

**NOMINATION OF EAST LIBERTY MELLON BANK
TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC LANDMARK**

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



EAST LIBERTY MELLON BANK- HISTORIC NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

Name of Property East Liberty Mellon Bank
Address of Property 6112 Penn Avenue
Property Owner City of Pittsburgh
Nominated by:..... Brittany Reilly
Date Received:..... 22 February 2021
Parcel No.: 84-C-51
Ward:..... 8th
Zoning Classification:..... UNC
Neighborhood..... East Liberty
Council District:..... 9 - Burgess

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (7 April 2021)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (5 May 2021)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (5 May 2021)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (18 May 2021)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (1 June 2021)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:

6. Conduct a public hearing within 120 days of the Planning Commission’s vote (29 September 2021)
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the Historic Designation

FACTS

1. On 22 February 2021, the staff of the Historic Review Commission received an application for the nomination of East Liberty Mellon Bank to be designated as a City Historic Structure.
2. **Description of East Liberty Mellon Bank** (as *extracted from the nomination form*)

Northeast (Front) Façade - Penn Avenue

The northeast (front) facade measures seven bays in width. It is symmetrical. It presents a central entrance via a recessed five bay portico, flanked on either end by the solidity of two brick piers. A period-detail folded plane aluminum fascia marks the edge of the portico soffit, featuring recessed downlighting. Narrow-sight line original aluminum framed full-height glazing provides unfettered interior/exterior views from street to interior. The perforated metal mesh of the interior drop ceiling coffers is visible to pedestrians. A terrazzo-clad plinth provides anchoring stability to the building as it wraps all facades. Along Penn Avenue this plinth provides a bulwark to protect the fine vertical glazing window-walls while allowing for the placement of a wood and stainless steel railing, a detail that along with the aluminum fascia, provides a mediating tactile scale to the overall design. Of note is the quality displayed in the building's brick construction: showcased here are bricks of speckled green glazing, providing a further fine-scaled detail to soften the building's mass.

Southeast (Side) Façade - Centre/Penn Avenue, Plaza

The southeast (side) facade measures ten bays in width. It is asymmetrical. Reading the building from left to right (southwest to northeast), bays one through six comprise the southeast-facing step-back of the Centre Avenue facade. Bays seven through ten feature four full-height vertical glazed slits in the brick building wall. Bays eight and nine are fitted with pedestrian doors. An aluminum fascia unites the fenestration with the rest of the building by a continuation of the primary facade's modern-day architrave.

The southeast (side) façade speaks to previous historical iterations of the key civic intersection of Centre Avenue and Penn Avenue. Remarkably, a façade whose construction layout and design was governed by a since-altered street layout, responds successfully to its current setting: a public plaza/parklet. This plaza façade opens onto an existing exterior plaza via three full-height vertical glazed slits in the brick building wall.

Southwest (Rear) Façade - Centre Avenue

The southwest (rear) facade measures seven bays in width. Here, the building's brick massing deconstructs into a saw-toothed plan of sliding planes and seven emerging office bays, an ingenious solution for stepping back in rhythm with the busy street it parallels. This saw-toothed plan functions to shield interior offices from street noise while also maximizing natural light. The double-height glass glazing continues vertically over the back-of-house office windows, as does the leitmotif of the folded-plate aluminum fascia cladding. However, dark green spandrel panels have been introduced to provide opacity. Mirroring the spandrel plates in height, the grounding terrazzo panel cladding wraps deftly into these saw-tooth bays to provide a secondary rhythm. A rear entrance occupies the central bay.

Northwest (Side) Façade

The northwest (side) facade is clad in stucco panels with a green brick plinth. One defined bay featuring a window opening is present at the northeastern end of the facade. Historically, this facade abutted the Sheridan Square Theater and was not intended to be seen. As such, it lacks the refined detailing exhibited by the other facades.

Roof

A uniform brick parapet screens a synthetic membrane-clad flat roof and the building's existing HVAC systems.

3. History of East Liberty Mellon Bank (as extracted from the nomination form)

Historically, the City Deposit Bank of 1899 occupied the site of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office. Mellon National Bank acquired the predecessor building in 1946 when the City Deposit Bank (then a subsidiary of the Union Trust Company of Pittsburgh) merged with Mellon National Bank.

By the early 1960s, Mellon's decision to modernize their existing East Liberty branch was directly influenced by the ongoing and extensive efforts planned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority for the area, as previously detailed, as well as by the company's own growth. A September 1961 press update revealed that Mellon anticipated the modernization of their branch, on par with plans for the neighborhood, but would hold on final decisions until the "overall plans for the neighborhood are known." Within the branch they maintained a redevelopment map, tracking each time the URA acquired a property. "Inviting customers in and making it convenient for them to do business with us had a lot to do with the (Mellon's) 1960s building boom. We're putting Mellon Banks in established communities, in growing suburban areas, in industrial sections, in shopping centers, in any location offering potential for the future... so there will be a Mellon Bank right around the corner," shared Edward L. Becker, assistant Vice President in charge of Buildings.

