

To the Members of the Commission,

As a practicing architect for over thirty-five years and historic architect on several projects including Stadium High School, Hangar 5 at NAS Whidbey, and many buildings on the VA American Lake campus, as well serving as a Landmarks commissioner for the City of Tacoma for ten years, I feel I am qualified to lend my support for the listing of the Harris Building at 1102 East Main in Puyallup. Too often preservation is focused on buildings of major significance or designs by important architects and the day-to-day buildings that most of us interact with throughout our lives are ignored. And yet, these are the buildings that influence our communities the most and form the basis for how we perceive a neighborhood's character and integrity. The Harris Building is one of these.

Modernism in America didn't reach the mainstream populace until the post-war economic boom, but what most people visualize as mid-century modern didn't spring whole cloth onto the architectural scene. For a brief period, between 1946 to around 1954, it incubated, especially in the realm of low cost, commercial developments. The Harris Building is a prime example of this and bears the markings of the period's singularly unique stylistic design elements. These buildings are primarily single story structures with a flat roof and an elongated overhang over the shop front. Plate glass on a narrow base is used to surround the main entry and is often accompanied by a narrow band of windows just below the eave (although this is not present on the Harris Building). However, the predominant feature in this style is the use of Roman Brick, set in a running bond, with strong horizontal and vertical elements.

A few of these buildings still remain in the area. There are three located in Tacoma along Tacoma Avenue in various states of repair (figs. 1 – 3 ) and an unusual city block development bordered between South L and South M Street, and S 11<sup>th</sup> and Earnest Brazil Street (figs. 4 – 6) also in Tacoma. All of these buildings are located in areas of economic distress and given current land values, it is unlikely they will survive the next decade.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5





Fig. 6

The Harris Building presents an opportunity to preserve one of these unique and quickly disappearing examples of early, post-war modern architecture. The exterior finishes, including the roman brick, are original and intact, the openings are original and unmodified, as is the roofline. Some of the windows facing E. Main have been retrofitted but can easily be replaced with period correct frames as can the non-historic doors. The bulk of the building not visible from E. Main, is painted concrete block, which is consistent with the period. The proposal includes replacing the existing T1-11 siding on one face of the shed addition with corrugated metal siding. T1-11 is not period correct and there is evidence that the wall it's on is a later infill wall installed to enclose what was an open horse stall. As the building was originally used as a veterinary clinic, corrugated metal siding or board and batt siding would be period correct given the quasi-agricultural nature of its use.

In addition, the Harris Building contains some interior historic features not usually found in other surviving buildings of this style, namely the terrazzo flooring in the entry and public corridors, the articulated plasterwork in the Doctor's office, and the period tiled bathroom. Specific to the Harris Building as a veterinary clinic, many of the original large animal stalls are also still intact and are slated to remain by the owner.

In my opinion, the Harris Building is eligible for registration in that it meets the age requirement, it represents a unique period in the development of American Modernism, it's architectural integrity is intact, and the original owner, Dr. Harris, played a significant role in Puyallup's agricultural past.

Sincerely,

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Principal

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