NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 428-434 N 4th Street

Postal code: 19123

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association Office

Current/Common Name:

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Real Estate Management Office

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1966 to 1968

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1966-68

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: I.Daniel Weisberg

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner: National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association

Other significant persons:

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☑ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☑ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☑ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization _____ Date January 2, 2025

Name with Title Misha Wyllie Email Misha.wyllie@gmail.com

Street Address 1613 S Franklin Street Telephone 6789364684

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia PA 19148

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 1/8/2025

☑ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 1/10/2025

Date of Notice Issuance: 1/17/2025

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Mark H Rubin

Address: 430 N 4th St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19123

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

1. Boundary Description

Located at 398 Willow Street and 428-34 N 4th Street, Parcel 03N 11-0186**,** the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association Union Hall is located at the corner of 4th Street and Willow Street (Fig. 1). The proposed boundary for historic nomination is as follows (Fig. 2):

> Beginning at the point of intersection of the Southerly side of Willow Street (30 feet wide) with the Westerly side if the 4th Street (50 feet wide); thence from said point of beginning extending along the said Westerly side of 4th Street South 11 degrees, 00 minutes, 17 seconds West 71 feet, 5-¾ inches to a point; thence extending North 78 degrees, 58 minutes, 50 seconds West 82 feet. 1-¾ inches to a point in the bed of a former 4 feet wide alley abandoned and extinguished by Agreement recorded in Deed Book CAD 363 page 70; thence extending North 9 degrees, 15 minutes, 43 seconds East 7 feet, 10-¼ inches to a point; thence extending South 87 degrees, 30 minutes, 25 seconds West 63 feet, 3-⅞ inches to a point on the Easterly side of the former York Avenue (60 feet wide, stricken from the CIty Plan and vacated); thence extending South 87 degrees, 30 minutes, 25 seconds West 30 feet, 0 inches to a point in the centerline of the former York Avenue; thence extending along the center line of the former York Avenue North 02 degrees, 29 minutes, 35 seconds West, crossing a 10 foot wide drainage right of way, 51 feet, 11 inches, to a point on the Southerly side of Willow Street; thence extending along the Southerly side of Willow Street North 82 degrees, 33 minutes, 12 seconds East 29 feet, 5-⅜ inches to an angle point thence continuing along the Southerly side of Willow Street South 88 degrees, 14 minutes, 04 seconds East 159 feet, 4-⅝ inches to the point and place of beginning. The building contains a total area of 10,519 square feet (Deed #51968863).

2. Physical Description

At the corner of 4th Street and Willow Street, the former National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association Union Hall, heretofore referred to as the NMEBA Union Hall is a brick-clad building composed of two rectangular blocks: a frontal 2-story-high unit, and a 1-story rectangular unit that extends to the back. Both sections have flat roofs. The facade is set back from 4th Street by a parking lot.

The East-facing, 2-story unit of the building demonstrates the characteristics of late-modern architecture, particularly of the New Formalist style (Figure 3.). New Formalism is an architectural style that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s and that incorporated the building techniques and minimal aesthetics of Brutalism and Internationalism, adding to them an expanded vocabulary of building materials and Classical architectural aesthetics. This part of the building's hierarchical design sets the second floor on top of a first floor with a smaller, street-level footprint, creating a sense of levitation while allowing for more surrounding outdoor space. The first floor walls are clad with horizontal stack bond brick with a clear glaze, and features cast concrete rectangular columns that are painted a cream color (Fig. 3). Pairs of these columns are located at the frontal corners, while in the back, one is located on each side and set 2 feet in from the back edge of the building's second story. Like shelving brackets, the columns taper out from the ground up to the underside of the second floor, where they turn from the vertical sides of the building onto the horizontal overhang (Fig. 4). The paired columns at the Easterly elevation wrap the corner and project in perpendicular directions where they then turn onto the overhang. The underside is also painted a cream color that matches that of the columns. Sited off-center to the right of the Eastern elevation is the front entrance: a double glass door flanked on either side by approximately 6 x 8 foot walls of glass block. The glass block is likely an alteration that replaces original glass pane walls on either side of the front door (Fig. 6). The first level is separated from grade by approximately two feet of stacked tan paver stones, while two cast concrete steps lead to the front door.

The cantilevered second floor of the East-facing rectangular block extends on three sides, creating an awning that shades the front, Southern and Northern elevations. The second floor consists of a series of tan brick piers that frame columnar windows of the same height. The piers are made of pairs of panels done in a running bond brick pattern. Each pair of panels meet along a vertical line and are set at an angle folding inwards towards the building. These faceted brick piers alternate with columnar windows, wrapping the North, East and South sides of the building and stopping at the rear, West side, itself a smooth flat surface consisting of the tan brick on the second floor and the glazed brick on the first. Each window is divided into six squares by darkly painted mullions; as a whole, each window is the same height and slightly more narrow than each pier (Fig. 1). The Western elevation of the second-story block's second floor is flat, undecorated, and clad with the same tan brick as the other three elevations. It features one of the same columnar, six-pane windows to the sited left edge, and two of the same windows to the right, stopping at the point where the first story block begins (Fig. 5).

The Western elevation of the two-story front block connects with the single story rectangular block of the building. This is clad in the same clear-glazed brick as the first floor of the two-story section. Four approximately 3 x 4 foot, horizontal glass block windows punctuate both the Northern and Southern sides of the 1 story block. On the Northern side is a panel door that serves as a rear entrance (Fig. 5).