On September 8, 1968, Mellon National Bank announced that the former City Deposit Bank at Penn and Centre avenues in East Liberty would be demolished and replaced with a new banking facility. Per the competitive climate, a month later, on October 8, 1968, Pittsburgh National Bank announced that it would demolish the former East End Savings & Trust Bank Building (People's Building) at Penn and South Highland avenues for construction of a new banking facility. In late 1968, early 1969, the East Liberty Office of Mellon National Bank temporarily moved its operations across Centre Avenue, while preparations and groundbreaking ensued for the new branch design. This temporary building was later renovated by Black Modernist architect Walter Roberts as the Selma Burke Art Center, and later demolished.

For the new East Liberty Branch, material choices and considerations of the site and surroundings were on par with how the Mellon Buildings Department approached other modern branches, shown throughout the historic photo log. Soaring windows capture natural light, swaths of eye-catching green-glazed brick wrap the building, and the Centre Avenue-facing staggered-plan setbacks maximize a triangular plot. A more classically symmetrical entrance facade opens along Penn Avenue. "We use a lot of glass to open up the banks, pay close attention to details such as lighting and landscaping..." Unique to the site, the existing triangular community "pocket park" to the building's east, marks the ever-changing boundary of this busy intersection. This verdant triangle park, with mature trees, grows in opposition to the rapid replication of commercial architecture proliferating on either side of the monumental East Liberty branch.

The bank building was designed by the Pittsburgh-based firm Liff, Justh and Chetlin, who also designed the East Liberty Carnegie Library Branch a year earlier, in 1968, on nearby Whitfield Street. Consisting of a concrete and steel frame, with brick infill and a recessed ground floor enclosed in glass, it was renovated in 2010. In addition to their East Liberty branch design for Mellon Bank, the firm completed the East Pittsburgh Branch in 1971. Founded by Bernard Liff after receiving his degree in architecture from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1935, Liff, Justh and Chetlin completed a range of Pittsburgh-area projects including community facilities, commercial

establishments, schools, and synagogues. Their portfolio includes the original Squirrel Hill branch of the Carnegie Library (1972), several local synagogues (the Beth Hamedrash Hagodol-Beth Jacob Congregation located downtown, the Gemilas Chesed Synagogue in White Oak, the new wing of Temple Sinai in Squirrel Hill), and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School on the North Side opened in 1973.

East Liberty Bank employees eagerly awaited and observed the completion of the new structure from the windows of their temporary facility across the street, and a grand opening was held on November 16, 1970. As the Mellon workplace culture would have it, many employee and community events such as tours for school-children and holiday gatherings were held at the branch and documented throughout internal newsletters. The branch went on to serve Citizens Bank as an active banking center until its closure in 2020.

Mellon National Bank's Architectural Heritage

By the time of their 2007 merger with The Bank of New York, Mellon National Bank had demonstrated via their built banking centers to date that architecture had not been merely a footnote to the institution, but a core business tenant. Rather than construct stale, derivative business outposts, architecture was prioritized. Each branch office design emphasized pride of place while re-imagining its role as both a public facing community service, and genial workplace for employees and executives.

In 1871, founder Judge Thomas Mellon erected the bank's first headquarters on a prime downtown property across from Pittsburgh's City Hall. A prominent stone statue of Benjamin Franklin, Judge Mellon's chosen muse, stood sentry above the entrance to this four-story neoclassical building at 514 Smithfield Street until the building was torn down and replaced by Judge Mellon's son, R.B. Mellon, with the construction of a more-spacious headquarters, of Doric sensibilities, in 1922. Of note is R.B.'s requirement to architects Trowbridge & Livingston that "The bank's design must display sensibility without reservation, and quality without showmanship". Vanguards of a new corporate architectural outreach, Mellon Bank strategically demonstrated a long term commitment to avant-garde architecture and historic preservation.

During the 1950s and 1960s Mellon developed a systematic approach to modern branch office building. Beginning with the downtown Pittsburgh core, moving outwards through the city's neighborhoods, and eventually, to the more suburban locales, the company successfully utilized architecture in its branch offices as a business outreach and marketing tool. The bank kept pace with contemporary design practices. In the Pittsburgh region, this resulted in an accumulation of above-average, often-delightful, branch banks; jewels ripe for preservation and re-use.

Mellon National Bank was not the only banking institution to adopt a campaign of modern branch bank building during the mid-twentieth century. With Pittsburgh National Bank and other competitors following suit, there was often a competitive air surrounding the construction of new branch offices. In 1962, Pittsburgh National Bank began construction of its Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill-designed Oakland Branch (extant), also located at Fifth Avenue and South Craig Street. Fortunately, this 1966 structure, a work by world-renowned architecture firm, and a rare example of visible structural concept as stylistic marker, still stands and is utilized by PNC bank as their Oakland branch office.

In 1961, across the street from PNC's SOM building, the Pittsburgh-based firm Hofmann, Loeffler, and Wolfe completed Mellon National Bank's University Office. It was located at the busy, highly visible intersection of Craig Street and Fifth Avenue, in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood. Demolished in 2004, the superlative design boasted a reinforced concrete shell roof and core, surrounded by a glass curtain wall and gneiss-clad drive-in teller services. But perhaps the most

fascinating aspect of the structure was its hyperbolic paraboloid form, the umbrella-like canopy serving as the functional concrete core/roof and simultaneously resulting in a striking, breathtaking interior for customers who chose to park and bank. A feat of twentieth-century engineering, this design move reflects Mellon's awareness of architectural style.

