

D.C. historic preservation board weighs fate of apartment building

By Bill Allegar
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The fate of an innovative apartment building in 1938 to house an influx of federal workers will be decided this morning by the District's Historic Preservation Review Board.

The Governor Shepherd Apartment House, across from the State Department in the 2100 block of Virginia Avenue NW, reflects the design philosophies of famed Washington architect Joseph H. Abel and an architectural movement known as "International Style," according to several preservationists, historians and the Foggy Bottom-West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

The ANC filed an application to have the eight-story building designated an historic landmark.

"Scholarship shows Joseph Abel was extremely important on a local and national level in developing principles of architectural design for apartment houses. It is one of his most notable works," said Steve Levy, ANC chairman.

Mr. Abel — who designed more than 100 buildings in the metropolitan area including the Shoreham Hotel and the Van Ness Center — where he now lives with his wife Marjorie — is modest in his own assessment of the Governor Shepherd.

"It's a good building. It would be nice if it's designated. I don't know how historic it is. I've done so many of them," said Mr. Abel, who often mentioned the Governor Shepherd in the numerous books and articles he wrote on apartment houses.

The Pan American Health Organization, which owns the building, wants to raze it and construct a new office building. Historians and architects testifying for the organization at a hearing last month said the building does not meet the criteria of a landmark and neither represents Mr. Abel's work nor the International Style.

The building was named after Alexander R. "Boss" Shepherd, ter-



Joseph H. Abel

ritorial governor of the District of Columbia from 1871 to 1874.

Visionary and brassy, the "Boss" ran the city during a quasi-home rule period. Although he paved the streets and built buildings and monuments, he also depleted funds allocated to the city by Congress, which soon after shifted the city to a commission form of government.

The Governor Shepherd was designed to house the great numbers of workers who came to Washington in the 1930s and 1940s. The building cost \$375,000 and had 128 apartments, most of them efficiencies rented by singles or young couples.

The apartments had fold-out beds and tables and a then-unique central ventilation system that helped draw national attention.

"The Governor Shepherd was nationally recognized and hailed at the time as a most important pioneer building," said Richard Striner, president of the Art Deco Society of Washington.

The building, mentioned in many architectural history books, originally had a roof garden.

The ground level is Virginia black serpentine with an Art Deco entrance. An unassuming overall

appearance contrasts with the elegance of the lobby, which includes a black terrazo floor, mirrored side walls, two wood veneer counters with marble tops and decorative lighting.

"It was not a luxury building, but as much as we could, we meant to give it a feeling of elegance," said Mr. Abel, who like other American architects blended the new International Style with other approaches and their own concepts.

The International Style, which developed in Europe in the early decades of this century, included a functional approach, little or no ornamentation, protruding elements, horizontal bands, ribbon windows and the use of industrial materials and technology.

"We didn't use the name International Style, it was simply the style we were using at the time. There was a lot of European influence," said Mr. Abel.

"I tried to make it as appealing as possible and for the people who live in it. That's the only way to design apartment buildings — for the people living there," he said.

The Governor Shepherd with its protruding balconies, blue porcelain horizontal lines, use of reinforced concrete and other features is one of the city's earliest examples of the International Style, said architectural historian Antoinette Lee.

"It's not the most exemplifying, but it has enough elements to be studied and appreciated as such," she said.

But another architectural historian disagrees. "It's not in the spirit of an International Style," said Anne Adams.

"Mr. Abel did many apartment buildings. Some are truly exceptional and in comparison the Governor Shepherd falls short. They didn't do enough critical evaluation. The loss of this building won't negatively impact on Abel's work," she said.

Pan American bought the building in 1969 with a plan to convert it gradually to office space for its expanding staff. But the company

Abel, Joseph H.



Photo by Walter Oates. The Washington Times

The Governor Shepherd Apartment House, 2121 Virginia Ave. NW, designed by Washington architect Joseph H. Abel.

decided conversion and renovation on the outdated apartment building would be too difficult and costly and now plans a new eight-story office building.

Pan American, as the regional arm of the World Health Organization and part of the United Nations, coordinates health education and the flow of medical supplies among 37 countries in the Western Hemisphere. About 500 employees work in its Washington headquarters.

For the last several years, the Governor Shepherd has been part residential and part office building.

In March, the last of about 45 tenants moved out, having reached a financial settlement with the owner.

Richard Longstreth, professor of architectural history at George Washington University, called the Governor Shepherd "an endangered species. It embodies the main features of the International Style and is an important example of Joseph Abel's work. Its role as a landmark is not only individually significant, but helps us understand the cultural heritage of the city"

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FOGGY BOTTOM AND WEST END
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

1920 G STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 • (202) 659-0000
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

May 2, 1984

Mr. James Speight
Chairman,
D.C. Historic Preservation
Review Board
614 H Street NW, Room 305
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Speight:

REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF ANC2a

ANC2a is pleased to submit the balance of our rebuttal testimony in the form of this letter and its attachments. This letter and the letter from Ms. Lee (attachment 1) will serve as our summary rebuttal. Other documents are attached for the information of the Board. We respectfully request that our testimony be given the full weight of testimony in person, as we are submitting our rebuttal in writing at your request in lieu of recessing the hearing to another date. Furthermore, these statements from the ANC are entitled to the "great weight" ANCs are accorded under statute. By agreement between Mr. Quin (for PAHO) and myself (for ANC2a) Mr. Quin will not be posing any questions for Mr. Striner. The ANC is heavily indebted to Ms. Lee, Mr. Chase and Mr. Wrenn for materials which were adapted for our rebuttal.

The first portion of the rebuttal speaks to the criteria for designation, the integrity of the structure and whether sufficient time has passed. The second portion relates to the relevance of PAHO testimony to landmark designation, use of the Governor Shepherd for offices, and the accuracy of statements regarding ANC interest in designating the Governor Shepherd as a landmark.

The Governor Shepherd Warrants Designation As A Landmark

The Governor Shepherd clearly meets criteria 2, 3 and 4 for landmark designation, as shown below.

As Ms. Lee points out in the attached letter, citing Mr. James Goode's forthcoming outstanding study of Washington apartment houses, the Governor Shepherd exemplifies the architectural heritage of the national capital as an outstanding and trend-setting International Style example of the specialized apartment houses constructed as part of the wave of new building activity generated by the influx of people coming to Washington to help implement the New Deal. The enormous expansion of government workers during the New Deal, and the ancillary services, businesses and cultural facilities, made a fundamental alteration in the social composition and character of Washington. The relatively small

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ABEL, JOSEPH H.

scale apartment buildings composed mostly of efficiency units are a phenomenon of this development. The letters from Ms. Lee and Mr. Chase (Attachment 2), cover this point in greater detail.

The Governor Shepherd embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the International Style, which was important to the appearance and development of the national capital. While witnesses for the opponents assert that the Governor Shepherd is not International Style and cite, as their authority, the characteristics used by Hitchcock and Johnson in their 1932 book, the Governor Shepherd was picked as an exemplar of International Style architecture in the 1940 Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) guide which clearly states (on page 7) that **both Hitchcock and Johnson were on the MOMA committee which selected and evaluated candidate buildings to be included in this exclusive guide to International Style architecture.** The MOMA, as sponsor of both the 1932 exhibition on the International Style and Hitchcock and Johnson's book, regarded the Governor Shepherd as being an important example of the International Style and would not have otherwise selected it.

