



DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Name(s): The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Street Address(es): 2700 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20566

Square(s) and Lot(s): 0012 0806

Property Owner(s): Federal Government

The property/properties is/are being evaluated for potential historical significance as/for:

- ☒ An individual building or structure.
- ☐ A contributing element of a historic district (specify):
- ☐ A possible expansion of a historic district (specify):
- ☐ A previously unevaluated historic district to be known as (specify):
- ☐ An archaeological resource with site number(s) (specify):
- ☐ An object (e.g. statue, stone marker etc.) (specify):
- ☐ A new multiple property/thematic study regarding (specify):
- ☐ Association with a multiple property/thematic study (specify):
- ☐ Other (specify):

Description, rationale for determination, photos & other pertinent information (enter below):

I. Introduction

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Kennedy Center) has the unique distinction of serving as both a national performing arts center and as the only presidential memorial to John F. Kennedy in the Nation's Capital. Located at 2700 F Street, NW, at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue, NW, and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the Kennedy Center is situated on an eminent site overlooking the Potomac River at the western edge of the Monumental Core of Washington, D.C. (See Figure 1.) The Kennedy Center is one of the nation's busiest cultural institutions, producing and presenting a wide variety of performances and leading the nation in arts education and accessibility. It was designed by twentieth-century master architect Edward Durell Stone and was constructed between 1964 and 1971.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the potential eligibility of the Kennedy Center for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The evaluation is based on the four criteria for inclusion in the National Register: Criterion A, properties associated with significant events; Criterion B, properties associated with significant persons; Criterion C, properties that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, properties that represent the work of a master, or properties that possess high artistic value; and Criterion D, properties that yield information important to prehistory or history. Due to the fact that the building was completed in 1971 and is a Congressionally designated presidential memorial, National Register Criterion Consideration F, for commemorative properties, and National Register Criterion Consideration G, for properties less than fifty years old, were also applied in evaluating the building.

The focus of this determination of eligibility is the building exterior. Thus, the evaluation of integrity and list of character-defining features address only exterior elements.

III. Methodology

In assessing the potential individual eligibility of the Kennedy Center, Robinson & Associates consulted two key background resources – the D.C. Historic Preservation Office’s historic context study *DC Modern* and the General Services Administration’s study *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*.¹ The *DC Modern* study examined the Modern Movement of architecture in Washington, D.C., and provided a framework for analyzing individual products of the Modern era for future landmark status. The GSA study provided valuable historic context on federal buildings of the Modern era and a definition of the time period. Informative secondary sources included the book *Miracle on the Potomac: The Kennedy Center from the Beginning* by Ralph E. Becker and the journal article, “The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: From Dream to Reality,” published in the *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*.

Research materials provided by the Kennedy Center included annual reports, historic photographs, and architectural drawings. Electronic databases such as Avery and ProQuest were queried for relevant journal and newspaper articles. Vertical files from the Kiplinger Research Library at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and from the Washingtoniana Collection of the District of Columbia Martin Luther King, Jr., Public Library provided background materials and images. Field study included a general photographic survey to record existing conditions of the building and the site.

IV. Executive Summary

The Kennedy Center was dedicated in 1971 as a national performing arts center and as a presidential monument to John F. Kennedy. An evaluation of the potential historic and architectural significance of the Kennedy Center concludes that the building possesses national significance under National Register Criterion B, for its association with President John F. Kennedy, and national significance under National Register Criterion C, as the work of a master architect Edward Durell Stone and as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Modern Movement. Because the Kennedy Center functions partially as a commemorative property and has achieved significance within the past fifty years, Criteria Considerations F and G were applied in evaluating its significance. The Kennedy Center retains a high degree of exterior integrity for its location, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and to some degree its setting and materials. The period of significance is 1964 to present, corresponding to the year construction began and the period in which the Kennedy Center has functioned as a presidential memorial.

V. Site and Building Chronology

The Kennedy Center is located in the District’s Foggy Bottom neighborhood, generally described as the area bound by 17th Street, NW, on the east, Constitution Avenue on the south, the Potomac River and Rock Creek Park on the west, and Pennsylvania Avenue on the north. Historically, the neighborhood was divided into two sections separated roughly by 23rd Street, NW. The section west of 23rd Street with riverfront access developed into an industrial area

¹ See Robinson & Associates, Inc., “DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976” (Washington, D.C., 2009) and Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60, and 70s* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration, 2003).

populated by working-class, immigrant families, while the area east of 23rd Street, further removed from the marshy riverfront and closer to the White House, developed into a primarily residential, upper-income neighborhood.