Starting in the mid-1960s Mellon National Bank maintained a 'Building Supervision' department, an in-house unit focused on "design, materials, colors and construction ... and interior planning," largely led by assistant Vice President in charge of Buildings, Mr. Edward L. Becker, under whom innovations such as efficient prefabricated branch models were developed. "After our application has been approved by the Comptroller of the Currency and the Branch Location Committee determines the site and size of the new bank, Building Supervision goes to work on design, materials, colors and construction," explains Becker of the process. "Our goal is to produce a good-looking office that we can be proud of; yet each new bank must be treated as an individual project."

Under this program, Mellon National Bank invested heavily in the design of its branch banks, expressed through a variety of designs throughout greater Pittsburgh, including, but not limited to locations in Squirrel Hill, Uptown, Lawrenceville, Millvale and East Liberty (the subject building of this nomination).

"In the wake of the Second World War...Glass, lighting, open interior spaces, warm colors, and well-maintained landscaping were incorporated into architectural plans. Mellon formulated a general philosophy for bank design, yet each office remained distinctive. Building codes, zoning laws, traffic patterns, neighborhood architecture and the character of the community determined the style of a branch office."

In early 1965, a modern Squirrel Hill branch, to replace an existing one across Murray Avenue, opened beneath a "concrete umbrella", achieved through a 27-hour continuous pour of 204 cubic yards of concrete, to the fascination of onlookers. The resulting form features a scalloped roof line, and a series of small arches punctuated with round windows. The interior's central feature is a 12' wide skylight marble floors, and a curved staircase by Earle Reichard leading to a crescent-shaped mezzanine. The Squirrel Hill branch survives, remaining active as of February 2021 as a Citizen's Bank branch. Still intact is its green-glazed brick exterior and terrazzo-panel base, clear material linkages between two neighboring green-glazed brick volumetric Mellon Bank branches in Uptown (Upper Fifth branch) and the subject building of this nomination, the East Liberty branch.

The Uptown branch (then referred to as Upper Fifth, for its location along Fifth Avenue, nearing Downtown Pittsburgh) was completed in 1966 and consists of a unique green-brick clad rotunda with windows housing the open-plan main lobby and tellers' area, flanked by a three-story terrazzo-panel clad rectilinear solid section accommodating the vault, conference room and employee rest areas. Its curved portion invited customers to conveniently drive-in. "Glazed brick combined with several attractive precast buildings materials – all shades of green – was used in the exterior construction of this half round, half rectangular banking office," a schematic which allowed for an efficient use of available space in tandem with a design-forward structure. "We design all our banks to fit the site and to blend with the neighborhood," explained Becker. This structure is extant as of February 2021, and currently vacant awaiting a buyer.

The Lawrenceville branch, at an important corner location at Main and Butler Street, opened in December 1966 at 4112 Butler Street as a "modern brick structure ... with drive-in service and ample customer parking," and a sizable custom vault. As of February 2021 the structure is being transformed into a food/retail market for pop-up retail. Original architectural characteristics have been kept.

Mellon's internal design department demonstrated design sensibilities of all styles and utilized architectural and material technologies of the time. Inclusive of Functionalist, Brutalist, Miesian, Modern, "Instant-office" prefabricated models, Colonial, or re-use of Neoclassical - the breadth is evident. Mellon Bank's architectural heritage is a true architectural gift to the citizens of Pittsburgh, a veritable architectural lexicon and learning tool for the implementation of architectural style in daily lives. Citizens Bank has adopted many of the designs produced by Mellon's Building Supervision Department, and utilizes them as active functioning banking centers. Yet, each day brings new branch closures. Many of Mellon branch structures lie in disrepair and neglect. The East Liberty branch, with its main structural and architectural elements intact, and its value as a neighborhood bulwark evident, is an important asset marking a dynamic period of Pittsburgh's history.

4. Significance of East Liberty Mellon Bank *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. Staff is of the opinion that Mellon Park meets one of the criteria as follows.

(7) Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;

This structure's association with the redevelopment of East Liberty, post-War changes in aesthetic tastes nation-wide, and the competition among local banks (noted below from the nomination) all contribute to the significance of this structure.

During the 1950s and 1960s Mellon developed a systematic approach to modern branch office building. Beginning with the downtown Pittsburgh core, moving outwards through the city's neighborhoods, and eventually, to the more suburban locales, the company successfully utilized architecture in its branch offices as a business outreach and marketing tool. The bank kept pace with contemporary design practices.

Mellon National Bank was not the only banking institution to adopt a campaign of modern branch bank building during the mid-twentieth century. With Pittsburgh National Bank and other competitors following suit, there was often a competitive air surrounding the construction of new branch offices. In 1962, Pittsburgh National Bank began construction of its Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill-designed Oakland Branch (extant), also located at Fifth Avenue and South Craig Street. Fortunately, this 1966 structure, a work by world-renowned architecture firm, and a rare example of visible structural concept as stylistic marker, still stands and is utilized by PNC bank as their Oakland branch office.