Critics of the pending application point out that the Governor Shepherd might be symmetrical, have some decorative touches or have some streamlined Art Deco elements. The presence of these features apparently did not deter Hitchcock, Johnson and the other MOMA committee members from selecting the Governor Shepherd as one of just six outstanding International Style buildings in the entire Washington metropolitan area. Mr. Goode, the leading authority on Washington area apartment buildings, has indicated to you in his letter that, considering the context of all Washington area apartment buildings, the Governor Shepherd is one of a select group of trend-setting buildings because of the quality and influence of its planning, the crucial innovations it brought to ventilation, and its exterior design and lobby treatment. Professor Frederick Gutheim, an outstanding architectural critic and contemporary of Mr. Abel, strongly supported designation and recognition of the building as International Style. The letter from Mr. Wrenn (attachment 3), Archivist of the American Institute of Architects, points out how the Governor Shepherd is a particularly fine example of the mainstream of the International Style in its heyday. I urge you to review his letter.

The Governor Shepherd is also identified as a notable work of an architect who has influenced the development of the national capital or the nation. The building was designed by Joseph Abel, an architect who all agree influenced the evolution of his field and the development of the national capital and, to a degree, the nation as a whole. As even the owner's expert witnesses acknowledged, Abel was the authority in this country on the design of apartment houses from the late 1930's through the 1950's. His apartment buildings and his writings on this building type received recognition by the leading national professional journals as setting the highest standards for those years in this area of architectural practice. As noted by Mr. Wrenn, Mr. Abel was even selected to author the entry on apartment houses by the Encyclopaedia Britannica. None of the opposition witnesses, despite being asked, were able to cite a single authority on apartment house design of that period other than Abel.

That the Governor Shepherd was so widely cited by Abel in his publications is testimony to his belief that the Governor Shepherd was one of his most notable works. Mr. Abel's own letter to Ms. Lee, concerning the landmark application before you, indicates as much. Given the large number of his designs, it is difficult to imagine that he would have used it as his example so often if he had felt it to be mediocre.

More dispassionate confirmation of the Governor Shepherd as a notable work by Mr. Abel comes from the professional literature of the time, which we cited in the application and in our direct presentation, which featured this building in both text and illustration. In addition, Nicholas Satterlee referred to Abel, even in 1967, as a mainstay of his profession, whose "apartment buildings and writings are nationally known and have served as guides and texts for architects across the country. The level of apartment building design in the Washington Metropolitan area is due to a considerable degree to the influence of Mr. Abel's designs." The 12/28/47 New York Herald Tribune noted that "By actual count Joseph Abel has probably designed more outstanding apartment houses than any other architect." It is clear, from all this attention the Governor Shepherd received, that it was regarded by both the architect and his contemporaries as one of his major achievements -- with no other Abel building receiving so much notice. The Governor Shepherd is still being featured prominently today: in the 1984 book by Wirz and Striner and in the forthcoming book by James Goode, Curator of the Smithsonian Castle. The high acclaim by Abel's contemporaries, his recognized preeminence in the field of apartment house design, his extensive use of the Governor Shepherd as a model and the contemporary and present praise of the Governor Shepherd all clearly serve to document that this building meets the test as a notable work of an architect who influenced the development of the national capital and of the nation.

In terms of integrity, the Governor Shepherd fares very well. The building has had remarkably few alterations over the years, with no significant feature of the design, inside or out, being lost or substantially altered. In terms of integrity, then, this building surely qualifies.

As to the question of age: has "sufficient time" passed since this building was erected "to permit professional evaluation ... in [its] historical context"? We believe it has. Unlike some other aspects of 20th century design, early modernism, and most particularly the International Style has been the subject of extensive research and numerous publications. Examples of the International Style can be judged professionally. In this instance, judgement now is especially timely, for in the case of the Governor Shepherd we cannot wait longer. If this building is not declared a landmark, it will be demolished. There will be no second chance for the Governor Shepherd.

Testimony attempting to detract from the national prominence accorded the Governor Shepherd, or to characterize the design as being inferior or not of the International Style, or to say that reviews of the building were included in publications only because of the peculiar pedantic views of those publications' editors, are clearly subjective and personal opinion not based on objective research. These testimonies would suggest that we wait until unnamed experts opinions are in on which apartment houses are significant or wait until more than 50 years have passed to "objectively" assess the importance of different buildings (while 50 years are not part of the DC criteria). These opponents admit to having done no research into apartment house design or to being unaware of who were (or are) the experts on apartment house design. They testify only to which buildings are more to their liking. While these naysayers criticize possible designation, one must remember that they are all paid to do just that, and I would refer you to our rebuttal testimony by Mr. Striner and Professor Longstreth. Of the outstanding professionals testifying on behalf of ANC2a, I would point out that none have received any compensation from the ANC, other than a token honorarium to Ms. Lee for her extensive research.

Other Issues

On the next point, Mr. Tracy testified, as a representative of PAHO, to how much they need an office building in this location and how surprised they were that the ANC had applied for landmark status. To "document" the lack of previous ANC interest, Mr. Quin passed out what was alleged to be the Foggy Bottom historic resource survey form. On this issue, our rebuttal falls into three categories: (1) relevance of PAHO testimony to landmark designation; (2) use of the Governor Shepherd for offices; and (3) the accuracy of statements that the ANC had evinced no interest in the building.

First, the bulk of Mr. Tracy's testimony spoke to the need for convenient office space and PAHO's financial considerations. While ANC2a has the greatest respect for the work carried out by PAHO and we understand their need for expanded office space, these needs and the cited financial considerations¹ are totally irrelevant to consideration of landmark designation by the HPRB. The Department of State representatives testimony was similarly irrelevant, as noted by the Board.

¹ If the cited need for convenient access to both the Departments of State and of Health and Human Services are to be given any weight in your deliberations, we would simply point out that HHS is located at 4th and Independence SW -- hardly nearby -- and there are many office locations more convenient either to HHS or to Metrorail. It is our ANC which has been heavily and adversely impacted by international agencies replacing housing with offices, such as the IMF, World Bank, OAS and now PAHO. Each of these agencies cited the need for convenient access and tight financial constraints imposed by their member governments.

Second, PAHO may, as a matter of right under the Zoning Regulations, use that site for offices and in fact has been doing so for 15 years. We have, in discussions between the ANC, PAHO and the Lenkin Company, specifically attempted to encourage more than just the de minimus consideration they have given to an adaptive reuse of the Governor Shepherd as offices. If the Board sees fit to approve the application for landmark status, ANC2a would be pleased to work with the developer and PAHO to actively pursue an adaptive reuse and to design sympathetic office and retail space on the balance of the site in the volume presently contemplated by the developer. This will assure that PAHO has the full extent of office space they require, in a convenient location, and that this exemplary building is preserved -- rather than construct the massive and abusively-designed replacement they propose.

