District of Columbia Office of Planning

December 13, 2012

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
c/o Lisner Home
5425 Western Avenue NW, Suite 219
Washington, DC 20015

Re: Historic Landmark Application #09-06
C & P Telephone Cleveland Emerson Exchange
4268 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Square 1786, Lot 9

Dear Commissioners:

Enclosed is a copy of the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board's decision to designate the property referenced above as a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. Under the Board's Rules of Procedure, this decision becomes final when copies are mailed to the parties in the case. The property is now protected by the D.C. Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978.

Listing in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites provides recognition of properties significant to the historic and aesthetic heritage of the nation's capital, fosters civic pride in the accomplishments of the past, and assists in preserving important cultural assets for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the District of Columbia. The Review Board appreciates the role of Advisory Neighborhood Commission conveying the opinions of the community on this matter.

For additional information please call the Historic Preservation Office at (202) 442-8800.

Sincerely,

Tim Dennee
Landmarks Coordinator

1100 4th Street SW, Suite E650, Washington, DC 20024 voice 202.442.7600 fax 202.442.7638

DESIGNATION

Of the District of Columbia

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

In Historic Landmark Case No. 09-06

Cleveland-Emerson Exchange

4268 Wisconsin Avenue NW

Square 199, Lot 832

The Historic Preservation Review Board, having held a public hearing on November 17, 2016 on the application for historic designation of the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building at 4268 Wisconsin Avenue, designated the property a historic landmark to be entered into the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. The Board further requested that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing at the local level of significance with a period of significance 1927-1962.

Architecture

The Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building at 4268 Wisconsin Avenue was constructed by the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company during the 20th century in several phases to accommodate the ever-increasing number of telephone subscribers in the vicinity as well as evolving telephone technology. The existing building, which dates from 1926-27; 1931-1932; and 1960-62, occupies the site of the first telephone exchange building constructed in Tenleytown in 1907-08.

The Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building is an expansive, two-story, smooth-cut limestone-clad brick building with elegant stripped Classical *bas relief* detailing. The building was principally constructed in 1931-32, incorporating two walls of the earlier 1927 building into it at the rear, and was then significantly enlarged 1960-62 towards Wisconsin Avenue. The 1931-32 building was designed by locally prominent architect Waddy B. Wood and is emblematic of the company's corporate image to build highly artistic buildings reflecting the aesthetics of their period and place. The 1960s addition, which greatly enlarged the 1931-32 building and brought it closer to Wisconsin Avenue, abuts and replicates the earlier building in design, materials and stylistic detailing, and may actually include re-used parts. Two walls of the 1926-27 building survive at the rear of the 1931-32 building.

History

The C&P Company was incorporated in 1883 with 896 telephone subscribers in the city. Over the course of the next two decades, significant technological improvements in communications resulted in the growing acceptance of the telephone as a means of communication. By 1905, the company had expanded to over 40,000 users. In order to accommodate the growth, the C&P Company engaged in an intensive building campaign that included numerous branch exchange offices in residential neighborhoods. In 1907, as part of this campaign, the C&P Company

established Tenleytown's first exchange building, the Cleveland Exchange, to service the Tenleytown and Cleveland Park areas.

In 1926-27, to again accommodate an increase in subscribers, the C&P Company built an addition to the Cleveland Exchange, comprising a new exchange called Emerson. However, the new manual exchange was completed at the same time that telephone technology was evolving from manual technology to the new dial technology, essentially rendering the Emerson Exchange building obsolete upon its completion. So, in 1931-32, just a few years after completing the 1927 manual Emerson Exchange, the C&P Company erected a substantial new building to accommodate dial technology for both the Cleveland and Emerson exchanges, referring to the new building as the Cleveland-Emerson Exchange.

This new exchange was designed by Waddy Butler Wood (1869-1944) a talented and prominent local architect who practiced architecture in Washington for 48 years from 1892 to 1940 during a period of great development in the city. Wood is well-recognized in historic preservation as a master architect for his quality designs for a variety of building types that ranged from single-family dwellings to government offices, and large-scale private company offices and headquarters buildings, such as those that he designed for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company.

Evaluation

The Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building meets National Register Criteria A and C under the Multiple Property Document (MPD), *Telecommunications Resources of Washington, D.C., 1877-1954* for its important associations with telephone technology and as an excellent representation of the telephone exchange as a building type. As described in the MPD, telephone exchanges were deliberately designed to impart the telephone company's corporate image through distinctive design, and are significant for their associations with and are physical manifestations of the early history and evolution of the telephone.

The Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building also meets National Register Criteria A and C under the Multiple Property Document, *Tenleytown in Washington, D.C.: Architectural and Historic Resources.* The building is a premier example of the public utilities that emerged in Tenleytown during the first decades of the 20th century to service the growing community of Tenleytown as it evolved from a small, 19th-century rural village to an urban/suburban neighborhood of the city. Furthermore, the Cleveland-Emerson Exchange building is an excellent example of the work of master architect Waddy Butler Wood.

For the same reasons stated above, the Cleveland-Emerson Exchange meets D.C. Designation Criteria B for its association with institutions, achievements, and patterns of growth that contributed to the development of the District of Columbia; Criterion D because it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles and building types; Criterion E because it possesses high artistic value that contributes to the appearance of Washington; and Criterion F as a notable work of Waddy Butler Wood.

The building retains integrity of location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling and association. The period of significance for the building, 1927-1962, spans the period of construction for its various phases.

The Historic Preservation Review Board acknowledged a resolution in opposition to designation submitted by Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E, which argued that the hearing notice to the applicant might not have been sufficient and that the C&P Telephone building downtown is of more architectural significance and integrity than those in the neighborhoods. The Board determined that proper notice had been given to the property owner and that, whatever comparisons might be made to other telephone properties or other resources, the building meets the above criteria.

Gretchen Pfaehler, Chairman