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5. Integrity

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The building remains in its original location in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood, bound by Penn and Centre Avenues.

With the exception of changes to exterior signage, the original exterior envelope and structural design of the building remains completely intact, including all of its original materials: glazed brick, glass, aluminum and terrazzo panels. The building demonstrates quality workmanship and an appreciably high level of care and maintenance.

Since the building's completion, its commercial-corridor setting has been in an ongoing state of flux, continuing to present-day. The building was constructed during the implementation of the East Liberty Urban Renewal Project, and designed in consideration of that project's components including a master-planned, architect-designed pedestrian mall. The Penn Mall has since been largely removed and returned to its historic use as a multi-modal thoroughfare.

Nonetheless, the former Mellon Bank building retains integrity of feeling and association. From its completion in 1970 until February 2020, the building was consistently utilized as a banking hall: first as Mellon Bank, then as Citizens Bank. As such, the building retains its historic association as a Mellon Bank and centrally located banking service amongst East End residents. The structure is a distinctive, established, and familiar visual feature within the East Liberty neighborhood, anchoring the eastern gateway of the commercial district for over 50 years. It continues to contribute an overall feeling of human scale, architectural character, and distinct identity of East Liberty, a neighborhood historically and consistently defined by its rich architectural diversity.

6. Photos



Figure 1: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing northeast (front) facade, facing southwest (Mary Barenfeld).



Figure 2: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) facade, facing southwest (Mary Barenfeld).



Figure 3: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) facade, facing northwest (Mary Barenfeld).



Figure 4: Detail view, Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) façade from adjacent plaza, facing northwest (Amy Fisher).



Figure 5: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southwest (rear) façade, facing northeast (Amy Fisher).



Figure 6: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing northwest (side) facade, facing south (Mary Barenfeld).

Historic Images and Resources - Mellon Bank Branch Structures

Upper Fifth Mellon Bank branch (former)



Figure 7: "Upper Fifth Opens". Branch Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue branch opening. Mellon Bank News, May 1966.



Figure 8: Upper Fifth branch. Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219. Current Use: Vacant. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.



Figure 9: Upper Fifth branch. Material and details match 6112 Penn Ave. Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219. Current Use: Vacant. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

Squirrel Hill Mellon Bank branch (former)

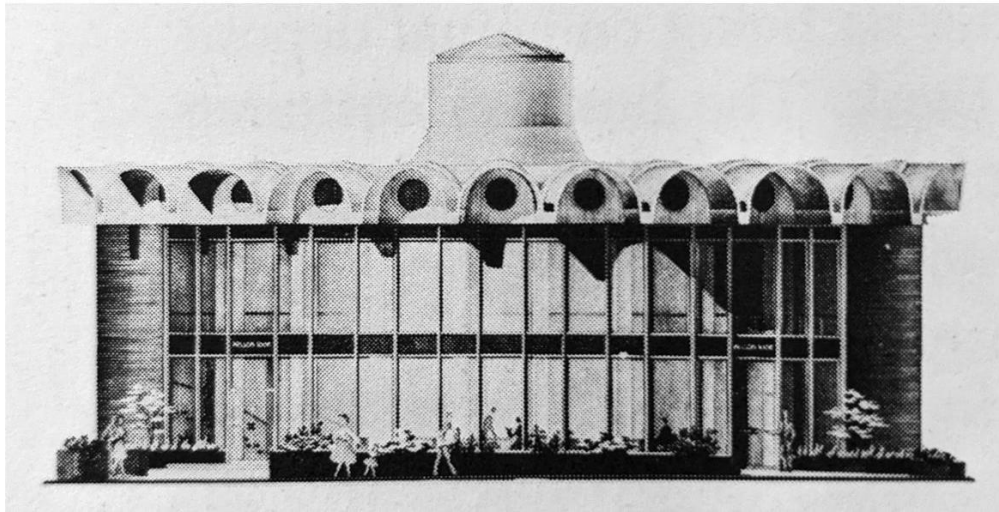


Figure 10: "A Concrete Umbrella". Squirrel Hill branch construction update. Mellon Bank News, Feb 1966. Branch location: 1801 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15217.



Figure 11: Squirrel Hill branch, location: 1801 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15217. Current Use: Citizens Bank. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