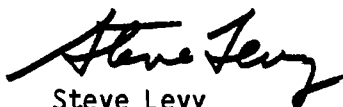
Third, Mr. Tracy stated that they were greatly surprised when ANC2a submitted the landmark application because our landmark study did not specifically identify it as a potential landmark and PAHO "had felt comfortable that it did not own a landmark structure." Mr. Quin passed out what was alleged to be the ANC survey form on the Governor Shepherd. That the survey form has been altered by the addition of comments on the bottom of the page is clearly documented, because the survey was conducted in 1981-82, while the description itself references a 1984 publication. In addition, these survey forms were never specifically accepted or approved by the ANC. [This survey was conducted in the context of not having had the advantage of all of the later research performed by Ms. Lee and Mr. Striner on the Governor Shepherd] The entire study referenced by Mr. Tracy by no means gave a green light to any and all development. In what was referred to as the George Washington University area, the Governor Shepherd and all of square 81 were included. The study (attachment 4) stated that the "19th-20th century urban middle class residential development [including square 81, was deemed to require] further research [on] ... the history of this unique confluence of residential and institutional growth ... to determine an approach that can maximize preservation of the neighborhood ambiance." If PAHO had reviewed the study -- as Mr. Tracy implies in his testimony -- no reasonable developer could assume, based on no individual building being cited, that there was absolutely no interest in their building. Furthermore, former ANC Commissioner Molinelli has consistently told PAHO, from the first meeting with Dr. Cooney in 1982, that he wanted to preserve the Governor Shepherd as the "most beautiful building in the neighborhood." Work of the ANC on historic designation of portions of the "GWU area" is still ongoing. However, as noted in attachment 5, we did not have so much as a draft application before us at the time of the Board of Zoning Adjustment hearing and so could not have informed PAHO on any more of a timely basis.

Summary

In summary, given the extensive documentation which has been amassed on the Governor Shepherd, it is hard to imagine finding another apartment house of the late 1930's which was accorded as much attention and praise as the Governor Shepherd. This building clearly meets the criteria for designating historic landmarks. It is also well preserved and sufficient time has passed and sufficient scholarship has been devoted to buildings of its type and style to permit professional assessment of its merits. Indeed, many outstanding professionals in the field have spoken or written in favor of designation. It should be declared a landmark.

We appreciate the opportunity we have had to present our rebuttal testimony and respectfully request that the Board designate the Governor Shepherd as a landmark.

For Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2a,



Steve Levy
Chairman

1

4851 N. 28th Street
Arlington, Va. 22207
April 29, 1985

Mr. James Speight
Chairman
D. C. Historic Preservation Review
Board
614 H Street, N.W. #305
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Speight:

I would like to respond to the testimony presented by the witnesses for the owner of the Governor Shepherd Apartment House at the hearing of April 24, 1985. The opponents claim that the Governor Shepherd does not meet any of the criteria for landmark designation. I believe that the building meets at least three of the criteria. It should be noted that in order to qualify for landmark designation, a property need meet only one of the criteria.

On the matter of the Governor Shepherd exemplifying the architectural heritage of the national capital, I would point to the extensive and systematic study undertaken by James M. Goode on all notable apartment houses from 1880 to the present. The apartment house was an important residential building type by the 1930's. However, the Great Depression slowed down apartment house construction until 1934, when President Roosevelt's relief programs attracted hundreds of individuals to federal service and thus encouraged a renewed wave of building activity. The Governor Shepherd Apartment House was an important response to this phase in the history of the national capital. However, unlike apartment house designs of the 1920's and early 1930's, apartment houses of this period responded to European modernism rather than historical styles. I believe that Mr. Goode's study of apartment houses in Washington, D.C. is the authoritative historical context for evaluating the importance of the Governor Shepherd and his support of this nomination is testimony to appropriateness of this criterion to the Governor Shepherd.

I also believe that the Governor Shepherd embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the International Style, a style that was important to the appearance and development of the national capital. The witnesses hired by the building's owner have testified that the Governor Shepherd was either not in the International Style or if it held some of the characteristics of the International Style, it was a mediocre example of this style. Despite the protestations of these witnesses, they cannot rewrite the historical record. The Museum of Modern Art, the sponsor of the influential 1932 exhibition on the International Style, would hardly have included the Governor Shepherd in its own 1940 guide to modern architecture in the northeast states had the building not conformed to the museum's

understanding of the style. One also could not imagine the 1940 guide including the Governor Shepherd if the museum had not regarded it as a noteworthy example of this style. The introduction to the 1940 guide states that only examples of the International Style were considered for inclusion in the guide. The specific entry that accompanied the Governor Shepherd noted the building's ventilating system. However, the nature of the publication and the direct statements in the guide's introduction leaves no question that in 1940, the Governor Shepherd was considered an important example of the International Style.

The third criterion which is appropriate to the Governor Shepherd Apartment House is its identification as a notable work of an architect who has influenced the development of the national capital or the nation. Here again, the building owner's witnesses cannot rewrite the historical record. Joseph H. Abel was both a locally-significant and a nationally-significant architect. He had a highly successful practice in Washington, D.C. and was regarded as the nation's authority on apartment house design. His 1947 book and 1952 essay in Forms and Functions of 20th Century Architecture are contributions to the national literature that cannot be matched by any other apartment house practitioner of his time. That the Governor Shepherd was so widely cited by Abel in his publications is testimony to his belief that this property was one of his notable works. It would be difficult to imagine that Mr. Abel would have cited the Governor Shepherd if he felt it to be one of his mediocre works.

When one looks at the documentation that has been amassed on this building, I believe that the building owner's witnesses would be hard pressed to find another apartment house of the late 1930's that was accorded as much national attention as the Governor Shepherd. I also feel that the witnesses' praise of nearly every other Abel apartment house is motivated by a desire to detract from the Governor Shepherd's historical record and by personal preferences of taste that are irrelevant to the evaluation of a property's historical or architectural significance. If the standards of evaluation cited by the building owner's witnesses were applied to every property of the pre-1930 era, very little of Washington's heritage would be designated and preserved.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my views on this subject.

Sincerely,



Antoinette J. Lee

2

Mr. James Speight, Chairman
Historic Preservation Review Board
of the District of Columbia
Room 305
614 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

29 April 1985

Dear Chairman Speight:

I write to you in order to express my support for the landmark designation application submitted by the Foggy Bottom / West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission for the Governor Shepard Apartment Building, 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W.

This landmark application was brought to my attention by Professor Richard Longstreth, who knew of my research on early twentieth-century Washington architecture and involvement in the recent hearings before the Review Board on 722 and 730 12th Street. Because I was familiar with the Governor Shepard and its special significance, I voluntarily attended the hearing held last week in order to listen to both sides present their views. After reviewing that testimony, as well as copies of the letters submitted by the various proponents and opponents, and after reviewing my own extensive investigations into early modern architecture in the District, it is my professional judgment as an architectural historian that the Governor Shepard qualifies for designation as an historic landmark under three of Washington's eligibility criteria.

Criterion 2: The Governor Shepard exemplifies the significant and unique social heritage of the Capital in that it is an outstanding and trend-setting example of the specialized apartment building accommodations required by Washington's legions of Government employees -- a class of worker and resident which expanded enormously during the 1930s and which then and now had and

has so much to do with the District's social composition and character. This aspect of the Governor Shepard's significance was discussed in a May, 1941 Architectural Forum article (pp.322-323); it has most recently received attention in the research conducted by James Goode on the history of Washington apartment buildings and will be featured in Goode's forthcoming book on this important facet of the District's cultural and architectural heritage.