The development of Foggy Bottom began with German immigrant Jacob Funk, who subdivided a large tract of land near the junction of the Potomac River and Rock Creek in the 1760s and incorporated it as the town of Hamburg. Swampy ground discouraged residential development, and Funk's venture did not progress as planned. Instead, beginning in the early nineteenth century, the area of Foggy Bottom west of 23rd Street – whose primary asset was its proximity to river transport – developed into one of Washington, D.C.'s few industrial centers. Wharves and warehouses went up along the waterfront to support local manufacturers of lime, glass, and other wares. The completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in 1850 further stimulated commercial and industrial growth. The Heurich Brewery and the storage tanks of the Washington Gas Light Company added to the industrial character of the area. Other businesses over the years included a lumberyard, factories producing ammonia and fertilizer, and an ice house.²

The availability of manufacturing and industrial jobs in Foggy Bottom attracted working-class European immigrants and African Americans, and the area developed into one of the city's few ethnically diverse neighborhoods. Laborers and their families occupied modest row houses, which came to dominate the streetscape west of 23rd Street, NW. Another form of workers' housing – alley dwellings – was also prevalent. Immigrant and African American communities left their mark on the neighborhood, establishing churches, social societies, and athletic clubs. By the early twentieth century, waterways were surpassed by more efficient methods of transporting raw materials and finished goods in and out of the city. As a result, many businesses in Foggy Bottom were shuttered, its ethnic communities dispersed, and the area went into a period of decline. By midcentury, the storage tanks of the Washington Gas Light Company were demolished, and in 1960 the Heurich Brewery ceased operations.³ The relocation of George Washington University to Foggy Bottom in 1912 indicated changes to come. After World War II, many large institutions and government agencies established their headquarters in the neighborhood. Blocks of older residential structures were demolished to accommodate new large-scale institutional buildings, and eventually, the architectural character of the area was dramatically transformed.

The urban renewal movement emerged in Washington with the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945. Later, as conventional urban renewal programs progressed in areas such as Southwest, an alternate method of redevelopment began to gain support among planners and policy makers. This method limited indiscriminate clearance and instead encouraged rehabilitation. Foggy Bottom emerged as a demonstration piece of the two methods, combining rehabilitation of the neighborhood's historic row houses with large-scale clearance and redevelopment.⁴ Redevelopment in the western section of Foggy Bottom eliminated almost all traces of the neighborhood's industrial past. The site of the Washington Gas Light Company was purchased in 1952 by developers for the construction of Potomac Plaza, an enormous residential complex that was to contain luxury apartments, shops, and restaurants. Never built in its entirety, Potomac Plaza served as a catalyst for other development projects including Columbia Plaza

² EHT Traceries, Inc. "Foggy Bottom Historic District." D.C. Historic Preservation Office Neighborhood Brochure, 2004.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976," 41.

(1963-67) and the Watergate (1964-71).⁵ The construction of major interstate highways and the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge added to the area's transformation. Coinciding with these examples of site clearance and urban renewal, private investors worked to rehabilitate the neighborhood's modest working-class row houses. Preservation activity culminated in 1987, when over 200 buildings were designated the Foggy Bottom Historic District.⁶

During the post-World War II period, many cities in the United States and Europe viewed the urban renewal movement as an opportunity to establish their cultural credibility and sophistication by developing large urban performing arts centers.⁷ In Washington, planning for the Kennedy Center began with the passage of Public Law 128, signed by President Eisenhower on July 1, 1955, which created the District of Columbia Auditorium Commission. This commission was tasked with formulating plans for the siting, design, and financing of a civic auditorium and was given six months to report to Congress with their recommendations. Several possible locations were initially considered by the commission including sites in Southwest and on the Mall. When the group issued their final report, it outlined plans for a "National Civic Auditorium and Cultural Center" on a site in Foggy Bottom.⁸ This proposed location generated significant local opposition from groups such as the Redevelopment Land Agency, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Greater Washington Board of Trade, which challenged the Foggy Bottom site based on potential conflicts with other private and public projects planned for the area, including the inner belt freeway and the Potomac Plaza complex. Proponents of the Southwest site argued that the success of the Southwest urban renewal project depended on a showpiece like the National Cultural Center and that land in the redevelopment area was readily available and less costly than land in Foggy Bottom. Debate in Congress over the proposed location and over the projected budget stalled the project. Ultimately, an alternative site in Foggy Bottom was identified (the Kennedy Center's current location), and consensus was reached. The National Cultural Center Act was signed on September 2, 1958, establishing the mission of the National Cultural Center for the Performing Arts as the presentation of classical and contemporary music, opera, drama, dance, and poetry; the establishment of educational programs; the development of programs for all age groups; and the provision of facilities for other civic activities.⁹