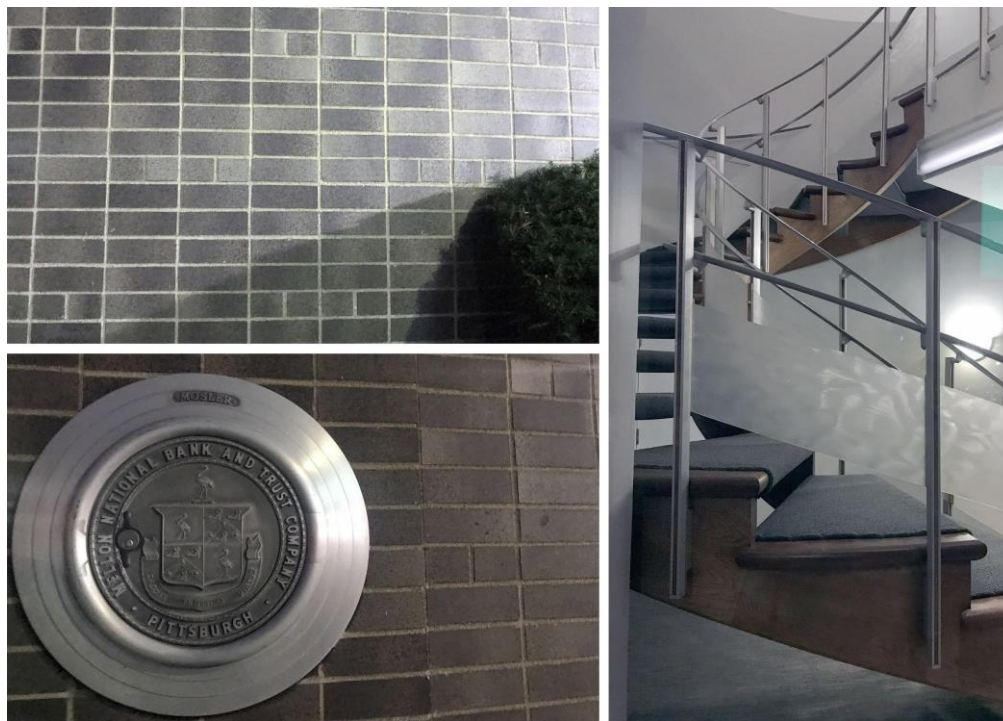
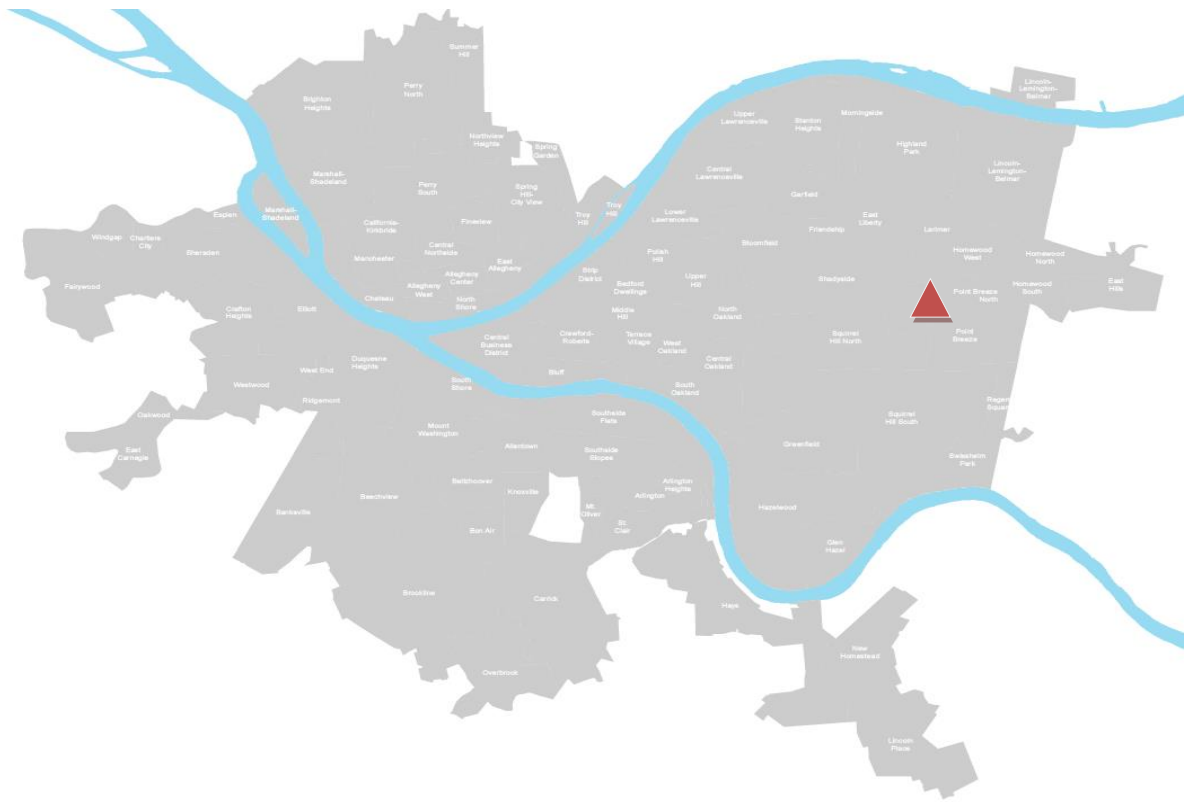


Figure 12: Squirrel Hill branch. Materials and details match 6112 Penn Avenue. Location: 1801 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15217. Current Use: Citizens Bank. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