In this vein, the Governor Shepard must be judged to meet Criterion 2 also as an exemplar of the significant architectural character of the city, again as the Forum article and Goode's research point out. Such relatively small-scale, low-rise apartment buildings containing efficiency units are strikingly a Washington phenomenon, and the Governor Shepard ranks as a major example of the type.

Criterion 3: The Governor Shepard embodies the distinguishing characteristics of early modern architectural style, or one may say more fundamentally, early modern architectural theory. That the Governor Shepard is an important example of advanced early modernism of the sort which was labelled in America the "International Style" is proven by the inclusion of this building in the Museum of Modern Art's 1940 Guide to Modern Architecture. Only five buildings in the District were cited in that publication. The very notion of an "International Style" of advanced modern architectural design was established by a 1932 Museum of Modern Art exhibition and a book titled The International Style based on that exhibition and written by its organizers, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. The 1940 Guide was intended to be a follow-up to the exhibition; it pointed out worthy examples of this "new architecture" -- buildings erected since the 1932 show, buildings which in the view of the Museum's Architecture Committee were "fundamentally modern" (Guide, p.5). It is important to note that both Hitchcock and Johnson participated in "finding and selecting the material published" in 1940 (Guide, p.7). Thus, one must conclude that the Governor Shepard Apartment Building, because of its inclusion in the Museum's 1940 guidebook, was considered by the very institution and the very people who created

the term "The International Style" for advanced architectural design in the first place, to be a notable example of "true modernism" and therefore this building qualifies for designation under Criterion 3.

In addition, as model of a major Washington building type -- the apartment house -- the Governor Shepard qualifies doubly under Criterion 3. The two leading authorities on Washington-area apartment buildings, James Goode and Frederick Gutheim, have both submitted letters to the Review Board indicating that the Governor Shepard, considered in the context of all Washington apartment buildings, stands out for the quality and influence of its planning, its innovative ventilating system (so crucial here), its exterior design and lobby treatment. This building is not simply representative of its type, it is a key example, one of a select group of trend-setting buildings.

Criterion 4: The Governor Shepard was designed by Joseph Abel, an architect who all agree influenced the evolution of his field and the development of the National Capital and, to a degree, the nation as a whole. As even the owner's expert witnesses acknowledged, Abel was the authority in this country on the design of apartment houses from the late 1930s through the 1950s. His apartment buildings and his writings on this building type received recognition by the leading national professional journals as setting the highest standards for those years in this area of architectural practice (see, for example, Progressive Architecture, July 1947, pp.14, 59; Architectural Forum, May 1948, p.150).

To qualify under Criterion 4, however, the Governor Shepard must be identified as a "notable work" by this major figure. Was it? Was this one of Able's important buildings? Yes. Mr. Abel's own letter written to Ms. Lee concerning the present landmark designation application indicates as much. More dispassionate confirmation comes in the literature of the period -- the books and articles which featured this building in both text and illustration -- from the Museum of Modern Art's 1940 Guide to Modern Architecture (p.26), through the Architectural Forum's

piece on this building (May 1941, pp.322-323), to Abel's own 1948 book, Apartment Houses, to Talbot Hamlin's four-volume Forms & Functions in Modern Architecture (III, p.83) issued in 1952 for which Abel wrote the chapter on apartment buildings and in which he illustrated the Governor Shepard -- though then twelve years old, still considered a very innovative, progressive, "modern" building. It is clear from all this attention the Governor Shepard received that it was regarded by both the architect and his contemporaries as one of his major achievements. Indeed, no other Abel building has received so much notice. More recently, the Governor Shepard was featured in Wirz and Striner's book, Washington Deco (pp.45-46), and will also figure prominently in James Goode's forthcoming volume on Washington apartment buildings. Obviously, this is one of Joseph Abel's "notable works" and therefore the Governor Shepard qualifies for landmark status under Criterion 4.

Having met the requirements for landmark designation under Criteria 2, 3, and 4, one must consider the Governor Shepard in terms of two additional matters set out in the D.C. eligibility standards: the building's integrity and age.

In terms of integrity, the Governor Shepard fares very well. The building is remarkably little altered. Both inside and out, no significant feature of the design has been lost or substantially altered. In terms of integrity, then, this building surely qualifies.


As to the question of age: has "sufficient time" passed since this building was erected "to permit professional evaluation... in (its) historical context"? I believe it has. Unlike some other aspects of twentieth-century design, early modernism, and most particularly the International Style, has been the subject of extensive research and numerous publications. Examples of the International Style can be judged professionally.

In this instance, judgment now is especially timely, for in the case of the Governor Shepard we cannot wait longer. If this building is not declared a landmark, it will be demolished. There will be no "second chance" for this building.

In summary, I want to restate my belief that the Governor Shepard Apartment Building meets at least three of the Criteria for Designating Historic Landmarks. It is well preserved and sufficient time has passed and sufficient scholarship has been devoted to buildings of its type and style to permit professional assessment of its merits. It should, in brief, be declared a landmark.

Thank you for considering my views on this issue.

Sincerely,



David Chase

3



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April 30, 1985

Mr. James T. Speight, Chairman
Historic Preservation Review Board
614 H Street N.W.
Suite 305
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: Governor Shepherd Apartments, 2121 Virginia Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Speight:

From my office at the American Institute of Architects at 18th and New York Avenue N.W. I frequently walk through the area, observing both Washington gardens and buildings. Some of the best public gardens in the District are along Virginia Avenue between 19th and 22nd streets. Located along the same stretch of Virginia, at 2121, is the governor Shepherd Apartments, one of the area buildings which I have long admired. I first saw the building some 25 years ago and have not ceased since then to anticipate it whenever in the area, learning from it about the International Style, about apartment houses of its era and about its architect, Joseph H. Abel.

Though its brick walls are neither plastered nor painted white, it is a particularly fine example of the International Style about which Marcus Whiffen wrote in 1969 "Today, as an independent entity, it is a thing of the past. But no architect of our time, whatever his opinion of the International Style, could design as if it had never been." Abel's building of 1938 was constructed in the heyday of the style, and its flat roof, cantilevered balconies, balance of unlike planes and parts, lack of ornamentation, rectilinear windows and horizontality are in the style's mainstream. Constructed during a prime period for the apartment house and in a prime location, the building worked well for a succession of tenants for almost 50 years.

Abel was a nationally and internationally known designer of and authority on apartment houses. He wrote the entry on apartment houses in the Encyclopedia Britannica beginning in 1951, was the author of the influential Reinhold book Apartment Houses, published in 1947 and of a number of other articles and works on apartment houses. In 1947 the December 28 New York Herald Tribune noted that "By actual count Joseph Abel has probably designed more outstanding apartment houses than any other architect." in 1967 Nicholas Satterlee wrote about him "Joseph Abel is the kind of person and architect who is a mainstay of our profession. In terms of design, his apartment buildings and writings on them are nationally known and have served as guides and texts for architects across the country. The level of apartment building design in the Washington Metropolitan area is due to a considerable degree to the influence of Mr. Abel's designs."

