B. Property Type: Commercial, Retail, Warehouse, and Workshop Establishments

Much of Southwest’s commercial and warehouse development followed railroad corridors along the quadrant’s northern and western borders or clustered near the waterfront. The Historic Preservation Office’s *Warehouse Survey Phase II*, commissioned in 1992, also defined “Navy Yard West,” an area of light industrial, warehouse, and garage buildings that sprawled from the Navy Yard to Buzzard Point beginning in the early 20th century.\(^{110}\) Although most of these areas were cleared during various redevelopment projects, some representative examples still exist.

Before urban renewal, Southwest had numerous neighborhood-level corner markets, as well as a local business strip on 4½ Street, which survive today only in historical illustrations. The Southwest redevelopment plan of the 1950s sought to concentrate retail businesses in a central shopping district, except for some shops for the convenience of office workers and a waterfront entertainment area.

1791-1870  L’Enfant Plan, the Port, New Populations

Southwest’s first known manufacturing facility was the federal Arsenal on Greenleaf Point, whose earliest structures were constructed between 1791 and 1801. Among the earliest known privately owned commercial structures were docks and wharves at the locations shown on the Boschke Map of 1857 (see p. 10). The nearby lands of Buzzard Point were associated with such noisome businesses as slaughterhouses and “horseboilers” – small factories that converted dead animals and organic refuse into soap and other products. As in other parts of the city, much development occurred along railroad corridors, beginning with the B&O line that in 1860 ran along Maryland Avenue and crossed the Long Bridge to Alexandria at 14th Street.\(^{111}\)

Before the Civil War, Southwest was associated with trafficking in human beings, including two of the city’s most infamous slave pens, on B Street. “Robey’s Pen” was at 7th Street; the “Yellow House,” a plaster-covered brick house converted to a private jail


\(^{111}\) *Warehouse Study Phase II*, 13-14.
which housed enslaved persons in transit at 8th Street, operated into the 1850s. Enslaved persons were frequently transported by schooners, which presumably docked on the Southwest waterfront. At the 7th Street steamboat wharf, fleeing slaves boarded the schooner *Pearl* and attempted to sail to freedom in 1848.

**Significance.**

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings, many of which remained in active use until they were demolished during the redevelopment program of the 1950s, evidenced the patterns of settlement and social life of the community of the time and were an architectural catalog of the city’s pre-Civil War building forms.

**Registration Requirements.**

Although no early commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings are known to survive in historic Southwest, remnants or archaeological evidence of such a property type could qualify under Criterion D. Such significant architectural remnants could provide information about pre-Civil War construction techniques or important information about the economic life of the community and its residents.

**1871-1945  Municipal Consolidation, Business, Railroads**

- *Sub-Period: Business and commerce in a growing city, 1871-1918*

Although the quadrant never included large-scale manufacturing facilities, several new rail lines entered the city, and commercial construction continued in Southwest through World War I. By 1900, some 23,000 Washingtonians were employed in industry. By the early 1880s a warehouse and small factory corridor lined the tracks of a Pennsylvania Railroad subsidiary along Maryland Avenue. Structures included a freight station that occupied an entire square at the intersection of D Street and continued along Virginia Avenue past the warehouse of the Adams Express Company at C Street to a large railroad yard at South Capitol Street. Several squares north of Virginia Avenue near 6th and 7th streets were largely devoted to railroad uses by 1903, while adjacent squares included small industrial enterprises such as a planing mill, iron foundry, boiler works, gas storage tank, and brewery.

---

113 Clephane, 247-48.
114 *Warehouse Study*, 22.
115 *Warehouse Study*, 17.
In Southwest no surviving industrial or workshop buildings from this era have definitely been identified. However, the much-altered two-story masonry building whose current address is 1399 Half Street may incorporate portions of a 19th-century blacksmith shop, cooperage, and wagon works. (Typology Table B1.1) The building, which originally bore the address 1341 Half Street, may have been one of several built by the family of blacksmith William F. Kendrick in the southern portion of Square 652. It served as a wagon-works, cooperage and workshop associated with African American blacksmith Jerome Elkins, who in the early 20th century lived at the corner of the alley to its rear.

