

From: Woods, David
Sent: Tuesday, March 20, 2018 5:12 PM
To: Blessing, Ralph; Mathur, Vineeta
Subject: FW: SHPO Letter Regarding High Ridge Park

FYI

From: Scofield, Jenny [<mailto:Jenny.Scofield@ct.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 20, 2018 4:59 PM
To: Woods, David
Cc: 'whennessey@carmodylaw.com'; 'LFeinberg@carmodylaw.com'; 'Jill Smyth'; 'Lynn Drobbin'; Newman-Scott, Kristina; Knight, Crystal
Subject: SHPO Letter Regarding High Ridge Park

Hi David,

Please see the attached letter regarding High Ridge Park. This letter is to clarify information about the National Register of Historic Places.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Regards,

Jenny

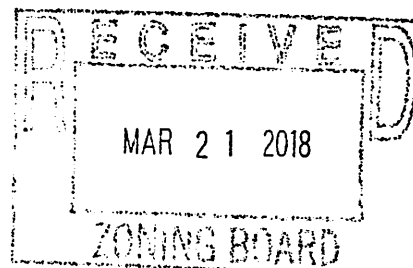
Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP, National Register & Architectural Survey Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
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Hartford, CT 06103
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March 20, 2018

Via Email

Mr. David W. Woods, PhD, AICP, PP
Deputy Director of Planning
City of Stamford Land Use Bureau
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Boulevard, 7th Floor
Stamford, CT 06904-2152

Subject: **High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus, Stamford, Connecticut**

To Mr. Woods:

The purpose of this letter is to provide clarification about the National Register of Historic Places to aid in the city's review of the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus in Stamford, Connecticut. Last summer, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff wrote a letter to Jill Smyth of Historic Neighborhood Preservation to express our support for the retention of the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus buildings and landscape, and to offer our technical services to help find solutions that do not result in loss of the property's notable features.

While this property is not currently listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places, SHPO staff consider the campus, including the buildings and landscape that comprise it, to be eligible for listing on the National Register. The National Register and SHPOs in each state were established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). As part of this legislation, the federally authorized duties of the SHPO include maintaining the National Register for properties within the state and determining the eligibility of properties for listing on the National Register. SHPOs must be staffed with qualified professionals in the fields of archaeology, architecture, architectural history, historic preservation, and history.

SHPO follows established National Park Service (NPS) guidance for evaluating the eligibility of properties for National Register listing. This guidance exists in the form of federal program regulations and many NPS publications as well as frequent training and communication between NPS and SHPOs. NPS developed the National Register Criteria as the basis for evaluating the historic significance of properties (attached for your reference). The criteria are used to communicate specifically what important themes in history a property has a notable association with; and include some general requirements a property must meet in order to be eligible. Properties can be evaluated individually or as part of a larger complex or district.

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SHPOs may need varying levels of information in order to evaluate whether or not a property is eligible for National Register listing. In some cases and typically in the case of properties significant for their design qualities, an important historic association may be quickly evident based on a review of current digital images or visual inspection and basic historical research. In the case of High Ridge Park, this historic property is immediately identifiable as a significant example of Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern design in Connecticut and it is known as the work of an influential architect who achieved prominence during his career. Further, Connecticut's legacy as a place where a concentration of Modernist designers networked and contributed to international design trends is well known. For these reasons, which are further described in the aforementioned letter (attached), High Ridge Park meets National Register Criterion C as a significant example of Modern design and the work of architect Victor Hanna Bisharat.

In addition to identifying a significant historical association a property must 1) retain a reasonable amount of its historic integrity (authenticity of historic features) and 2) be about 50 years old to be eligible for National Register listing. Many factors are considered in an evaluation of historic integrity. The NPS defines seven qualities of integrity and requires that a property meet some, but not necessarily all of those qualities. These qualities are location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

The amount of overall integrity property must have to be eligible for National Register varies depending on whether the property is a single building/resource or is comprised of multiple resources. High Ridge Park is a property with multiple integral features, including a designed landscape and six large-scale key buildings that are characteristic of Modernist tenets. It is an integrated campus that is evaluated as a district rather than a single property. Districts can have a larger amount of non-historic alterations or change, especially on building interiors, than individual buildings or resources can and still be eligible for the National Register. Based on information available on the High Ridge Office Park website, historic and current aerial imagery, and historic news articles, the overall design of the High Ridge Park campus is highly intact. The property retains its key design features, including the six innovative office buildings organized around the central water feature. The buildings express their Modernist design and display the plastic qualities of concrete Bisharat is known for. They each retain their original siting and orientation within the campus.