Certainly the reputation of both Mr. Abel and his Governor Shepherd Apartments is secure. As an architectural historian, I strongly support designation of the building.

Sincerely,


Tony P. Wrenn
Archivist

4

The Architectural History Of Foggy Bottom

A preliminary report completed by the firm of Traceries Inc. has recommended that the citizens of Foggy Bottom apply for landmark status for two sections of their neighborhood—several blocks of townhouses west of New Hampshire Avenue and a group of buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue between 25th and 26th Sts. A text of the report, which also recommends a further study of buildings east of New Hampshire Avenue, follows.

Introduction
For the last 50 years the area that falls under the jurisdiction of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A has been experiencing a steady erosion of its original residential and commercial fabric. The intrusion of major interstate highways, the development of a large urban university, and the construction of major apartment complexes has whittled away at the two- and three-story row-houses, elegant detached residences and small apartment buildings that once provided homes for the neighborhood. As an area situated adjacent to primary federal land holdings, Foggy Bottom-West End is under great pressure to develop its resources to their ultimate zoning potential. As the major residential area within the most urban areas of Washington, it is an area rich in history and community spirit. Neighborhood groups have long taken an active role in guiding this development along lines that respond to residents' needs, as well as urban commerce.

The Foggy Bottom-West End Historic Architecture Survey is an effort to undertake a comprehensive gathering and analysis of detailed data on the historical and physical character of the area falling under the jurisdiction of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A. The survey is a three-part study that includes a Preliminary Survey, Intensive Research and Implementation of Recommendations.

The Preliminary Survey required the development of an Inventory of Historic Resources. Through field work and historical research, data has been collected on all buildings 50 years or older located within the ANC boundaries. This data has been used to identify properties for inclusion in the Inventory. The inventory includes all buildings qualifying for the 50-year limit and includes some later meritorious structures.

Beyond the encompassing inventory, a second level of evaluation based on set criteria has resulted in a smaller list of significant buildings. These buildings are noted by the inclusion of a statement briefly describing their architecture and contribution to the area.

In addition, the Preliminary Survey report makes specific recommendations for further action toward the protection of the buildings listed on the Inventory.

Sponsored jointly by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A and the Foggy Bottom Association, the Preliminary Survey was conducted by Traceries in conjunction with neighborhood volunteers. Work on the first stage began in January 1982 and was completed in July 1982.

Why a Survey?

This survey is being conducted to provide the community with the information necessary to establish priorities for preservation efforts. Foggy Bottom-West End has long been recognized as an area with distinctive identities. Throughout, neighborhood associations have worked together for many years to maintain a high quality of urban living. This survey will provide needed information to help focus citizen efforts and channel time, energy and money toward worthwhile endeavors.

Specifically, the survey and its resulting inventory of significant buildings has the potential of:

- 1) Identifying buildings, sites, districts, structures and objects that are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Places so they receive the recognition and protection of National Register listing. This will entitle them to tax benefits, possible Federal funding and, under DC law, protection from demolition.
- 2) Identifying buildings, sites, districts, structures and objects that contribute to the character of the community and deserve consideration in the local planning process.
- 3) Providing planners with a data base from which to monitor and channel new development.
- 4) Establishing priorities for conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation efforts within the community.

5) Providing the basis for legal and financial tools to protect and enhance historic resources.

6) Increasing awareness in the public and private sectors of the man-made environment and the need for preservation efforts.

7) Enabling block grant communities and Federal agencies to meet their planning responsibilities under existing Federal legislation and procedures.

Survey Methodology

This survey is being conducted in three stages: Preliminary Survey; Intensive Research; and Implementation of Recommendations.

The Preliminary Stage has involved initial research—locating existing research at local libraries and archival centers, contacting people who have studied the area, and collecting relevant information, documentation and publications; preparation of maps; organization of volunteer photographers—preparation of photography forms and assignment of volunteers; preparation for on-site survey—mapping the area locating all structures, buildings, building groups, sites and urban design objects; identifying key structures, building groups, sites and objects, preparing survey forms, conducting archival research on identified buildings and sites, photographing buildings and sites, and transferring information and photographs onto survey forms; on-site survey—confirming research findings against visual evidence, conducting visual analysis; development of evaluation criteria—review selection of key buildings and sites; preparation of Preliminary Survey report and recommendations—preparation of survey map, final evaluation of buildings and sites against criteria, prioritization of further research requirements, revision of task schedule for Intensive Research stage and preparation of report.

The next stage, Intensive Research, will require further research into areas and buildings as specified in the recommendations. This will include a review of historic maps, census reports, tax records, city directories and other documents that will provide the information necessary to establish both the history of specific buildings and to allow that history to be integrated into the area's development.

The third stage, Implementation of Recommendations, will respond to the recommendations of the first and second stages. These will include the development of guidelines for determining the relative significance of extant buildings and will lead to establishment of priorities for devising means of protecting buildings listed in the inventory. It will include the preparation of historic landmark and/or district applications and the preparation of any other reports or publications as may be recommended and authorized. In addition, it will include following through administrative processes that may provide protection for the historic buildings.

The Inventory Criteria

Inclusion in the inventory was based on the sole criterion of age.

painter of note



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Buildings were to be 50 years old or older. In some cases, later buildings have been included because they are close to 50 years of age and appear to have a significant contribution to the area under survey.

Notation as a contributing building or site was based on merit as evaluated against set criteria. Each building that could meet one or more of the criteria was noted as such and a statement describing the building and its significance is included in the inventory.

Foggy Bottom-West End Inventory Criteria for Evaluation

1. Its value as part of the development, history, prehistory or culture of the survey area, the District of Columbia or the Nation.
2. Its location as a site of significant local or national historical event.
3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the survey area, the District of Columbia or the Nation.
4. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, architectural, or historical heritage of the survey area, the District of Columbia or the Nation.
5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of architectural style.
6. Its identification as the work of an architect, builder or developer whose work has influenced the development of survey area or the District of Columbia or the evolution of architectural styles or building technology within the District of Columbia or the United States.
7. Its embodiment of elements of design, detail, materials, building technology, craftsmanship or building type that are significant to the survey area, the District of Columbia or the Nation.

The development of the evaluative criteria for inclusion in this inventory was based on two sets of established criteria that directly impact the selection of landmarks for inclusion in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Places. The first is the Staff Criteria of Evaluation currently in use by the Staff of the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital. The second is the National Register Criteria for Evaluation currently in use as a guide for the States, Federal agencies, and the Secretary of the Interior. These two criteria are attached.

The criteria developed for the Foggy Bottom-West End Inventory are tied closely to that of the Staff of the Joint Committee on Landmarks and satisfy the National Register Criteria. Notation as a contributing building requires substantial satisfaction of one or more criteria; however, notation does not imply that any building necessarily possesses a quality or historic association that would lead to official landmark status.

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The Area Surveyed

The Foggy Bottom-West End Inventory of Historic Resources covers the area within the boundaries and jurisdiction of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A. Basically L-shaped in formation, the area comprises land adjacent to the Potomac River and Rock Creek Park to the West, N Street to 20th Street south to Pennsylvania Avenue, continuing to 15th Street to the east, and Constitution Avenue to the south. A map of the surveyed area is included.