7. Maps



Location Map

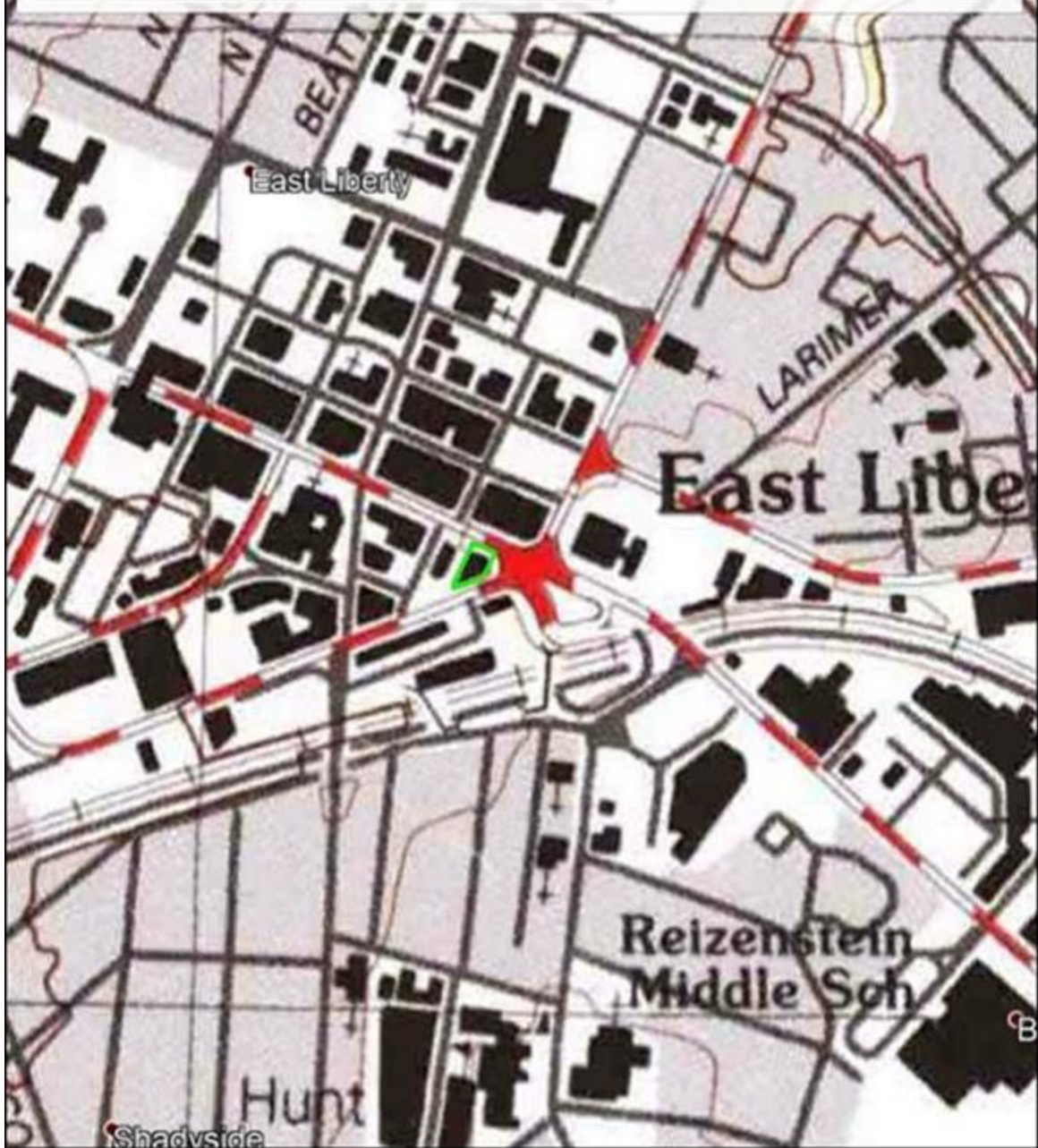
Pittsburgh East, PA,
7.5-minute topographic quadrangle (USGS 1997)

2000 ft



Legend

-  Resource Boundary



8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of East Liberty Mellon Bank. On 5 May 2021, the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate East Liberty Mellon Bank as historic

9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation East Liberty Mellon Bank. On 1 June 2021, the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate East Liberty Mellon Bank as historic.

10. Meeting Minutes

HRC MINUTES – 7 APRIL 2021– PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING

Pittsburgh HRC –April 7, 2021
East Liberty Mellon Bank Historic Nomination
Owner:
ARC CPPBGPA 010, LLC
Ward: 8th
Lot and Block: 84-C-51
Nominator:
Brittany Reilly
Inspector:
Council District: 9th
Nominations Received: 2/22/21
National Register Status: Listed: Eligible:
Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Aguirre states that they are looking at the viability of the nomination today and not necessarily taking public comment.
2. Ms. Quinn states that they can take public comment if desired. She prefaces the nomination by stating that the owner of the property is a group out of Phoenix, AZ, but Citizens Bank has been the tenant for a long time and would like to act in place of the owner. She states that it is up to the Chair, but she feels that is a reasonable approach. She gives a short presentation on the property. She states that this nomination is unusual as the nomination as submitted does not support historic designation, however, the historical context materials provided with the nomination do support designation. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under Criterion 3, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship. She states that the information provided referred to a style known as Functionalism, which she had concerns about. She had a conversation with Dr. Kai Gutschow of Carnegie Mellon University about the appropriateness of the term. Dr. Gutschow referred to it as “Pittsburgh Brick Brutal” like what is found on the CCAC campus. She states that the nominator also found the property significant under Criterion 5, exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail, as related to the East Liberty Renaissance 1 development, which she feels would be more appropriate as part of a district or park. She states that there was information provided with the nomination about an architectural program that Mellon Bank had and published a book on, but that was not explored in the nomination itself. Since this is the preliminary determination, that is something that can be researched before next

month's hearing. She states that a positive determination today means that any changes made to the building will have to be reviewed, and a negative determination means that changes will not have to be reviewed, but demolition will not be allowed.