In June 1959, architect Edward Durell Stone was selected to develop a concept for the National Cultural Center project. Stone was born in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and received his undergraduate education at the University of Arkansas. He moved to Boston in 1923 where he studied at the Boston Architectural Club (now Boston Architectural College), Harvard, and MIT. After two years of study and travel in Europe, Stone moved to New York and established his firm, Edward Durell Stone & Associates, in 1936. Stone's early work employed, to great

⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁶ Lois Snyderman, "Foggy Bottom Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, October 14, 1987.

⁷ Theodore H.M. Prudon, *Preservation of Modern Architecture* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008): 357-59.

⁸ Ralph E. Becker, *Miracle on the Potomac: The Kennedy Center from the Beginning* (Silver Spring, MD: Bartleby Press, 1990): 17. The Foggy Bottom site originally proposed was bounded by New Hampshire and Virginia Avenues, 23rd Street, 26th Street, E Street, and Water Streets, NW. See Roger Meersman, "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: From Dream to Reality," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 50 (1980): 534.

⁹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952-2005," (Washington, D.C., 2008): 137.

success, the architectural idiom of the International Style. Examples included the Mandel House (1933-35) in Mount Kisco, NY, the A. Conger Goodyear House (1938-39) in Old Westbury, NY, and the Museum of Modern Art (1939) in New York City, which he designed with Philip L. Goodwin.¹⁰ Beginning in the 1950s, Stone grew disenchanted with the strictures of the International Style and adopted a less severe approach influenced by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, whom he considered a friend and mentor.

Stone made his reputation and established his place among the major figures in twentieth-century architecture with his widely admired design for the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi (1959). The embassy represents the earliest manifestation of Stone's individualistic style – a blend of formal, classical traditions with contemporary materials and methods.¹¹ A monumental temple-like white box, the embassy was raised on a platform to allow for lower-level parking where cars were located out of sight and sheltered from the elements. Windows were shaded by exterior grilles and a deep roof overhang, which was supported by slender columns. Stone's success with the embassy led to major civic, commercial, and institutional commissions in the United States and abroad, including the commission for the National Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. Others major works by Stone during this period were the U.S. Pavilion at the 1957 Brussels World's Fair (demolished), the National Geographic Society Headquarters (1964) in Washington, D.C., the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art (1964) in New York City, and the Campus Center (1966) in Anchorage, AK.¹²

By 1959, when Edward Durell Stone was asked to design the National Cultural Center, he had already established a solid reputation as a highly respected Modernist who had achieved great success and received public acclaim for major public commissions. Before the age of the “starchitect,” Stone was featured on the 1958 cover of *Time* magazine, an achievement shared by master architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, and later Le Corbusier, R. Buckminster Fuller, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Stone's original concept for the National Cultural Center featured a clamshell design that extended over the banks of the Potomac River. (See Figure 2.) The design, featuring grand staircases and generous open spaces, was highly praised, but proved to be too extravagant. Its estimated cost prohibited public support and challenged fundraising efforts. Stone agreed to significant revisions and, in 1962, produced a simpler and less expensive design that featured a more classically inspired form. Writing about his personal style, Stone stated, “Although I do not copy classical architecture, my interest in the monuments of the past has led me to give my buildings a formality and, I hope, a dignity that echoes theirs.”¹³ The multilevel design incorporated three performance venues – an opera house, a concert hall, and a theater – into one monumental building.