Retail establishments included grocery stores, saloons, small restaurants, and the shops of tradesman such as shoemakers and tailors. By 1903, 4½ Street had established itself as the quadrant’s major commercial strip, although businesses also clustered near the waterfront piers. Neighborhood businesses such as corner groceries dotted the quadrant, many occupying space on the ground floor of the proprietor’s home.

One surviving building represents an early repurposing of a dwelling to commercial use: 7 N Street, a two-story dwelling which has a modern storefront on its ground floor. It was permitted as a Washington Sanitary Improvement Company duplex in 1914. (Typology Table B1.2) However, city directory and Census records indicate that by 1920 Jennie Payne, a 40-year-old African-American woman, operated a lunchroom at this address, which was also her residence. The DC Permit Index indicates that the

---

116 DC Permit 4932, May 21, 1914.
117 Boyd’s District of Columbia Directory for 1920, 1786.
storefront was added after 1949.

A more typical example of a Southwest retail building is presented in a 1943 Farm Security Administration photograph by Louise Rosskam that documents Shulman’s Market, which stood on the present-day footprint of Tiber Island. Shulman’s Market exemplifies the vernacular character and adaptive nature of neighborhood commercial buildings. Located in a pair of two-story buildings, with its entrance in 485½ N Street, Shulman’s wrapped the corner of the 1200 block of Union Street, and although its construction permit is for a single-family dwelling its 60-foot depth suggests it was intended as a retail establishment.

Designed in 1897 by Julius Germuiller, a highly active Washington architect who also designed the National Register-listed Germuiller Row at 3rd and Massachusetts Avenue NW, its front façade’s only brick embellishment is a tall corbelled cornice. Its central section includes a large four-pane sash window separated from a double-door entry with transom by a wooden pillar ornamented with simple roundel elements.

Shulman’s Market also occupied 487 N Street, the easternmost unit of a row of 10 houses erected in 1894 by B. F. Leighton, a real estate developer long active in Southwest. This smaller house, whose entrance has been replaced by an early trapezoidal “display case” commercial window bay with a dentilled overhanging cornice, was much more elaborately detailed than its neighbor. Its façade had geometric patterns of pressed brick as cornices and eyebrow courses above its windows. Although the upper-story windows of 495½ N Street are empty, curtains and a war bonds sticker indicate that the second story of this house was in residential use.
Significance.

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of this period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s economic and social evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect such important themes as the role of transportation-related businesses and small neighborhood-level workshops in the economic life of the community.

Registration Requirements.

Although questions arise about the integrity and intactness of surviving examples, commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of the sub-period may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they must retain their original mass and scale. Remnants or archaeological evidence of such a property type could qualify under Criterion D. Such significant architectural remnants could provide information about early construction techniques or important information about the economic life of the community and its residents.

- Sub-Period: Zoning, commerce, depression and recovery, 1919-45

After creation of the Zoning Commission in 1920, strict rules restricted industry to Georgetown and Southwest, and heavy industry was banned from the city by Congress. Despite increasing government regulation, Southwest’s stock of commercial and industrial buildings continued to grow through the 1920s.

The industrial and warehouse district along the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks continued to expand, with the significant addition of the large Washington Terminal Warehouse at 300 D Street in 1923. During the 1920s warehouses and distribution depots also began to appear on the South Capitol Street corridor. After a fire destroyed its downtown warehouse in 1925, the S. Kann

Figure 45. Brenizer warehouse complex. Peter Sefton

118 Warehouse Study, 22-23.
& Sons Department Store built a modern replacement just off South Capitol Street at Delaware Avenue and C Street. Employing the steel-sash multi-paned windows and concrete piers of a “daylight factory,” it was designed by the prominent New York firm of Abbott Merkt Co., later responsible for such iconic Washington commercial structures as the warehouses of the Hecht Company, Woodward & Lothrop, and Palais Royal. Kann’s constructed its warehouse in Southwest to avoid the traffic congestion that hampered truck traffic in midtown.119

More typical of Southwest’s commercial structures was the Warren F. Brenizer Company’s single-story brick garage and warehouse complex in the 1500 block of South Capitol Street. Brenizer, a sewer and paving contractor, erected seven buildings in Square 657, which was bisected by a railroad siding that connected with the branch line laid along Potomac Avenue in 1932.120 (Typology Table B2.1)