3. Ms. Aguirre asks for confirmation if Criteria 3 and 5 were the Criteria provided for designation, which the nomination does not seem to meet, but that additional documentation could be provided and research could be done into possible qualification for another Criterion.

4. Ms. Quinn confirms.

5. Ms. Aguirre asks for comment from the nominator.

6. Ms. Brittany Reilly speaks as the nominator. She is on the board of Preservation Pittsburgh and is the Chair of the Modern Committee. She gives some history on the building. She states that the nomination does present Criteria 3 and 5 as well as Criterion 10, unique location or distinctive physical appearance representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, of the City of Pittsburgh. She touches on each Criterion and the reasons why they believe they apply. For Criterion 3, she states that there is quite a bit of descriptive language in the nomination that is not tied to any particular architectural term. For Criterion 5, she states that structure by its siting and age is directly linked to the now-historic Pittsburgh Renaissance. She states that they address at length the successes, challenges, and failures of the program, but they do believe that its effects are worth considering. For Criterion 10, she talks about the building's place in this corridor and at this intersection as well as the effects of new development in the area now as compared to during the Renaissance era. She encourages the Commissioners to review the nomination and supporting documents, and she states that they have received support for the nomination from the community.

7. Ms. Aguirre asks for public comment.

8. Mr. Alex Lacey speaks as the attorney representing Citizens Bank. He states that since this is just the preliminary assessment, their initial comments would be that the Criteria for designation have not been met. He also brings up a procedural issue, which is that if the Commission decides to move the application forward and do additional research, it will be difficult for Citizens to present their defense without having that additional information.

9. Ms. Quinn states for the record that the Ordinance allows for additional review of the nomination by Commissioners. She states that she is not suggesting that they go outside the content of the nomination, but just explore the full nomination and supporting documents.

10. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional comments; there are none. She closes public comment and lists for the record the letters of support that were received. Ms. Aguirre states that it is important to note how important the structure is to the community and the city. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.

11. Ms. Quinn states that Criterion 10 was included in the nomination, but she felt it did not apply in this case. She feels that it would be more appropriate for something like a church that could be seen above the other buildings.

12. Mr. Green asks if the nomination process continues if they do not find the nomination viable.

13. Ms. Quinn says yes, and the only reason it would stop is if the nominator withdrew the nomination.

14. Ms. Aguirre adds that the HRC is step one of a three part process as well, with Planning Commission and City Council.

15. Mr. Green asks if there have been any other structures nominated of a similar era and design.

16. Ms. Quinn mentions the Abrams House, which was not approved by City Council.

17. The Commission discusses the nomination.

Motion:

1. Mr. Green moves that there is reasonable cause for designation based on Criteria 3, 5, and 10.

2. Mr. Dash seconds.

3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; Mr. Green, Mr. Dash, Mr. Hill, and Ms. Aguirre are in favor and Ms. Loysen abstains. Motion carries.

HRC MINUTES –5 MAY 2021 - RECOMMENDATION

Pittsburgh HRC –May 5, 2021
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Ward: 8th
Lot and Block: 84-C-51
Nominator:
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Inspector:
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Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

1. Mr. Falcone recuses himself from the discussion and vote and exits the hearing.
2. Ms. Quinn makes a short presentation on the property. She addresses the significance criteria and the updates to the staff recommendation from last month to this month. She states that she believes the building is eligible for nomination under Criterion 7, association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States.
3. Ms. Aguirre asks for comments from the nominator.
4. Ms. Brittany Reilley speaks as the nominator. She makes a short presentation on the property and the nomination.
5. Ms. Aguirre asks for comments from the owner or owner's representative.
6. Mr. Clifford Levine speaks as counsel for the owner, Citizens Bank. He introduces Jared Wallace and Jason Jones with Citizens Bank and Mr. Gerald Morosco who will address the nomination as an architect.
7. Mr. Jared Wallace makes a short presentation on the issues with the building and reasons why Citizens Bank does not want to continue to use it.
8. Mr. Gerald Morosco makes a short presentation on why the building does not meet the criteria for historic designation.
9. Mr. Jason Jones makes a short presentation on the issues with what the building represents in the neighborhood.
10. Ms. Aguirre asks for public testimony. She enters for the record the 21 letters received in support and 2 letters received in opposition and reads the names into the record.
11. Mr. Justin Greenawalt speaks in support of the project.
12. Ms. Mary Berensfeld speaks in support of the project.