This area includes both private and public land holdings, as well as primary federal land.

Recommendations

Analysis of the findings in the Preliminary Survey indicates that there are six identifiable districts within the ANC 2A boundaries. These districts represent concentrations of building types, development periods, historical patterns, uses and/or socio-economic patterns. Following is a listing of squares falling within each district. Parentheses indicate squares that are compatible to the district, but do not hold specific historic resources.

District 1: Foggy Bottom (19th century working class residential development) Squares 5, 16, 17, 28, 29

District 2: Pennsylvania Avenue Corridor (19th-20th century commerce) Squares 14, 15, 25, (26), (27), 37, 38, (52), 53, 74, part 75, 78, part 101, (119), (144), 168

District 3: George Washington University (19th-20th century urban middle class residential development) Squares (30), (31), (40/41), 42, 43, (54/55), (56), (57), 58, part 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, part 101, 102, 103, part 104, 122

District 4: West End/Federal City (19th century Federal City history) Squares 121, 142, 169, 170, Reservation 1

District 5: Industrial distinctive building type Squares 24, (36), 50

District 6: Institutional (architectural excellence) The area south of Virginia Avenue including Squares 59, (60-61/83-84), 62, 82, E-87, 88, E-88, part 104, (2104), (123), (124), (128), (144), 145, (146), (147), 171, 172, 173, 174, Reservation 1

In recognition of the development patterns extant in this area the following recommendations are made:

District 1: Foggy Bottom
Recommendation: Prepare a historic district application for this entire area for submission to the Joint Committee on Landmarks.

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REBUTTAL STATEMENT OF STEVE LEVY, ANC2a CHAIRMAN, ON ANC2a's
ACTIONS REGARDING THE GOVERNOR SHEPHERD LANDMARK APPLICATION
(PORTION OF TOTAL REBUTTAL STATEMENT)

In testimony by two witnesses in opposition to the designation of the Governor Shepherd apartment building as an historic landmark, it was alleged that ANC2a had acted in bad faith by submitting a landmark application after not opposing a zoning application before the D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA). This portion of the rebuttal statement by ANC2a, the applicant for historic designation, briefly responds to those charges and provides a chronology of events. Had the ANC desired to delay development of the site or act in bad faith, it is clear it could have: (1) opposed the BZA application and, if it then lost, appealed through one or more Commissioners to the Court of Appeals; or (2) requested the right to continue our rebuttal testimony in person at a later date, as was offered by Chairman Speight, rather than agree to an expeditious end of the hearing and to file such testimony in writing within ten days from the hearing. Instead, the ANC followed an open process and duly considered an outstanding and meticulous application prepared for it. The ANC clearly acted in good faith, notified the developer promptly and acted after giving all parties due process.

1. In 1981 and 1982, the ANC conducted a study to inventory its potential historic resources. The area which includes the Governor Shepherd was deemed to warrant further study of the 19th and 20th century middle class residential housing. No specific buildings were cited in this wide area, bounded by 19th, 24th, Pennsylvania and E Street. The followup studies are still ongoing, and were not the source of the draft landmark application which was offered to and adopted by the ANC.

2. In 1982, after the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) notified me that it intended to remove the rest of the tenants in the Governor Shepherd, the ANC and the Ward 2 Tenants Council assisted the tenants in forming a tenants association to represent their interests in negotiations with PAHO. The ANC provided a grant to the tenants association to assist them in retaining legal counsel, with the stated purpose of retaining their housing accommodation. In our original meeting with Dr. Cooney of PAHO, Mr. Molinelli, who was then an ANC Commissioner, warned PAHO that he wanted to preserve the Governor Shepherd as the "most beautiful building in the neighborhood."

3. Early in 1984, we understood the The Lenkin Company was selected by PAHO to develop the site, which included the neighboring gas station. During late summer 1984, a BZA application was filed by Lenkin, and Mr. Edward Lenkin duly notified the ANC. Mr. Lenkin was scheduled to appear at the regular September meeting of the ANC to describe his proposal, but was unable to attend. He was also unable to attend the October meeting. When we realized that the BZA case date was approaching, a special meeting was scheduled for November 5,

1984. The discussions between Mr. Lenkin and myself just prior to the meeting were the first definite word that, of the possible development options available, demolition of the Governor Shepherd was the final course. Prior to that time, discussions between Mr. Lenkin and myself solely concerned whether the tenants in the Governor Shepherd were being treated fairly. Demolition was one development option. Because the BZA application was stated in terms of an addition to an existing building, we had been led to believe that the Governor Shepherd was only going to be modified. At that meeting the ANC did not oppose the BZA application. No questions of landmark status of preservation were before the ANC at that time and the ANC straightforwardly declined to oppose the application, while expressing anything but enthusiasm for the abusive and massive design proposed to replace the Governor Shepherd. The minutes of that meeting are attached. Had the ANC wished to oppose the application, we would have adopted an extensive written report and comments which I had prepared just prior to the meeting.

4. On November 21, 1984 Mr. Lenkin met with Mr. Striner of the Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW) and discussed preservation issues regarding the Governor Shepherd. As noted in the last paragraph of Mr. Striner's letter to Mr. Lenkin, dated December 6, 1984 (attached), between those two dates the ADSW got in touch with ANC2a to share its information on the Governor Shepherd.

5. Subsequently (I am not certain of the dates), Mr. Striner, myself and Ms. Lee discussed a draft landmark application which had been researched and prepared by Mr. Striner.

6. On January 7, 1985, Ms. Lee made a letter proposal (attached) to Mr. Stamm, who was then still ANC Chairman, to prepare a landmark application on the Governor Shepherd. This offer was responded to affirmatively.

7. On January 14, 1985, after intense research and rewriting, Ms. Lee proffered a rewritten draft application (first page attached). Within several days, Mr. Lenkin was notified that we were to consider a landmark application.

8. On January 23, 1985, a private discussion was held between the ANC Commissioners, Mr. Molinelli, Mr. Lenkin, several PAHO representatives and PAHO's outside counsel. I provided all participants with copies of Ms. Lee's latest draft application. The offer was made by Mr. Lenkin for a limited residential F.A.R. covenant for air rights over the Peoples Drug store (on E Street) adjoining the Governor Shepherd site. The ANC members found this offer not to be germane to the issue of preservation, which was now before the ANC.

9. On January 24, 1985, the ANC had a regular advertised business meeting at which the Governor Shepherd application was before the ANC for action. As reflected in the minutes of that meeting (attached), extensive discussion took place on the merits of the application and the ANC unanimously voted the attached resolution to submit the application.

MINUTES: Special meeting of the Foggy Bottom and West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) held 5 November 1984 at the ANC office, 1920 G Street, N.W.

The meeting was convened at 7.34PM to consider BZA Application #14210. All commissioners were present, except for Commissioner Tyler. Also present were the architect, Vlastimil Koubek; Edward Lenkin, developer; Tom Tracy, PAHO; PAHO's attorney; and several current tenants of the Governor Shepherd.