The industrial and warehouse district along the Mall corridor was demolished for construction of the Southwest Federal Center office buildings, and very little new construction replaced the structures. Perhaps the most notable building constructed in Southwest during the 1930s was the Potomac Electric Company’s art moderne Buzzard Point Power Plant, designed and erected by the Boston firm of Stone & Webster, which

120 DC Permit 123620, May 14, 1929.
was responsible for almost 20 percent of the electrical plants built in the United States at the time.121 Another was the concrete-and-steel-framed-window Lansburgh and Brothers Department Store warehouse at South Capitol and P streets, which replaced several buildings in the Brenizer complex.122 (Typology Table B2.2 and B2.3)

Figure 47. Lansburgh warehouse. Peter Sefton

**Significance.**

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of this sub-period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect many period themes, including the growth of industry along the South Capitol Street corridor and Anacostia River, and the increasing activity at the nearby Washington Navy Yard and Army War College during the pre-World War II buildup. These buildings followed the forms and styles found in buildings of their type elsewhere in the city. However, they represent an evolution from the pattern of the earlier sub-period in that they are of larger scale.

**Registration Requirements.**

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of this sub-period may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. They could potentially be

---

121 Hayden Wetzel, “National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Buzzard Point Power Plant” (draft of study, 2014).
122 DC Permits 222169, 4/26/1939 and 244637, 6/13/1941.
eligible for listing under Criterion B, although there are no known examples of “persons significant to our past” among their residents.

**1946-73  Postwar Period – Decades of Dramatic Change**

Bridging the Anacostia River in 1949 made South Capitol Street an arterial route connecting downtown Washington with Anacostia and southern Maryland via the newly opened Suitland Parkway. Between the end of World War II and the beginning of redevelopment in 1954, much of Southwest’s commercial building activity was focused on the warehouse district along the South Capitol Street corridor near the waterfront. By the late 1940s, Gulf Oil and Standard Oil petroleum distribution facilities dominated the squares in the 1600 and 1700 blocks of South Capitol Street in the shadows of the bridge.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 48. 1601 South Capitol Street. Peter Sefton*

Although the storage tanks and many other structures on these sites have been demolished, the surviving Standard Oil office and warehouse at 1601 South Capitol Street represents an office and warehouse complex of the late 1950s. (Typology Table B3.1) Is proximity to the waterfront, as well as its location on a rail spur which links to the Potomac Avenue siding via Half Street, testifies to the transportation access that made the South Capitol Street corridor a distribution hub.123

Between 1877 and 1949, no building permits for hotels were issued for addresses in Southwest. In 1962, the firm Lapidus, Harle & Liebman of New York, whose principal architect, Morris Lapidus, designed 250 hotels worldwide, was commissioned to design

---

123 Construction date from Parsons-Brinkerhof, 4-78.
the Capitol Skyline Hotel, a fusion of the international and art moderne styles at South Capitol and I streets. ¹²⁴ (Typology Table B3.2)
While Southwest had restaurants and bars of all types, the most famous of which was the original Hogate’s on Maine Avenue, these establishments occupied buildings erected for generic purposes. From 1877 until 1949, less than a half dozen permits were issued for the construction of restaurants in Southwest. With the adoption of Chloethiel Woodard Smith’s waterfront redevelopment plan in 1960, the Maine Avenue waterfront was rededicated to a string of large functionalist restaurant buildings,\(^{125}\) as well as the Channel Inn, a hotel that incorporated a seafood restaurant called Pier 7 when it opened in 1972.\(^ {126}\) (Typology Table B3.3)

Another building form that appeared in Southwest during this era was the modern office tower. Although commercial facilities such as contractor’s yards had office structures, they were small and co-located with production facilities. The Federal Center development, which began during the 1930s, introduced the quadrant to the concept of a large-scale facility whose primary purpose was administration and management rather than production. The Zeckendorf-Pei Plan envisioned L’Enfant Plaza as the location for large-scale office construction. (Typology Table 3.4) The plaza was constructed largely to the specifications of the plan, but no buildings were erected before Zeckendorf’s departure from the scene.