In terms of age, NPS generally requires a property to be 50 years old from the time of its construction to be considered historic, but there are exceptions to this guideline. For 2018, the age cut-off is 1968, but when National Register evaluations are completed in general practice, the time needed to prepare a nomination (if one was in process) is considered, so a property one or two years younger than 50 years can be eligible because it would be 50 years old by the time the property was listed. More importantly, NPS allows for the listing of properties that have achieved significance in less than 50 years if the property is of exceptional importance. Constructed from 1967 to 1975, the original vision for High Ridge Park and the first two buildings constructed are more than 50 years old. The entire complex was completed only a few years later and the campus is considered as a whole, integrated historic resource. The property also meets National Register Criteria Consideration G for achieving significance in less than 50 years because it is a key work of an internationally renowned architect whose design portfolio and career is complete. Thus, the 1975 construction date of the later buildings in the complex does not detract from its National Register eligibility.

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If you have any questions regarding this information or if these office can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kristina Newman Scott, State Historic Preservation Officer

cc (via email): Lynn Drobbin, Stamford Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
William Hennessey, Jr., Partner, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey
Jill Smyth, Historic Neighborhood Preservation

cc (via mail): Peter S. Duncan, President & CEO, George Comfort & Sons, Inc.

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THE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

Criteria: The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or
- D. A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- G. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.



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July 3, 2017

Jill Smyth, Executive Director
Historic Neighborhood Preservation
65 High Ridge Road
Stamford, CT 06905

Subject: **High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus, Stamford, Connecticut**

To Ms. Smyth:

The following is in response to your inquiry about the historic significance of the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus in Stamford, Connecticut. The State Historic Preservation Office staff understand that a potential project is proposed, which may involve the demolition of Building 3 on this 40-acre campus. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is a state agency that is responsible for managing a program of historic preservation for Connecticut's citizens. We work to identify and increase appreciation for the buildings, structures, landscapes, archaeological sites, and places that form Connecticut's heritage. Much of that work is understanding why these resources contribute to our culture and how to maintain them.

The purpose of this letter is to express our support for the retention of the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus buildings and landscape, and to offer our technical services to help find solutions that do not result in loss of the property's notable features.

This campus is highly significant for its representation of Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern-style architecture and is potentially the largest, most intact example of its kind in Connecticut. Designed by internationally renowned architect Victor Hanna Bisharat (1920-1996) from 1967 to 1975, the campus exhibits innovative engineering and experimentation in the plastic qualities of concrete to achieve new, sculptural building forms. Experimentation in the abilities of contemporary building materials, efficiency in building systems, and development of non-traditional building forms are tenets of Modernist design masters.

Connecticut is important in the history of Modern architecture as a place where a concentration of influential designers lived, worked, networked, and tested new design concepts. Bisharat's work in the state is an important addition to this larger portfolio because his educational background differs from others in the Connecticut network, many of whom were affiliated with

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the Bauhaus-inspired architectural program at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, such as Marcel Breuer, or the Yale School of Architecture, such as Eero Saarinen. (Bisharat's contemporary Paul Rudolph is affiliated with both programs.) Unlike other designers in the Connecticut network, Bisharat originated from the Middle East and studied at the University of California under expressionist architect Erich Mendelsohn.

The architectural significance of the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus is heightened through the individual, rather than uniform designs of each of the six buildings, which are unified through color and an overarching landscape plan. The property is also notable for its association with the urban renewal-era relocation of corporate offices from New York City to Connecticut and the development firm of F. D. Rich, which was influential in attracting accomplished designers to Stamford. While other examples of Bisharat's work exist in the United States and internationally, Stamford has a well-known concentration of his buildings, produced at the height of his career.

SHPO considers the High Ridge Park Corporate Center Campus eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance. Demolition of contributing components of this property would be a significant loss to our architectural heritage.

Please contact Jenny Scofield, jenny.scofield@ct.gov or 860-256-2766 if this office can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Kristina Newman Scott, State Historic Preservation Officer

cc (via email): Lynn Drobbin, Stamford Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Colin Reilly, CBRE
David Woods, Principal Planner, City of Stamford

cc (via mail): High Ridge Real Estate Owner LLC

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