Fueled by his personal belief in the importance of the arts and culture, President Kennedy took a personal interest in the project. He urged Congress to pass legislation that would enlarge the proposed Foggy Bottom site, writing: “The National Cultural Center is the most significant

¹⁰ The Mandel House was listed in the National Register on March 1, 1996. The Goodyear House was listed on April 12, 2003.

¹¹ Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, “Pine Bluff Civic Center, Pine Bluff, Jefferson County,” <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/historic-properties/national-register/search.asp> (accessed March 18, 2011).

¹² The Campus Center was listed in the National Register on June 22, 1979.

¹³ Edward Durell Stone, “Modern Architecture,” *NEA Journal* 54 (1964): 54-57.

cultural undertaking in the history of this city and has enormous importance to the cultural life of the Nation as a whole.”¹⁴ Kennedy gave the project an additional boost when he appointed Roger L. Stevens, a successful real estate broker and theatrical producer, to be chairman of the Center’s Board of Trustees in 1961.¹⁵

Less than two weeks after President Kennedy’s assassination on November 22, 1963, a bill was introduced to Congress authorizing the Center to be named after the slain president and dedicated as a memorial in his honor. The John F. Kennedy Center Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Johnson on January 23, 1964. The act established that a memorial in honor of the late president be located within the Center and stipulated that the Center be the sole national monument to the late president within the District and its environs. As laid out in its originating legislation, financing for the National Cultural Center was to come solely through private contributions. Generating public awareness and raising financial support for the estimated \$31 million dollar project proved to be an exceptionally difficult task. The John F. Kennedy Center Act, however, provided substantial impetus for the project by stipulating that up to \$15.5 million in federal funds would be appropriated to match private contributions.¹⁶

Although legislative proceedings specified an irregular 7.5-acre site for the Center, Stone’s studies called for a naturalistic setting, and ultimately, a little more than 17 acres were set aside for the building. Stone described his plan stating: “In considering the general building type, I would say that Washington is primarily a city of white buildings in a park-like setting. I would see no reason for departing from that. The National Cultural Center should follow the tradition of white buildings in a park.”¹⁷ (See Figure 3.) Under the Capper-Cramton Act, which authorized appropriations for the purchase of land within the District suitable for the development of a park and parkways system, the National Capital Planning Commission was responsible for acquiring and assembling the parcel necessary for the construction of the Center. The land on which the Center was built, therefore, became part of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and was to be administered by the National Park Service. National Park Service participation in the development of the Kennedy Center included the transfer of park land for the proposed building and the relocation of a portion of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway in order to accommodate traffic needs.¹⁸ Moreover, because the Center was declared a public monument, the National Park Service would be responsible for maintenance, security, information, and other nonperforming arts functions of the Center.

Construction of the Kennedy Center began on December 2, 1964, with a groundbreaking ceremony presided over by President Johnson. The building took nearly seven years to complete and opened on September 8, 1971. (See Figure 4.) With its unbroken row of columns, traditional materials, and solid geometrical forms, Stone aspired to endow the building with a sense of

¹⁴ The American Presidency Project, “Letter to the President of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House on the Proposed National Cultural Center,” <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8530#axzz1OhCvm47d> (accessed June 1, 2011).

¹⁵ Meersman, “The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: From Dream to Reality,” 546.

¹⁶ The \$31 million price tag represented only the cost of the building’s superstructure. Additional funding for the lower-level parking facilities was financed separately. See Meersman, “The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: From Dream to Reality,” 555.

¹⁷ “The National Cultural Center,” Pamphlet Collection, The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ Robinson & Associates, Inc., “National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952-2005,” 138.

permanence and to pay indirect tribute to Washington's Classical Revival traditions.¹⁹ (See Figure 5.)

Contemporary reviews of Stone's design for the Kennedy Center were, for the most part, negative. The building was called a monument to mid-twentieth-century mediocrity by *Washington Post* critic Wolf von Eckardt and a cross between a concrete candy box and a marble sarcophagus by Ada Louise Huxtable in the *New York Times*.²⁰ Surrounded by a complication of roadways and seemingly without straightforward pedestrian access, the Kennedy Center was also condemned for its urbanistic shortcomings. Especially vocal on this issue were those who lobbied earlier for sites in Southwest and along the Mall. The building's scale – particularly in relation to the Lincoln Memorial – was also criticized. Both Eckardt and Huxtable, however, admired Stone's design for public amenities such as the entrance plaza and the terraces.