3. Statement of Significance

The NMEBA Union Hall at 428-34 N 4th Street merits listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by satisfying the following criteria as established in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
(d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Designed for the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association by architect Irwin Daniel Weisberg and constructed between 1966-68, the NMEBA Union Hall is a unique example of late-modern architecture as it boasts the techniques and design principles of Brutalism and the International Style, while most embodying the character of New Formalism with its variety of materials and references to classical architecture. Given its eclectic combinations of styles and materials, the NMEBA Union Hall is a rare example of New Formalism in Philadelphia's built environment, qualifying it for criterion (d).

The NMEBA Union Hall meets criterion (c) and reflects the environment in an era characterized by the distinctive architectural style of New Formalism, a style that is a product of economic, social and political changes that came about in the after-effects of WWII, the progression of the Cold and Vietnam Wars, and the transitions from industrial degradation to revitalization that came as a result.

The NMEBA Union Hall meets criterion (j), exemplifying the cultural, political and economic heritage of Philadelphia's postwar industrial community and the communities affected by urban renewal programs that transformed US cities nationwide during the 50s and 60s. As a product of the local manifestations of national change, the NMEBA is a significant historic marker of the cultural and economic transitions that have shaped Philadelphia's built environment.

4. Overview

Occupying five formerly residential parcels at 428-434 N 4th Street, the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association building is named after its union owner. The NMEBA used this property as one of multiple Philadelphia headquarters until 1990 when it was sold to Seymore and Helen Anne Rubin. The property was

then sold in 2008 to Mark Rubin, the current owner and co-partner of Seymour Rubin Associates, the commercial real estate management company currently using the property. The period of significance dates from 1966, the date of the beginning of its construction, through 1990.

Little has been recorded about the architect associated with this building, Irwin Daniel Weisberg; however, the NMEBA Union Office fits comfortably amidst his portfolio with the scale and breadth of the projects. After serving in the military from 1950-52, Weisberg graduated from Columbia in 1959 with a Bachelors in Architecture (Bowker). He then became a member of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1960 before going on to organize his own firm under his name I. Daniel Weisberg in 1961, with his office based in New York through 1964 (Sheer). In 1965, Weisberg partnered with Ernest Castro to form Weisberg, Castro Associates, although building permits for the NMEBA Union Hall list only I. Daniel Weisberg's name. Outside of Philadelphia, works by the firm can be found in New York City, New Jersey, and Maryland. The firm is also credited with a number of high-end fashion stores in New York City, including ones used by Gucci, a Mark Cross, a Valentine, a Bucherer, as well as the renovation of a Dunhill Tailors store (Fig. 9) ("Gentleman's Clothing Store"). Additionally, the firm completed two historic-to-modern high-rise apartment renovations at 360 and 813 Park Avenue and restored the historic Dairy building in Central Park in 1978 following the designs of another architect (Fig. 8) (Miller). While little documentation is available on Weisberg, his direct influences, or his subsequent work with the firm, this inventory of projects reveals his experience working with a variety of architectural styles, which affirms the eclectic mix of building materials found in the New Formalism style characterizing the NMEBA Union Hall (Fig. 6).

Weisberg designed the NMEBA Union Hall as one of three Philadelphia headquarters for the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (Fig. 7). Established in 1875, the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, now MEBA, is the oldest maritime labor union still operating today ("MEBA History"). The origins of the union date to the early 1800s, when steamboats were a primary means of transporting goods and passengers by the river systems and Great Lakes. As technology advanced, demands for skilled workers and appropriate working conditions led to the formation of the Buffalo Association of Engineers in 1854, in Buffalo New York. The MEBA first Philadelphia-based meeting was recorded in 1884, and held at 337 Delaware Avenue Professions represented by the union include licensed mariners, particularly deck and engine officers working in the United States Merchant Marine aboard federally-owned merchant vessels ("Local Events Review"). Thirty-five years later, in 1889, Buffalo and other one-city associations combined to become the Nationwide MEBA. After a substantial increase in mariner jobs during World War II, the US fleet shrunk from 43,000 vessels to 1,150, and today only 2 1/2% of all cargo moving in and out of the US is moved by American vessels. Despite this drop in numbers, the MEBA expanded the depth and breadth of its services in the postwar decades, including successfully organizing support for the Merchant Marine Act of 1970 and opening a marine engineers academy in Baltimore in 1970 (Gelernter 261).

5. Historic Context (i): Modern Architecture and the US in the Postwar Period

Criterion (c): Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style

The design for NMEBA Union Hall is a product of the Modernist Movement in architecture that swept the country from the late 1930s to the 1970s and that arguably continues to be the dominant style today. These decades were a time of unprecedented international political conflict with the onset of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, as well as radical advances in technology and manufacturing techniques. The modern and eclectic design for the NMEBA Union Hall is a product of the techno-utopian and democratic zeitgeist of the 1960s that

emerged in the midst of this so-called postwar era. As such, it reflects the national and global environment in an era of unprecedented cultural, economic and political change.

In the 1940s, debates around the future of architecture centered on the dramatic cultural and political shifts that Western societies had experienced in the previous decades. During those periods, the development of industrially produced plate glass, steel and concrete allowed for lighter, stronger and taller structures. Architects looked to the possibilities of the increasing breadth of materials, technologies and techniques available to create designs that would meet the needs of a changing society. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, for example, innovative designs were produced by architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Eero Saarinen and J. Robert F. Swanson. These new constructions created a spectrum of modernist architectural styles that paved the way for the Modernist Movement in architecture. The concept of monumentality as an expression of national identity—associated with municipal colonial architecture—demanded revision as nations dealt with the effects that increasingly globalized and modernized economies were having on their populations (Gelernter 262-263). An influential text written in 1943 by architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, architect-planner José Luis Sert, and painter Fernard Légard relatedly argued for redefining monumentality for a modernized society. This manifesto, "Nine Points on Monumentality," called for iconic buildings that reflect a unified society and universalized needs. The first of these "points" most expresses their ambitions for this new approach:

> Monuments are human landmarks which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions. They are intended to outlive the period which originated them, and constitute a heritage for future generations. As such, they form a link between the past and the future (Oackman 4).