The Zeckendorf-Pei Plan also called for retail activity to be centralized at a Town Center Plaza, to be located on the axis of a realigned 4th Street in a superblock near the heart of the former Southwest commercial district at 4½ and M streets. (Provision was made for additional shops that would be convenient for workers at L’Enfant Plaza and Federal Center.) As proposed by Webb & Knapp, Town Center was to be “an area of broad, paved spaces shaded by trees under which cars are parked,” offering convenience to both drivers and pedestrians, with an expansive park separating the commercial core from M Street. However, even as the Zeckendorf-Pei Plan was being formulated, downtown merchants stated their opposition to a major business district in Southwest.

The Town Center shopping center was never completed. Its eastern half, a Pei-designed glass-fronted, arcade-like strip of storefronts which accommodated a Safeway grocery store, a dry-cleaner, a liquor store, a Peoples Drug store, a bank, and a post office, opened in 1960. Financial problems forced Zeckendorf to withdraw from Southwest before the west module was built.

Chloethiel Woodard Smith’s Waterside Mall opened in 1972. It was a brutalist concrete shopping center and office building whose main block stood at right angles to the façade of the Pei commercial module and enveloped it beneath a concrete upper level that wrapped the old and new structures. Waterside Mall quickly gained a reputation for being too small to meet Southwest’s retail needs and a difficult place to stay in business. By

---

127 Panorama of Southwest Redevelopment (Unpaginated booklet published by Webb & Knapp ca. 1956).
1974, the *Washington Post* could refer to it as “beleaguered,” and, in 1981 call it a “cavernous shell.” Eventually much of the mall became federal office space. It was demolished in 2007.

**Significance.**

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of this period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s economic evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect such period themes as the growth of automobile transportation, the response to postwar de-urbanization in the face of suburban growth, and the implementation of modernist urban planning and architectural principles. The emergence of such new building forms as hotels and office towers represents a departure from previous forms of development, as does their integration with a large-scale urban plan. Some are important, architecturally significant works by national and internationally known architects with the involvement of larger-scale builders and developers, many of whom had a citywide base of operations.

**Registration Requirements.**

Commercial, retail, warehouse, and workshop buildings of this period may meet Criteria A, B, or C. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they must retain their original mass and scale.

---


1791-1870  L’Enfant Plan, the Port, New Populations

Government buildings were the first large-scale structures erected in Southwest. The L’Enfant Plan of 1791 had envisioned lower Greenleaf Point as “Military Reservation #5,” which, along with a ring of forts, would protect the city from invasion. Greenleaf Point was fortified in 1794 and later became the location of an arsenal, which was burned during the British invasion of 1814. Buildings for a new arsenal had been erected on the site by 1822, and four years later the Washington Penitentiary, designed by the noted Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, was under construction to the Arsenal’s northwest. The 1857 Boschke Map (see p. 10) shows almost 20 major buildings on the Arsenal tract, while the penitentiary included both a central cellblock and a shoe factory staffed by inmates. Although most of the early buildings on the Arsenal grounds were razed in the early 20th century, several Civil War era structures survive, including the building where the Lincoln conspirators were tried, currently known as Grant Hall (Building 20). Fort McNair, which incorporates the sites of the penitentiary and the Arsenal, was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Other notable early federal government buildings in Southwest were located along the Mall corridor. The Norman-style Smithsonian castle, designed by James Renwick, was erected just north of Independence Avenue in 1855. The Washington Armory (demolished 1964) was built at 6th Street and Independence Avenue in 1855. Four-and-a-Half Street connected the Armory Square Hospital, which occupied the Mall between 5th and 7th streets during the Civil War, to the 7th Street Wharf, where casualties arrived by ship.