Aside from the technicalities of the BZA application, the project as a whole involved demolishing the Governor Shepherd apartment building at 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W., and the adjacent Gulf gasoline station, to build a new office building for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). PAHO is the owner of the Governor Shepherd, and PAHO has converted much of the building to office use. As part of the development, the new building would be connected to the existing Peoples Drug Store to the east by an open breezeway; this has no practical purpose except as a device to tie the lots together for zoning (FAR) benefits.

Eddie Lenkin and, primarily, Vlastimil Koubek described the proposed development as a whole and the new building in particular. They stressed PAHO's need for office space, and the limitations of the existing building for office use. They also described the financial and other assistance offered to current tenants to vacate the building for the redevelopment. The tenants expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements, since they viewed their situation as untenable and increasingly undesirable, and urged the ANC to support the development.

One of the features of the development plan is that it uses all the commercial FAR available, leaving the residential FAR for potential development on the Peoples property at some future date; there is no likelihood of that for at least the next 20 years because of existing leases.

Commissioners expressed their dissatisfaction with the further loss of residential use and with the design of the proposed building. Commissioner Molinelli was especially displeased with the loss of apartments and the loss of the Governor Shepherd building in particular, and he urged the ANC to oppose the BZA application. Commissioner Levy asked PAHO and Eddie Lenkin if they could not execute an agreement that would restrict any future development of the property to residential use as defined by the ANC. Eddie Lenkin agreed to explore this within the very short time remaining before the BZA hearing date; PAHO expressed an inability to even pursue the thought.

After much discussion, Commissioner Stamm stated that he didn't care for the alternatives but that (1) PAHO made it quite clear that they would not return the existing building to residential if the BZA application were defeated, and (2) at least there would be residential FAR available and a place to put it in the however-remote future if the project were approved. Therefore, he moved that the ANC not oppose the application (moved/Stamm - seconded/Rigdon; failed 3-2: Stamm, Levy, Rigdon in favor; Molinelli, Rosenbaum opposed).

Commissioner Molinelli then moved that the ANC oppose the application (moved/Molinelli - seconded/Rosenbaum; failed 2-2-1: Molinelli, Rosenbaum in favor; Stamm, Levy opposed; Rigdon abstained).

There was further discussion about the necessity of informing the BZA of the ANC's action on the application before knowing definitely if Eddie Lenkin would be able to give the ANC any concrete assurances from the parties involved about future residential development on the site; the ANC had to take some sort of position that night in order to make a timely filing of its position under the BZA's rules of practice. Eddie Lenkin promised to pursue the matter immediately to be able to give the ANC some indication of the possibilities before the BZA public hearing. The ANC adopted a resolution that it seeks a dialogue with the development parties to reach an agreement about future development of residential use on the property, and that it asks for a response before 14 November (moved/Rigdon - seconded/Levy; 5-0) (Resolution K-1). It also adopted a resolution to inform the BZA that the ANC took no position on the application at this time, but requested the opportunity to testify at the hearing if the ongoing discussions with the developer bore fruit by then (moved/Rigdon - seconded/Levy; 5-0) (Resolution K-2).

The meeting adjourned at 9.35PM.



December 6, 1984

Mr. Edward J. Lenkin
The Lenkin Company
4922-A St. Elmo Avenue
Bethesda, Md. 20814

Dear Mr. Lenkin:

Thank you for your letter of November 27, which followed our meeting of November 21. It is necessary for me to clarify my representations of the Art Deco Society's position regarding the Governor Shepherd apartment building at 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W. In your letter, you state that "all (I) wanted to save" of the Governor Shepherd building was an assortment of lobby fixtures. In fact, as you know, I made clear that this statement was entirely contingent on the Art Deco Society's Board of Directors determining that salvage of lobby elements indeed would constitute a satisfactory resolution of preservation concerns regarding the Governor Shepherd, as opposed to application for landmark status or other preservation options. You will also recall my statement that our discussions with Mr. Philip Horowitz and Ms. Karen Gordon of the Tenants' Association last year, which broached the possibility of salvage, were contingent on timely follow-up steps to explore this possibility. No such follow-up occurred, despite a letter to Mr. Horowitz in late spring.

Since our meeting of November 21, we have been in touch with the Foggy Bottom A.N.C. and are sharing both ideas and information on the Governor Shepherd with that group. We hope to be able to advise you of the position we will take on the Governor Shepherd in the near future.

Very truly yours,

Richard Striner
President

cc: Avis Black, Esq.
Mr. Stephen Levy ✓

P.O. Box 11090, Washington, D.C. 20008

Stamm

4851 N. 28th Street
Arlington, Va. 22207
January 7, 1985

Mr. Geoff Stamm
2475 Virginia Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr. Stamm:

I understand that, for the past several years, the Foggy Bottom neighborhood has been active in historic preservation activities. For the past fifteen years, I have been working as a professional architectural historian and preservationist. Given the neighborhood's activities and my professional experience, I am inquiring as to the interest of the Foggy Bottom Advisory Neighborhood Commission in procuring my services on a contract basis.

As a way for the Foggy Bottom ANC to become familiar with my services, I am proposing to show you a sample of my work. The first project that comes to mind is the preparation of a landmark nomination for the Governor Shepherd Apartment Building at 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W. I will also appear at the hearings to testify on behalf of this building. Should my work on this project prove satisfactory to the Foggy Bottom ANC, I would ask to be reimbursed in the amount of approximately \$750 (\$25 per hour x 30 hours).

With many thanks.

Sincerely,

Antoinette J. Lee

Antoinette J. Lee

GOVERNOR SHEPHERD APARTMENT BUILDING

The Governor Shepherd Apartment Building, located at 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W. (Square 81, Lot 830), is significant for its role as an early, virtually intact, surviving example of an International Style building in Washington, D.C. Designed by a well-known architect of the twentieth century, Joseph H. Abel, the Governor Shepherd Apartment Building was completed in 1938. It antedates what has been commonly cited as the "first" International Style building in Washington, D.C., the Longfellow Building at 1741 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., designed by William Lescaze, built in 1941, and now much altered from its original appearance. In fact, the Governor Shepherd Apartment Building is one of only four pre-World War II International Style Buildings in Washington, D.C. (The others are 2929 Connecticut Avenue built in 1936 after designs by Abel; the apartment building at 2407 15th Street, designed by Abel and completed in 1938, and the Longfellow Building.)

The Governor Shepherd building is notable for its architect, Abel, whose work in Washington, D.C. spans the period 1930 with the Shoreham Hotel to the 1960's, with Van Ness Center. Abel was a nationally-recognized architect who specialized in modern apartment house design. Upon its completion, the building received national recognition from both trade journals and art critics.

Site

For nearly half a century, the Governor Shepherd Building has occupied an important site on Virginia Avenue, a major thoroughfare from the Mall to Rock Creek Park. Along this route are located major federal government buildings, such as the Interior Department and the State Department buildings, as well as major twentieth century apartment buildings, such as Columbia Plaza, Potomac Plaza, and the Watergate.

Because of its location across Virginia Avenue from the State Department (formerly the War Department), the building has provided housing for World War II workers and, later, State Department workers.