Elsewhere, Giedion, Sert and Legard cited this (re)vision of monumentality as a new ideological foundation for designing the built environment. With this foundation, they proposed that the architect's task in the postwar years would be the reorganization of community life through the planning and design of civic centers, monumental campuses, and public spectacles with timeless and universalist qualities (Curtis 256). The new methodology for architecture would be the modern design tenet that "form follows function," which led buildings to be conceived in terms of how best they could address the needs of the urban landscape and its populations, for the present and future (Gelernter 263).

The European Modernist Movement found a welcoming audience in the political leaders of the United States thanks to its ability to help realize a new public image for national and state governments. Following World War II, ongoing international conflicts changed the US' position in global politics. Simultaneously, technological advancements in computer science and space exploration fascinated the public. The combination of political dynamics and the techno-utopian trends of the 1950s and 1960s prompted government-led architecture projects to embrace the innovative, universalist and civic-minded promises of modernist architecture (Curtis 264). For instance, in 1962, the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space, facilitated by the Kennedy Administration, drafted the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture", a 3-point statement on GSA (General Services Administration) commissions for new buildings calling for designs that "reflected the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government" (Robinson) (Fig. 10, 11 and 12).

Under John F Kennedy, an ideological framework developed that would guide both public arts and architecture programs. This framework defined the artist/designer as an independent, innovative individual who would educate the state and enlighten the public. On the basis of this conception, the artist became part of an anti-communist narrative that encouraged public approval for the ongoing Cold War. As art historian Grant Kester explains in his essay "Crowds and Connoisseur: Art and the Public Sphere in America":

> The artist represented the creative and intellectual freedom of the United States against the stale conformity of the Soviet Union…This curious combination of political pragmatism and artistic

> romanticism led to the paradoxical concept of state-sponsored art that, at the time, embodied a symbolic resistance to state authority. (Kester 206)

In design terms, this ideology translated into the formally complex language of the avant garde in the visual arts, which included an openness to non-traditional materials and a tendency towards abstract shapes and compositions. In line with this, the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture" also called for buildings that would directly relate to their neighboring outdoor spaces and thereby underline their function as public gathering spaces: "Special attention should be paid to the general ensemble of streets and public places of which Federal buildings will form a part. Where possible. buildings should be located so as to permit a generous development of landscape"(Robinson).

These design principles draw a direct line to the development of New Formalism. By the mid-1960s, the minimal designs of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe were taken in more stylistically futuristic and fantastical directions by US-commissioned projects such as Edward Durell Stone's Kennedy Center, 1964-71, Warren C. Heylman's Federal Building, 1965, and Minoru Yamasaki's World Trade Center, 1966-75, all considered to be New Formalist designs.

In New Formalism, monumentality is achieved through monolithic, rectangular designs decorated with elegant columns that often feature curves or sleek lines. These qualities, along with the use of marble and natural stone, reference Classical municipal architecture such as open-air theaters—an effective signifier for the democratic idealism of the GSA's principles. New Formalist buildings also commonly feature reduced footprints in favor of greater integration with surrounding outdoor public areas. With its monument-on-pedestal composition and its rows of brick pillars, the NMEBA Union Hall undoubtedly owes its design to the popularity of these features in municipal buildings at the time.

6. Historic Context (ii): Industrial Decline and Urban Renewal in East Callowhill

Criterion (j): Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community

The NMEBA Union Hall is located in the East Callowhill neighborhood, a site that reflects the dramatic transformations to Philadelphia's industry and architecture from the 1800s to the 1960s. Bordering the Southern edge of Willow Street, this uncharacteristically curvy street (by Philadelphia's standards) runs parallel to Callowhill (Fig. 13). The street was previously the site of the Cohoquinoque Creek. In the 1800s Quaker communities took up residence there for its distance from congestion of the city. They were followed by industries such as tanneries, dye makers, and abattoirs, who took advantage of the proximity to the Delaware and the creek as a mode of transportation. As a result, the neighborhood developed along the curved embankments of the creek, which was eventually buried and incorporated into the city's sewer system. The latter fact explains the preservation of Willow Street's curvy character despite significant changes to its built environment over the past two centuries.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, Willow Street (along with the nearby neighborhood surrounding Franklin Square) underwent dramatic changes resulting from the Great Depression. In the early twentieth century, the Great Migration and response of white-flight from urban centers resulted in displacement of wealth into the suburbs, leaving cities underfunded and more vulnerable to economic decline (Gelernter 264). Meanwhile, the vibrant commercial and industrial area of Callowhill dissolved along with the national manufacturing rate. In the 1920s, an increase of automobiles and the construction of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge (1922-1926) created substantial traffic congestion and decreased real estate appeal in the Franklin Square neighborhood, contributing to the area's ongoing decline and ghettoization (Simon).

Under the impetus (and cautious optimism) of New Deal spending, the economy slowly improved nationwide after 1933, and by 1937 manufacturing output had almost returned to pre-Depression levels. But the recovery was precarious, and in late 1937 output fell sharply and unemployment rose again. Region-wide the manufacturing index fell 23 percent in a year and unemployment quickly shot up, reaching almost 25 percent in Philadelphia by early 1938. Later, the city's population reached a new record of 2 million in the 1950s, leading to housing shortages and Franklin Square becoming a slum (Simon).