In 1806, the Eastern Free School at 3rd and D streets, became one of Washington’s first two schoolhouses. During the Civil War, Congress instituted tax-funded construction of the city’s first “modern” brick schools, which were designed by the city’s preeminent architect, Adolf Cluss, and served white students. As the thematic study Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1862-1945 notes, the Cluss schools “were architecturally distinctive three story buildings of brick masonry construction with typically pressed brick facades and limestone, terra cotta, and iron trim” which incorporated clocks and

---

bell towers with an auditorium, library, office, and basement playroom. The first such building in Southwest was the Jefferson School at 6th and D streets, constructed in 1872, eight years after Cluss’ original Wallach School had opened on Capitol Hill. The Jefferson School was preceded by a more modest three-story building, one of the city’s first two schools for African-American students. The original Anthony Bowen School, at 9th and E streets, was named for a Southwest resident who maintained an Underground Railroad station in his home and founded the first YMCA for African-Americans in 1853.

Other early municipal buildings in Southwest with long careers included the firehouse at 470 Virginia Avenue, which was constructed in 1868 and remained in service into the 1950s. Constructed before 1878, the Sixth Police Precinct Station House at 492 E Street remained in service until January 1961, although its iron box “dungeon” for sobering up drunks had presumably long since passed out of use.

No pre- or immediately post-Civil War government buildings survive in the Southwest study area other than the historic buildings contained within the Fort McNair Historic District.

1871-1945  Municipal Consolidation and Public Services

- Sub-Period: Federal and local governments enlarge their presence, 1871-1918

Major federal government buildings continued to be erected at Fort McNair and on the Mall corridor during the years between the Civil War and World War I. Notable early examples include the National Museum (now known as the Arts and Industries Building), which opened adjacent to the Smithsonian castle in 1881, and the Army Medical School and Museum (demolished in 1969), which occupied the site of the Hirshhorn Museum beginning in 1886. Both were designed by Adolf Cluss in red brick, high Victorian style.

The government buildings in the Southwest study area during this period were devoted to District of Columbia functions. They included schools, police stations, fire houses, and structures associated with the administration of the harbor. One of the Southwest’s distinctive government buildings was constructed at 7th and Water streets in 1904. The City Morgue (now demolished), which the Washington Evening Star called “one of the

---

134 Ibid.
135 Beauchamp and Lee, F4.
best … in the country”\textsuperscript{138} and the \textit{Washington Post} described as a “strange little church” that resembled a traditional New England chapel,\textsuperscript{139} was indeed topped by a steeple-like cupola whose weather vane resembled a cross in newspaper photos. Neighborhood complaints about odors led to relocation in a special room behind the Sixth Precinct Stationhouse on E Street. The Southwest waterfront was selected because odiferous gases could be vented over the river and an ice house was located nearby.\textsuperscript{140}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure53.png}
\caption{Lunch Room Building. Peter Sefton}
\end{figure}

The construction of a more-than-utilitarian morgue reflects the influence of the City Beautiful Movement, which was at its zenith from the McMillan Plan of 1901 into the 1920s. As early as 1904, repeated cries arose for a cleanup of the “dilapidated and disgraceful looking” wharves and other structures on District-owned waterfront land,\textsuperscript{141} which had so little effect that in 1921 the \textit{Washington Post} editorial “Make Washington Beautiful” could still note, “It requires no special artistic sense to recognize at a glance that the general effect [of the Southwest waterfront] constitutes a veritable eyesore.”\textsuperscript{142} In 1906, a new firehouse constructed by William E. Mooney in the 1300 block of Water Street was described as “an ornamental building that adds greatly to the appearance of the riverfront section of the city” in addition to providing a berth for the city fire boat. In 1914, the District Government rebuilt its dilapidated sand and gravel pier at the foot of 9th Street.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} “District Starts Wharf Clean-Up: Official Storehouse First Building Condemned By Commissioners,” \textit{Washington Post}; July 24, 1921, 16.
\textsuperscript{143} “Old Bricks to Be Used Again: Material from Razed Ice Plant Saved for Home for Aged,” \textit{Washington Post}; Dec. 27, 1914, R5.
That same year, the District built a new produce and seafood market wharf at the foot of 11th Street.\textsuperscript{144} Although the Municipal Fish Market building was demolished in 1960, one building remains from the initial development.\textsuperscript{145} The small, rectangular, 1916-18 Lunch Room Building, later joined to the 1916-18 Oyster Shucking Shed (Typology Table C1.1), is an early municipal example of the colonial revival style, which was heavily promoted by the Commission of Fine Arts created by Congress in 1910.\textsuperscript{146}

Another surviving municipal building that reflects the City Beautiful movement is the Municipal Dog Pound and Health Department Stable, built in 1912 on land reclaimed from the James Creek Canal at the Intersection of South Capitol and I streets.\textsuperscript{147} (Typology Table C1.2) This single-story, red-brick building with colonial revival-accented hipped roof and central cupola replaced a primitive facility in Foggy Bottom.