The International Style

In designing the Governor Shepherd Apartment Building, architect Abel, demonstrated his allegiance to the new architectural style that swept through the 1930's, the International Style. This style was derived from a number of parallel but separate architectural experiments of the 1920's in Scandanavia, France, Holland, Germany, and Italy in which architects such as Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier designed highly utilitarian buildings devoid of arbitrary decoration. The appearance of these buildings depended on the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions. This approach to architecture was influenced by the architects' experiences in designing modern industrial structures and their search for an architectural style that best expressed the opportunities made available by twentieth century technology and building materials.

Typical ~~elements~~^{characteristics} of International style buildings include cantilevered elements, the lack of any historical references in form and details,

MINUTES: Regular meeting of the Foggy Bottom and West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) held 24 January 1985 at St. Mary's Court, 725 24th Street, N.W. All Commissioners were present.

This was the second regular meeting this month, and it convened at 7.30PM.

Governor Shepherd Building: The ANC had before it a draft historic landmark application (eight pages of text) prepared by Antoinette J. Lee. She described how she had taken a rough draft prepared by Richard Striner of the Art Deco Society, developed it into an application, and proposed it to the ANC. In developing the application, she thoroughly researched the architectural style, the role and significance of the architect Abel (who is alive and living at Van Ness Center), and the building itself.

Chairman Steve Levy described a meeting the previous evening of ANC commissioners with officials of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) as owners of the property, their attorneys, and Edward Lenkin representing the partnership of developers which proposes to develop a new office building for PAHO on the site. Chairman Levy related that the partnership offered to covenant that if the remaining residential FAR on the site were to be used any time in the next 60 years, it would be used according to the domiciliary definition of "residential" required by the ANC; PAHO itself was not able to negotiate anything.

Mr. Wayne Wolf, attorney for the developers, expressed disbelief that the ANC would even consider an historic landmark application on the property at this time. When the ANC last met on the subject of the Governor Shepherd, in the fall of 1984 just before a BZA hearing on the application, the ANC's main expressed concern was for the welfare of the remaining tenants in the Governor Shepherd, who were offered \$18,000 each as part of the relocation. Mr. Wolf asked if there was any connection between the ANC's interest in residential use on the site and the landmark application.

Commissioner Stasa replied that, as far as he was concerned, there was no connection; he was not under any illusion that there was likely to be any residential use of the site either with or without landmark status for the building. The question was the importance of the building. He did not consider himself an expert in architectural history, and in fact he didn't particularly appreciate the design of the Governor Shepherd, but it was clear to him that a number of experts in the field did feel the building to be important, so he was inclined to let the Historic Preservation Review Board decide.

He also stated that he believed the timing of the landmark application was lousy. However, he pointed out that the ANC had been methodically and purposefully moving on landmark applications for a number of years, and that the prime prospects for landmark status in the

neighborhood (including the Governor Shepherd) had been identified several years earlier in the survey that was published and was the subject of a series of public meetings, so that the ANC's serious interest and intent were no secret. Furthermore, he gave several examples of buildings in the neighborhood that had been demolished by developers after being identified as of historic interest, because of the ANC's open process, and pointed out that bad timing and losses at the last minute are a two-way street.

Commissioner Tyler echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that there was no relationship between a potential residential covenant and the historic landmark application. She also sympathized with the remaining Governor Shepherd tenants, who were very anxious about what response a new ANC action at this point might provoke to jeopardize their payments.

Rick Striner of the Art Deco Society described the society's interest in the Governor Shepherd, and the specific steps it had taken since the society was formally established in the fall of 1982. He stated his belief that the building was important, and that a landmark application should be filed.

Commissioner Schumacher expressed doubt that PAHD would actually use all the space in the proposed development, in view of shrinking budgets and the economic distress of most of Latin America.

Commissioner Levy and others commended the record of openness and cooperation that developer Eddie Lenkin had established in the neighborhood, including the proposed PAHD development, and expressed heartfelt regret that a landmark application would cause disruption and perhaps some measure of financial loss to his operations. However, the ANC's duty is to all the residents and the public interest as a whole. He proceeded with a motion to file the historic landmark application, pay Antoinette Lee \$750 for the cost of preparing and defending the application, and authorize incidental expenses she may have for additional photographs, copies, and the like (moved/Levy - seconded/Schumacher; 6-0).

Zoning Case 84-19C: A hearing is scheduled for this PUD to redevelop the B & M Garage at 1250 24th Street, N.W. Chip Glasgow, attorney for the developer, gave a summary of the project, which the ANC has previously supported. At the ANC's invitation, Robert Burke of Boston Properties attended the meeting to describe his company's objection to the current design of the proposed development; he made it clear that Boston Properties does not object to the development itself.

Commissioner Levy moved to reaffirm the ANC's support for the project in a resolution that explained in detail the ANC's rationale and priorities (moved/Levy - seconded/Rigdon; 5-0, Tyler absent). At the request of Phil Brown, Commissioner Levy moved an amendment to the resolution that would negate the ANC's support for the project if the owner of the land and the developer did not remain in complete . . .

THE FOGGY BOTTOM AND WEST END ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION
(ANC-2A) passed the following Resolution #A-10:

Whereas Ms. Antoinette J. Lee, an architectural historian who wishes to introduce her services in preparing landmark applications, has offered to prepare an historic landmark application on the Governor Shepherd apartment building, and that if ANC2a Finds the quality of the application to be acceptable, the ANC may reimburse her for her services; and,

Whereas ANC2a has a longstanding interest in preserving the architecturally and/or historically important structures within its boundaries; and,

Whereas, after duly studying the proposed landmark application prepared by Ms. Lee for the Governor Shepherd, and finding that the application persuasively makes the case for the Governor Shepherd being an important building in the development of the "International Style" in Washington, D.C.; and,

Whereas the ANC finds the landmark application drafted by Ms. Lee to be not only acceptable, but outstanding:

Be it therefore resolved that ANC2a hereby endorses the draft landmark application, adopts the rationale stated therein, and:

- (1) authorizes its Chair and/or Vice-Chairs to submit a landmark application on the Governor Shepherd to the Historic Preservation Review Board;
- (2) authorizes its Chair and/or Vice Chairs to represent it in the hearing at the HPRB;
- (3) authorizes as witnesses Ms. Lee, Richard Striner, Richard Longstreth, James Goode, and representatives of the West End Citizens Association and Foggy Bottom Association; and,
- (4) authorizes reimbursement to Ms. Lee in the amount of \$750 for her services, plus additional amounts for such ancilliary expenses as photography, xeroxing, etc.

Date: 1/24/85 APPROVED E-C

	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT	MOVED	SECONDED
SMD 01 ROSENBAUM	X					
02 RIGDON	X					
03 TYLER	X					
04 STAMM	X					
05 LEVY	X				X	
06 SCHUMACHER	X					X

Louis T. Rigdon
SECRETARY

5/20
July - F.U.L.
Jmi

ABEL, JOSEPH H.

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16 May 1985

Dear Miss Lee

Thank you very much for the flattering collection of letters you so kindly sent me. It is very disappointing that the board members had to be bound by the number 50. It seems to me that they should be able to judge a building on its merits and not simply by an arbitrary number embedded in a law. Of course if I had known then what would happen I would have designed the building two or three years sooner, but unfortunately I was not that foresighted.

Sincerely,

Joseph H. Abel
Joseph H. Abel

3001 Veazey Terrace
Washington, D.C. 20008