This decline in the quality of life for city residents demanded response from local and national governments. In 1949, Harry S. Truman passed a Federal Housing Act, granting the government the authority to acquire land in city centers, which would then be sold or leased to redevelopment agencies and private developers (Gelernter 264). In anticipation of this national support of the decline in America's cities, the Urban Redevelopment Law passed in Pennsylvania in 1945. This legislation created the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) and authorized it to facilitate urban renewal projects through a process of acquiring properties by eminent domain then collaborating with and funding private firms to redevelop the lands that had been seized. Such changes to legislation made the project of urban renewal synonymous with demolition, redevelopment and displacement of communities from underserved neighborhoods of the city (Cohen).

With the elections of Mayor Joseph Clark in 1951 and Mayor Richardson Dilworth in 1955, local government became increasingly involved with housing and city planning, and further empowered the City Planning Commission. These political and legislative turns resulted in a wave of urban renewal projects in Philadelphia, with a particular focus on the Franklin Square and Callowhill areas. In 1951, a few blocks South West of the NMEBA Union Hall, the process of acquiring and razing old commercial squares to make way for Independence Mall began just as I.M. Pei's plans for the Society Hill Towers were submitted. In 1966, the City Planning Commission set forth the Independence Mall Redevelopment plan, which led to closing Ridge Avenue to make way for the Vine Street Expressway (Interstate 676) ramps to connect to Market East and the Metropolitan Hospital, two blocks southwest of the future NMEBA plot.

With work on these projects underway, a marketability study was conducted in 1959 that revealed a strong demand for industrial buildings and offices in this region of Philadelphia (Halverson Pace 113). To address the blighted Callowhill East neighborhood, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority drafted the Callowhill East Redevelopment Project, as a project that would transform this neighborhood that spanned 65 acres into large tracts of open land for use as an inner-city industrial parks with easy access to Interstate-95 and the Vine Street Expressway (Fig. 14). The target area spanned from Second to Ninth Streets between Callowhill and Spring Garden Streets, resulting in the demolition of hundreds of nineteenth-century dwellings and commercial buildings in the late 1960s (Fig. 15) (Kyriakodis 148-50). In late January of 1968, the Department of Housing and Urban Development approved the plans and by the Fall, 84 families, 41 individuals and 214 businesses were relocated as bulldozers were readied (Fig. 16) (Eisen).

Demands for architectural innovation dovetailed with these urban renewal projects, which led to a move towards modernism across the city. A group of notable architects joined the University of Pennsylvania, known as the "Philadelphia School." Led by George Holmes Perkins, the group championed the relationship between city planning and urban design and enlivened both the education and practice of architecture in the city (Rowan 130-1).

In the decade that followed, a number of government buildings with modern designs were constructed in the nearby center city neighborhoods, including the Philadelphia Police Headquarters in (1962) at Race and 7th Street, the United States Courthouse and Federal Office Building (1963-1968) at 6th and Market Street, and the United States Mint (1965-1969) and 6th and Race Street. Completed in 1964, the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters was the first privately funded urban renewal project for the Independence Mall area, designed in

the International Style by Pietro Belluschi and George M. Ewing Company, and in 1968, the humble (but no less modern) NMEBA Union Hall at 4th and Willows Street was added to the catalog of modern additions (Davis 20). Though smaller and less pedigreed than its peers, the NMEBA Union Hall signaled a renewed commitment to Philadelphia as a site of progressive culture and industry.

7. Architectural Style: The NMEBA Union Hall and New Formalism

Criterion (d): Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen

The NMEBA Union Hall is a unique example of stylistic transitions in modern architecture from the late 1950s through the 1970s. While Brutalism and the International Style are evident in the NMEBA's design, the building most embodies New Formalism, a late-modern architectural style that emerged in the mid-1950s. New Formalism (also referred to as Formalism and New Palladianism) is characterized by flat projecting rooflines, hierarchical designs, smooth flat surfaces, minimal palettes, and structural features turned into decorative elements. While techniques and concepts from Brutalism and the International Style remain central to New Formalist buildings such as the NMEBA Union Hall, they simultaneously critique modern tropes through the incorporation of Classical design elements and their use of a wide variety of materials.

Alongside its smooth surfaces and visible structural supports, the NMEBA Union Hall owes its rational construction system to the International Style. The International Style was first named in 1932 in the publication *The International Style.* Written by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, this guide was a result of an exhibition on modern architecture that the two had been invited to curate at the MOMA the previous year (Fig. 17) ("Modern Architecture"). In their survey of the growing number of modern constructions appearing across the globe, they identify that, for the International Style architect, technical and pragmatic problems are prioritized over aesthetics and cultural heritage. Further, they point out that the resulting designs are simple and based on geometric grids, thereby reflecting rational and minimalist values (House). The results were often buildings featuring steel structural frames together with nothing more than thin wall cladding and window panes (Gelernter 265).

Other elements of this style, such as cantilevered horizontal planes, flat roofs, and strip windows, are all found in the NMEBA Union Hall. Moreover, the building's second story is organized by alternating brick pillars and vertical windows that reflect the International Style tendency to show off the structural supports of the building (Curtis 256).

New Formalism diverges from the International Style by overlaying the minimal grid design with decorative elements and materials found in Classical architecture such as curved lines, columns, natural stones and warm metals (Gerfen). A prime example of this expanded palette of materials is the original Kennedy Center designed by Edward Durell Stone (Fig 18 and 19). Built in the 1960s and opened in 1971, this building-as-monument incorporated marble blocks and the addition of bronze-painted columns into a minimal, box-like silhouette typical of the International Style (Robinson). In an interview for *Time* magazine in 1958, Stone called for a re-examination of classical and ancient artistic traditions, stating that "What we need is to put pure beauty into our buildings" (Gelernter 265).