13. Ms. Melissa Mcswigan speaks in support of the project.
14. Mr. Rob Pfaffmann speaks in support of the project.
15. Mr. John Axtell speaks in support of the project.
16. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional public testimony; there is none. She asks for a five minute break to return at 6:40pm.
17. Mr. Green moves.
18. Ms. Loysen seconds.
19. Ms. Aguirre calls the meeting back to order and recaps what has been discussed so far.
20. Ms. Quinn clarifies that the property was left out of the East Liberty National Register nomination as it was not yet 50 years old.
21. Mr. Dash asks for clarification that the Commission can discuss any of the ten Criteria.
22. Ms. Quinn confirms. She states that everything in the staff report is included in the nomination. She states that Criteria have been added and removed in the past and states that the motion should specify what Criteria the Commission found appropriate.
23. Ms. Loysen asks if the Commission is changing the nomination by finding different criteria.
24. Ms. Aguirre states that they have done it before.
25. Mr. Green states that per the ordinance they are to take testimony and gain evidence during the hearing.
26. Mr. Dash states that the application is for nomination of a historic structure, not a nomination according to specified criteria.
27. Ms. Quinn states that the requirement is that a nomination only needs to meet one of the criteria.
28. Ms. Aguirre agrees. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.
29. Mr. Dash calls on the nominator and asks if there was an interest in nominating all four of the Mellon Bank buildings.
30. Ms. Reilly states that they stand by this as an individual nomination and wanted to prioritize it, but their research led them to believe that all of the buildings could possibly be nominated.
31. Ms. Loysen states that she does feel torn about the significance of the building but echoes one of the pieces of public testimony that asked why it should be torn down if it won't be replaced by something better.
32. Ms. Aguirre talks about the history of Pittsburgh and East Liberty and the changes

that have happened and what lessons there are to be learned. With regard to Criterion 7, she states that although this building is alone it still represents the association and significance expressed in that criteria. She feels that Criterion 10 could also apply.

33. Mr. Hill agrees with Ms. Loysen although the future of the site is not in their purview right now. He would like the building to stay but is struggling with designating the building itself as historic.

34. Mr. Dash asks additional questions of the nominator about the modern committee of Preservation Pittsburgh and their future plans.

35. Ms. Reilly addresses the questions.

36. Ms. Loysen is very much in favor of preserving modern architecture and looks forward to future nominations.

37. Mr. Dash talks about the nomination of public schools as a group, which also started small. He states that some of the questions that the Commissioners raised will be addressed by Planning Commission as well.

38. The Commission discusses the nomination.

Motion:

1. Mr. Green moves to provide a positive recommendation for the historic nomination to City Council based on Criterion 7.

2. Mr. Dash seconds.

3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; Mr. Green, Mr. Dash, Mr. Hill, and Ms. Aguirre are in favor and Ms. Loysen abstains. Motion carries.

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES –1 JUNE 2021

City of Pittsburgh
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2021 2pm, Meeting called to order by Secretary Becky Mingo.

In Attendance

Jennifer Askey
Vice Chairwoman LaShawn Burton-Faulk Sabina Deitrick
Secretary, Becky Mingo Dina (Free) Blackwell
Holly Dick
Rachel O'Neill
Fred Brown

Staff Present

Corey Layman, Zoning Administrator Anne Kramer
Andrew Dash, Director of City Planning William Gregory
Kate Rakus, Principal Planner Kathleen Oldrey
Svetlana Ipatova, Recording Secretary Sarah Quinn
Daniel Schepke

3. DCP-HN-2021-00163 – 612 Penn Avenue

Ms. Quinn made presentation in accordance with the attached staff report.

Ms. Briffany Reilly from Pittsburgh Modern Committee presented aerial view, photos of contextual area of subject building; site views photos, explained commissioners rhythmic building form, details and structure materials, nomination criteria. Ms. Reilly also pointed on the uniqueness of structure and conceptual reuse proposal. In addition, Ms. Reilly reported about community support for nomination. Secretary Mingo called for questions and comments from the Public.

Mr. Alex Lacey, attorney for opposing party, introduced experts to support the opposition testimony.

Mr. Jared Wallace on behalf of the Citizen Bank presented recent site photos, proposed renderings and explained the reasons to choose for structure demolition, not rehabilitation.

Mr. Jerald Morosco , architect, explained his professional experience in historical buildings preservation and his view of structure architectural design. Mr. Morosco explained details of report provided to support proposal not to renovate a structure.

Mr. Rob Pfaffman, architect, suggested to send nomination back for additional review both plans.

Mr. Justin Greenawalt, architect, stated why a subject building has a good design that responds to environment, and supported proposal to save it.

Mr. Jack Nelson, resident, explained his position regarding building rehabilitation and supported structure reuse.

Ms. Melissa Miller supported a proposal to reuse a structure.

There being no more comments from the Public, Secretary Mingo called for questions and comments from the Commissioners.

Ms. Mingo agreed with Director Dash clarification regarding PC recommendation for Historic Nomination applications.

Ms. O'Neill also pointed that commissioners are focusing on HRC decision.

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh provides a positive recommendation to City Council for the nomination of 6112 Penn Avenue, DCP-HN-2021-00163 for listing as a City-designated historic site.

MOVED BY: Ms. Askey SECONDED BY: Ms. Dick
I
N FAVOR: Mingo, Dick, Deitrick, Askey, Blackwell, Burton-Faulk, Brown

ABSTAINED: O'Neill

OPPOSED:

MOTION CARRIED