![Figure 54. Dog Pound and Stable. Peter Sefton](image)

Between 1897 and 1910, after periods when public schools were designed by the Office of the Architect of the Capitol and the Office of the Building Inspector, the District government commissioned school designs from prominent architects in private practice. The two Southwest schools that survive from this period reflect what the public schools thematic study terms its defining characteristics. They are built in brick of varying color with terra cotta and limestone trim in the Renaissance, Italian Renaissance, colonial


\textsuperscript{145} The Lunch Room Building is described in detail in the National Register Nomination Form prepared by EHT Traceries, posted on the DC Historic Preservation Office webpage for pending hearings.

\textsuperscript{146} Beauchamp and Lee, F8.

\textsuperscript{147} The Dog Pound and Stable is described in detail in the National Register Nomination Form prepared by Hayden Wetzel, posted on the DC Historic Preservation Office webpage for pending hearings.
revival, Elizabethan Gothic, or collegiate Gothic styles. Erected for African-American pupils in 1902 and named for the first African-American member of Board of Trustees for the Colored Schools of Washington, the William Syphax Elementary School at 1360 Half Street was designed by the prominent firm of Marsh & Peter in the colonial revival style. (Typology Table C1.3)

Figure 55. William Syphax Elementary School. Peter Sefton

Randall Junior High School, located in the unit block of I Street, has an original section designed by Marsh & Peter, built in 1906 as the Francis Cardozo Elementary School for African-American pupils and expanded for upper grade instruction in 1927. (Typology Table C1.4)

Significance.

Government buildings of this sub-period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of construction reflect such important themes as the development of a racially segregated system of public education, the evolution of municipal functions, the development of the Southwest waterfront, and the influence of the City Beautiful movement.

Registration Requirements.

Government buildings of this sub-period, including the Randall and Syphax schools, and the Dog Pound and Stables, have been eligible for the DC Inventory and ultimately the National Register under Criteria A and C. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they

---

148 Beauchamp and Lee, F7.
149 Parsons-Brinkerhof, 4-3.
must retain their original mass and scale. Remnants or archaeological evidence of such a property type could qualify under Criterion D. Such significant architectural remnants could provide information about early construction techniques or important information about the economic life of the community and its residents.

Figure 56. Randall Junior High School. Peter Sefton

- **Sub-Period: New schools and a change of aesthetic, 1919-45**

During the years between the world wars, the industrial area along the Independence Avenue corridor gave way to the Federal Center office development as well as the expansion of the Mall and Capitol grounds. However, relatively little federal or municipal construction occurred in the study area south of F Street. In 1922, the two-story “head house” of a city wharf became the headquarters of the harbor police precinct.150

The two most prominent government buildings erected in the study area during the interwar years reflected particular eras in the development of both public schools and the work of the municipal architect’s office. The Anthony Bowen Elementary School represented a 1930 rebuilding and expansion of an earlier school in the simplified version of the colonial revival style favored by municipal architect Albert I. Harris. Located in the unit block of I Street, the Bowen School served African-American pupils. (Typology Table C2.1)

While the Bowen School employs a simplified colonial revival style, Jefferson Junior High School, designed in 1940 by Harris’ successor, Nathan A. Wyeth, exemplifies a high Georgian revival style. (Typology Table C2.2) Jefferson is an important work by Wyeth, municipal architect from 1933 to 1946, who, as architectural historians Tanya

---

Beauchamp and Antoinette Lee have noted, was a major architect whose work exerted an enormous influence on the look of the city: “Wyeth’s fine sense of proportion, massing, and siting evidenced his Beaux-Arts training... He is a transitional figure in public architecture, occupying a niche between Beaux-Arts formalism and International School functionalism. His work is thoughtful and creative in a time of extraordinary national crisis and change. His role in creating a sense of unity in the design of public buildings in the city during his tenure as Municipal Architect is of the utmost importance.”