These additions were intended to soften and humanize modern architecture's cold and rigid pragmatism, a popular criticism of the movement since its first appearances (Van de Heuvel 293). Paralleling this trend was the nation's investment in new technologies in service of the Cold and Vietnam Wars. As demands for mass production increased, so did building materials and technological advancements, thus enabling architects such as Stone to incorporate a broader variety of materials into their designs. This revival of marble and natural stones

resonates with the tan bricks and cream colors of the NMEBA Union Hall and perhaps even influenced the selection of those very materials.

New Formalism's tendency towards monumental, seemingly gravity-defying structures—evidenced in the hierarchical design of the NMEBA Union Hall—can be traced to the adjacent and more widely recognized Brutalist style. Originating from the French phrase *béton brut*, meaning "raw concrete," Brutalism celebrates the modern building technique of cast concrete by making the material both the structural and aesthetic focus of the design. The English version of the term, "new brutalism," may have first appeared in print in the December 1953 issue of *Architectural Design* which featured a description for a private residence in Soho, London. The article was written by the British architects behind the project, Alison and Peter Smithson. In it, they argue for Brutalism as a celebration of the material qualities and technical processes of architecture, as well as for being representative of a democratic solution to urban dwelling due to the principles of truth to materials and transparency of design (Van de Heuvel 293-4).

Out of this utopian vision came buildings with the weighty massiveness characteristic of concrete, while demonstrations of its "brutalist" strength appeared in such buildings' gravity-defying overhangs. Two Philadelphia Brutalist buildings—the former Philadelphia Police Headquarters, commonly called the "Roundhouse," and the Philadelphia Municipal Building—are prime examples of this design feature and likely influenced the design for the NMEBA Union Hall, which prominently features cast concrete and a hierarchical design.

Standing just North of City Hall, and designed by Vincent Kling & Associates, the 18-story Philadelphia Municipal Building was completed in 1965 and won the Progressive Architecture Award in 1962 for its innovative approach to urban architecture(Fig. 20) ("Project Gallere: Philadelphia Municipal Building"). Like the NMEBA Union Hall's overhanging second story, the Philadelphia Municipal Building is organized in two blocks, its block of upper stories set atop a ground floor with a smaller footprint. In addition to giving the building a looming presence, this design allows more space for the plaza surrounding it, a gesture towards one of the GSA's Guiding Principles, which call for architecture that responds to its neighboring environment.

Constructed in 1965, the Roundhouse is visible from the East Callowhill Neighborhood and was a part of the Franklin Square Development Project adjacent to the Callowhill urban renewal programs of the same decade (Fig. 21). Like the NMEBA Union Hall, the upper bulk of the building projects out from the first floor, creating a cast-concrete awning and giving this building a greater sense of volume (Davis 13).

In New Formalist designs, the emphasis on volume and monumentality of Brutalism is overlaid with elements from classical architecture and the use of decorative trabeation. The results are designs with a surprising weightlessness but no less of a monumental presence. A highly publicized example of New Formalism's particular approach to monumentality is the Los Angeles County Museum of Art campus (Fig. 22). Designed by William Perreira, a local and established modernist architect, and constructed from 1962 to 1965, this trilogy of buildings made LACMA the largest museum built in the country since the start of World War II. Each building of Perreira's LACMA campus consisted of the rectangular bulk of the building set atop a ground level with a smaller footprint. The pedestal-like composition emphasized the structural grid and overall dimensionality of each building.

One of the unique architectural features of the original LACMA campus are the skinny cast-stone colonnades on the building's exterior. These elements give the building a sculptural quality insofar as they interact with the natural light and cast patterns of shadows (Meares). Serving no practical function, these colonnades conjure the open-air theaters of Classical architecture. Though decorative in effect, this historical reference goes beyond aesthetics by incorporating into a modern design the legacy of the architecture of public gathering places and markets characterized by buildings such as the Parthenon in Athens, Greece (Fig. 23).

The Geisel Library, also designed by Perreira, and built in 1968, demonstrates qualities of New Formalism, including its futuristic and utopian philosophy and its counterintuitive approach to perceived weight and monumentality (Fig. 24). Named after Audrey and Theodor Geisel (better known as Dr. Seuss) for their support of the University library, the Geisel is an eight story, concrete structure sited at the head of a canyon near the center of UC San Diego's campus. Like the NMEBA Union Hall, the Geisel minimizes its footprint by setting its upper levels on a smaller, pedestal-like first floor, itself framed by expressive, 45-degree-angled, cast-concrete piers that project upwards towards its fourth level.

Constructed from these heavy concrete piers and contrastingly thin glass walls, this building appears simultaneously massive and weightless. Further, its gravity-defying presence and modular structure signals technological advancements being experienced nationwide, from computer technology to exploration. While fantastical in style, the Geisel stays true to the modernist tenet of form-follows-function: its sphere-like silhouette serves the practical needs of a library by maximizing access to natural light, all while providing flexible-use spaces around a centrally-located circulation system (Langdon).

While humbler in stature, the NMEBA Union Hall features similar design qualities (Fig. 25). Its modular, stacked structure (reminiscent of the Geisel) gives it the illusion of having the potential to transform or be reassembled. Similarly, the NMEBA Union Hall angled brick piers and faceted columns suggest that these features could fold or collapse at any moment.

As a union building by a little-known architect, the NMEBA Union Hall inventive display of innovative design trends in modern architecture of the 1960s makes it a unique and valuable specimen of Philadelphia's built environment. Its position in a neighborhood marked by histories of industry, urban blight, and state and government urban initiatives establish it as an important bridge to Philadelphia's past and secure its place on the national and global architectural stage.

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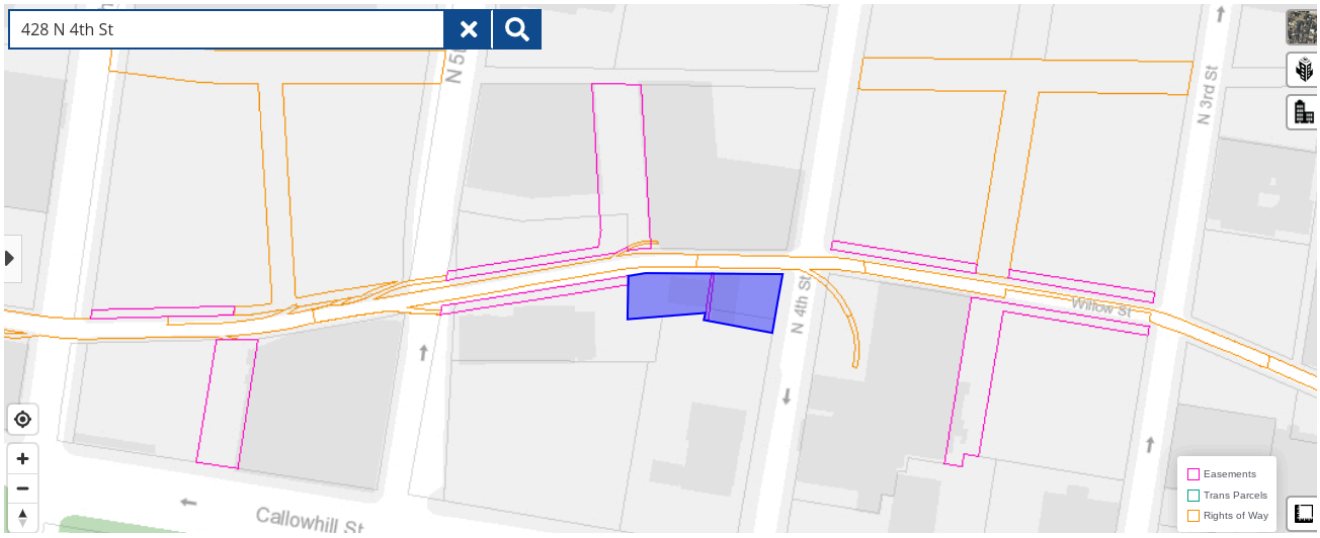

Figure 2. The boundary for the subject property is delineated by the blue line. Source: City of Philadelphia Atlas,https://atlas.phila.gov/428%20N%204TH%20ST/deeds 2024.

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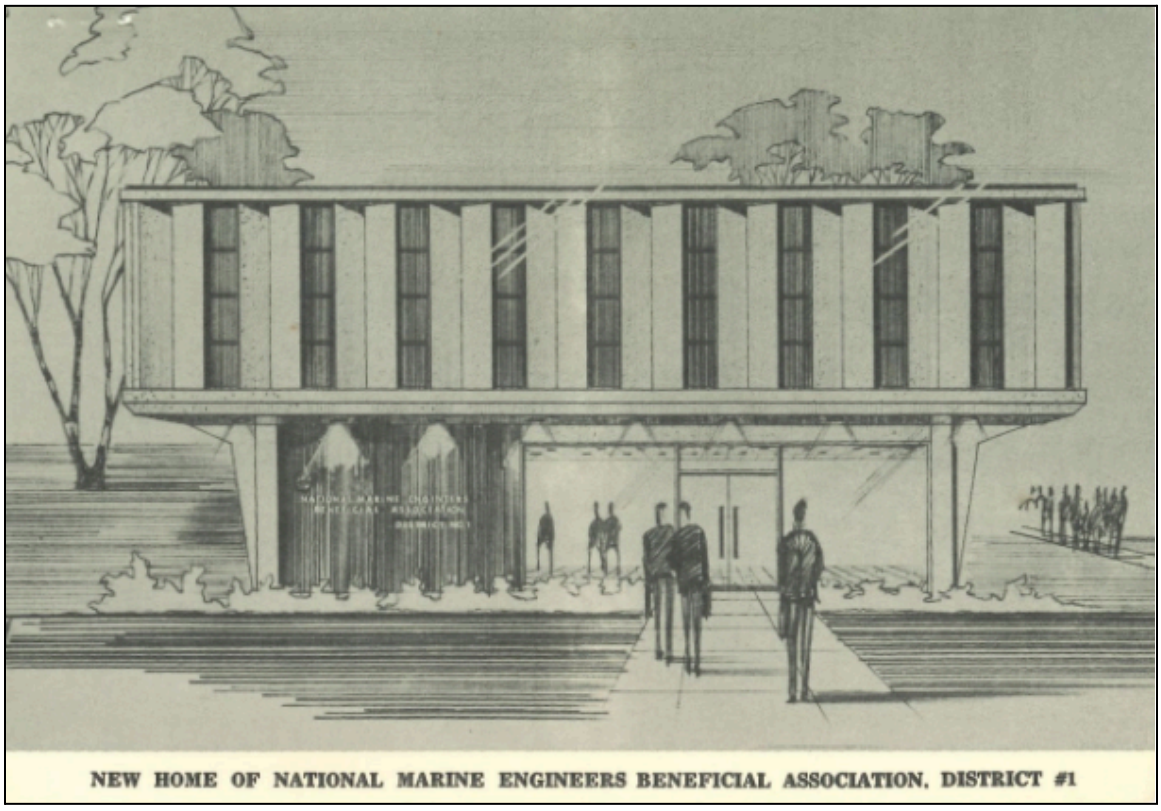