During the 1940s, Wyeth supervised the design of numerous important municipal buildings in a streamlined moderne style, including the Municipal Center and DC National Guard Armory, whose construction began almost as soon as Jefferson was completed. However, Jefferson is an elegant refinement of the revival styles favored by Harris, a choice Wyeth employed in his noted design for the Petworth Library constructed during the previous year. This formality of style underlines the community importance of Jefferson, built to provide white students with manual training. Its construction marked the culmination of 13 years’ struggle to replace the 1872 Cluss-designed school, and was a major victory in at least white Southwest residents’ efforts to claim a proportionate share of municipal resources. The building’s two-story east wing was dedicated to the first public library branch in Southwest, which had been the only quadrant in the city without such a facility.

**Significance.**

Government buildings of this sub-period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect important period themes, including the growth of government-developed recreational

---

151 Beauchamp and Lee, F10.
facilities, the evolution of government-funded construction as economic stimulus projects, and the provision of municipal services to outlying or underserved areas.

![Image of Jefferson Junior High School]

Figure 58. Jefferson Junior High School. Peter Sefton

Registration Requirements.

Jefferson Junior High School has been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register under the Multiple Property Listing for the District of Columbia Public Schools, as well as for its association with municipal architect Nathan C. Wyeth, a master architect. Other government buildings of this sub-period may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A, B, and C.

1946-73 Postwar Period – Decades of Dramatic Change

During the 1960s, a parallel federal construction program erected numerous office buildings in the Federal Center area, just north of the Southwest redevelopment zone. Among these are the Forrestal Building (1969) and Marcel Breuer’s Department of Housing and Urban Development Headquarters (1968). An adjoining area just north of the Southwest Freeway was redeveloped with private office buildings, many of which house trade associations that conduct extensive liaison work with federal agencies.

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, the study area’s municipal government buildings were demolished with only a few exceptions. Some were replaced by new buildings that centralized functions in Area C-1, a 30-acre tract along South

Capitol Street that was subtracted from the renewal area in 1955 and redeveloped separately for commercial and municipal uses. Some redevelopment-era public buildings, such as the 1960 Motor Vehicle Inspection Station on Half Street that replaced the original 1939 facility at 10th and F streets, are strictly utilitarian structures. Others, like District of Columbia Fire Department Repair Shop at 6th and E streets (also 1960), apply the functionalist aesthetic principles of modernism.

Figure 59. Amidon School. Peter Sefton

Two public buildings that most clearly represent the modernist principles of the “new Southwest” are neighbors. With the elimination of the Office of the Municipal Architect in 1954, public school design reverted to architects in private practice. The Margaret Amidon School was designed by Lublin, McGAughey and Associates, an international engineering and architecture firm which began as a partnership between Norfolk architect Alfred Loblin and civil engineer John McGAughey in 1945. The only elementary school erected in Southwest during the redevelopment period, Amidon opened at 4th and I streets in 1961 and replaced a building of the same name that had served from 1882 until 1957. (Typology Table C3.1)

The Jefferson Junior High School Branch Library wing was a stopgap remedy for a civic lack that was finally repaired by the 1965 construction of the Southwest Branch Library on Town Center Plaza across I Street from the Amidon School. (Typology Table C3.2) The library building was designed by Angelo R. Clas (1887-1970) of the local firm of Clas & Riggs, who served as the District’s director of housing and assistant administrator of public works between 1934 and 1938. His original design was too rigorously

---

154 Ammon, 29-40.
155 Ammon, 73.
modernist for the Commission on Fine Arts, which rejected it as “severe and forbidding for a small urban library.”

Figure 60. Southwest Branch Library. Peter Sefton

Significance.

Government buildings of the postwar period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect such period themes as the implementation of modernist urban planning and architectural principles. They are unique within the city and represent a departure from previous forms of development. Their construction represents the implementation of a quadrant-wide urban plan on an unprecedented scale.

Registration Requirements.

Government buildings of the postwar period may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and B, Criterion C, or a combination of all three. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they must retain their original mass and scale.

---