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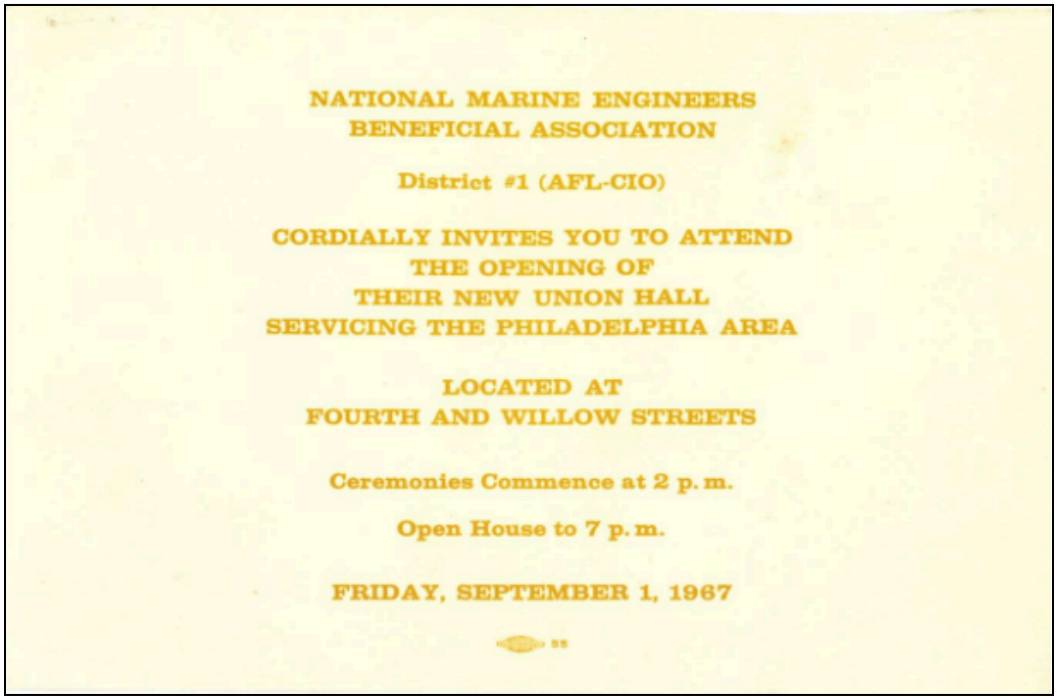

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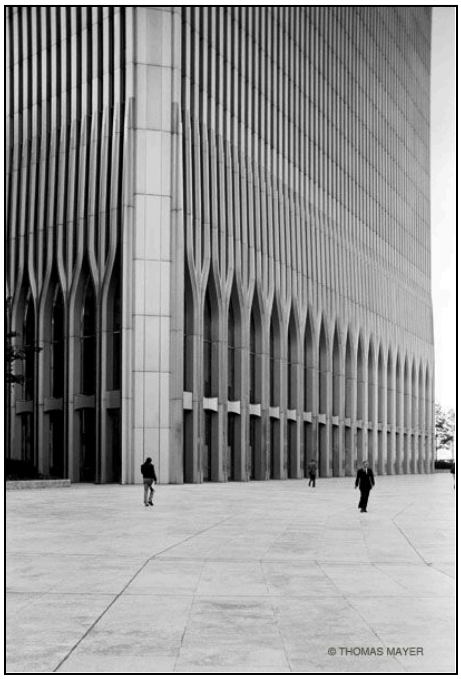
https://4urspace.com/location/jimmy_choo/ny/new_york/699_madison_av./10065/237



(Left) Figure 10. World Trade Center. Source: Thomas Mayer, https://www.archdaily.com/198121/architectural-photographers-thomas-mayer/architekturreportage-architecture-reportage-4., 1978.
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Figure 12. The Federal Building, 2008. Source: Joe Mabel, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wenatchee,_WA_-_Federal_Building_03.jpg, 2008.

Figure 13. Map of 3N11, 2024, Source: City of Philadelphia Archives, 2024.

Figure 14. Scope of the Callowhill East Redevelopment Project, facing West. The L-shaped building just north of MEBA the American Stores Warehouse, which survived the razing, and which is now condos) can be seen at the upper-center-left.ca. 1969. Source: Temple Urban Archives, https://hiddencityphila.org/2012/07/the-cheapest-place-of-entertainment-in-the-world/callowhill-east-redevelopment-project/, 2012.

Figure 15. Looking NW at subject property in 1964 American Stores Warehouse seen in background. Source: City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, 2025.

LEGAL NOTICES

City of Philadelphia proposes to use its power of eminent domain in the acquisition of land and improvements within the Callowhill East Urban Renewal Area.

The Project Area is bounded as follows:

Beginning at a point at the northeast corner of New Market Street and Spring Garden Street; thence west along the north side of Spring Garden Street to a point at the northeast corner of Fifth Street and Spring Garden Street; thence south to a point at the southeast corner of York Avenue and Spring Garden Street; thence west on the south side of Spring Garden Street to a point at the southeast corner of Spring Garden and Sixth Street; thence south along the east side of Sixth Street to a point at the southeast corner of Sixth and Callowhill Streets; thence east along the south side of Callowhill Street to a point at the east side of Fourth Street, south of Callowhill Street; thence north to a point at the southeast corner of Fourth Street and Callowhill Street; thence east along the south side of Callowhill Street to a point at the southeast corner of Callowhill Street and New Market Street; thence north along the east side of New Market Street to the point of beginning.

INCLUDED WITHIN THE ABOVE BOUNDARIES AND PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION BY THE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ARE THE FOLLOWING CITY BLOCK, STREET AND HOUSE NUMBERS:

North American Street, East Side
421-25, 427-35, 437-47, 449, 451-55, 457-59, 461-69, 473, 475, 477, 479, 481-85, 487-91, 493, 495, 497-99 (incl 210-20 Buttonwood Street, incl. #1-9 McKinley Court); 509-13.

North American Street, West Side
404-10, 412-20, 422-26, 454-62, 464-66, 468-78 AKA 221-33 Noble Street AKA 475-77 North Third Street, 480-86 AKA 485-89 North Third Street, 488-94, 502 AKA 227 Buttonwood Street, 504 AKA 509-11 North Bodine Street, 506-10 AKA 226-36 Spring Garden Street, 512.

North Bodine Street, East Side
509-11 AKA 504 North American Street.

North Bodine Street, West Side

LEGAL NOTICES

North Fifth Street, West Side
422-42, 444, 446-48, 450, 452-64, 468, 470, 472-76, 478, 480, 482-88, 500-06, 508, 510, 512, 514-18 AKA 500-514 Spring Garden Street.

North Sixth Street, East Side
405, 407, 409, 411, 413-23, 425-27, 429-35, 437-41 AKA 522-28 Noble Street, 443-45, 447-51, 453, 455, 457, 459-79, 501, 503, 505, 507, 509, 511, 513-17, 519, 521, 523, AKA 522-46 Spring Garden Street.

INCLUDED WITHIN THE ABOVE BOUNDARIES, BUT NOT PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION BY THE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ARE THE FOLLOWING CITY, BLOCK, STREET AND HOUSE NUMBERS:

North American Street, West Side
428-52.

York Avenue, East Side
433-37.

North Second Street, West Side
404-20.

North Third Street, East Side
417-27, 437-61.

North Third Street, West Side
406-16.

North Fourth Street, East Side
411-41.

North Fourth Street, West Side
428-34, 436-54.

North Fifth Street, East Side
441-51.

North Fifth Street, West Side
400-20.

The Redevelopment Proposal with the Relocation Plan, and such maps, plans, contracts, or other documents as form part of said proposal, will be available for public inspection at the offices of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, Juniper and Filbert Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107, from the 14th day of July 1967, until the date of Public Hearing.

At the Hearing, the governing body shall afford an opportunity to all persons or agencies interested to be heard and shall receive, make known, and consider recommendations in writing with reference to the Redevelopment Proposal.

NATHAN WOLFMAN,
Chief Clerk of
City Council.

PETITIONS & RULES

Figure 16. The Philadelphia Inquirer 1967, July 28, page 20. Source: Philadelphia Historic Commission Archives

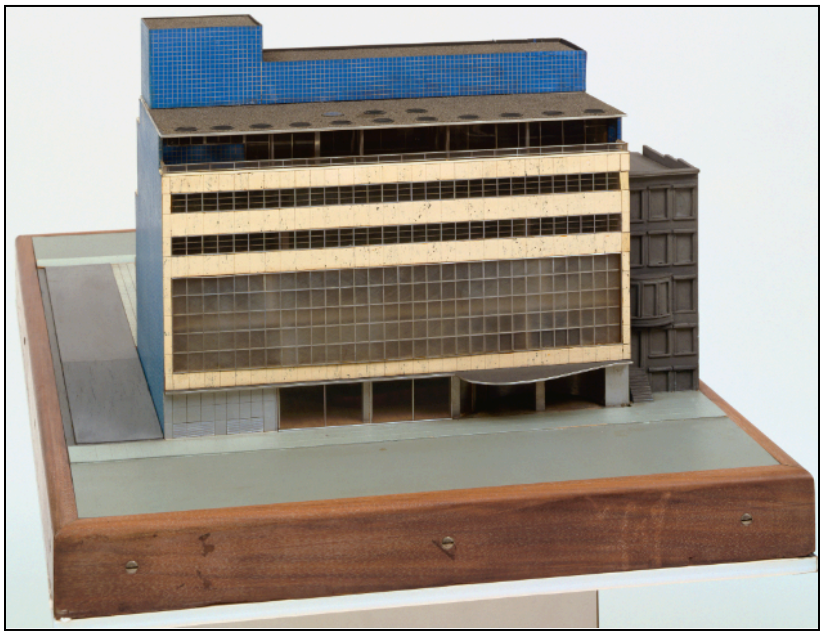

Figure 17. Model for the Museum of Modern Art by Philip L. Goodwin, Edward Durell Stone, 1939. New York. Source: The Museum of Modern Art, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/82404, 2007.

Figure 18 and 19. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Source: Franz Jantzen,https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/DC-01-FB14, 1993.

Figure 20. A rendering of MSB by Kling Architects, 1960s. Source: Billy Penn for WHYY, https://billypenn.com/2020/04/05/how-the-municipal-services-building-became-phillys-most-polarizing-government-tower/ 2020.

Figure 21. The Roundhouse, Source: Steve Butler, https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-roundhouse-redevelopment-challenge/, 2022.

Figure 22. LACMA: The view of the original central plaza, which hovered above shallow pools, in 1965. Source: Museum Associates/LACMA, https://la.curbed.com/2020/4/23/21230153/lacma-museum-los-angeles-history-pereira, 2020.

Figure 23. The Parthenon in 1978. Source: Steve Swayne, Wikimedia Commons, 1978.

Figure 24. Geisel Library. Source: Flickr User LaurelJukebox, https://www.flickr.com/photos/groovygeekgirl/618380299/ 2007.

Figure 25. NMEBA Front, Eastern Elevation. Source: Misha Wyllie, 2025.

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