Despite receiving many negative architectural reviews, the Kennedy Center was praised as a performing arts center and presidential memorial. As a center for the arts, the building was regarded as “an inspired and inspiring catalyst for the capital's cultural life.”²¹ The Kennedy Center's tremendous success as a presidential memorial quickly made it a major tourist destination.²²

In December 1971, three months after the building opened, the high cost of maintaining the building as a public monument – paying for security, cleaning, and the replacement of vandalized property – forced the Center to temporarily shut down to everyone except ticket holders. The building reopened to the general public that spring after Congress appropriated \$1.5 million to cover expenses associated with the building's operation as a presidential memorial.²³

In its early years of operation the Kennedy Center had many maintenance issues. Leaks caused considerable water damage, and repairs involved resurfacing the roof and reconstructing the terraces.²⁴ In 1994, a significant change was made to the John F. Kennedy Center Act that transferred responsibility for operations, maintenance, and capital repairs from the National Park Service to the Kennedy Center's Board of Trustees. In subsequent years, federal funds were allocated to the Kennedy Center for capital improvement projects. In 1997, the penthouse roof was replaced, and the original concrete pavers of the roof terrace were replaced with granite. New exterior lighting, including column washers and wall washers, was installed in 2003.

A major capital improvement undertaking completed in 2005 was the garage expansion and site improvement project. Work involved expanding three levels of the parking garage to the north

¹⁹ Stone disliked the quality of impermanence in Modern architecture stating: “In earlier days, buildings in this country were constructed to have a permanent look. Somewhere along the way since then we have lost the ability to create a feeling or permanence. Much modern architecture seems to have a temporary quality that I do not like;” and “It may be that we are beginning to realize that our cities, our buildings, and our homes should be part of a permanent heritage.” See Stone, “Modern Architecture,” 54-57.

²⁰ See Ada Louise Huxtable, “A Look at the Kennedy Center,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1971, and Wolf von Eckardt, “Rating Washington's Architecture,” *Washington Post*, January 6, 1974.

²¹ Wolf von Eckardt, “If Only it Looked as Good as it Works,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 1973.

²² Newspaper accounts site average visitorship in the months after the Kennedy Center's opening as 45,000 per week. See “Kennedy Center: Tourists Welcome,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1972.

²³ “Center Funds,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 1972.

²⁴ Roger Meersman, “The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: The Early Years of Operation,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 50 (1980): 618-19.

and the south and constructing terraces over the new parking areas.²⁵ The related site improvement work was a multifaceted project that involved reconfiguring pedestrian and vehicular circulation throughout the site, installing new landscaping and site features, and terrace renovations. (See Figure 6.) On the east side of the building, the roadways, sidewalks, and access ramps were reconfigured; street lighting was updated; public art was relocated; and new security booths, bus shelters, granite planting boxes, and fountains were installed. (See Figure 7.) The new terraces on the north and south sides of the building were finished with a patterned concrete slab, and new granite planting boxes and concrete perimeter walls with handrails were installed. On the west side of the building, the River Terrace deck was resurfaced with granite pavers, and granite planting boxes, fountains, and perimeter walls with handrails were installed. (See Figure 8.) Additionally, damaged marble panels on the west fascia of the River Terrace overhang were repaired or replaced in kind as necessary. Granite pavers were installed under the roof overhang around the entire perimeter of the building. (See Figures 9 and 10 for aerial photographs of the Kennedy Center site before and after the garage expansion and site improvement project.)

Most recently, in 2010, the Kennedy Center carried out extensive repairs to the building envelope. This included the replacement of all plaza-level and roof terrace-level exterior glass curtain wall systems and the replacement of all double door and sliding door components. Additionally, the exterior marble cladding on all facades was cleaned, the joints sealed, and the cracks repaired.

VI. Building Description²⁶

The Kennedy Center is characterized as a Formalist building – a Modern-era style typically featuring flat projecting rooflines, smooth wall surfaces, high-quality materials, columnar supports, and strict symmetry.²⁷ Its structural design consists of a curtain wall system composed of glass and masonry cladding supported on a steel frame. Assembled from high-quality materials, the building has a highly symmetrical design featuring clean lines and minimal ornamentation. Its low horizontality is emphasized by cantilevered terraces and projecting rooflines. Rectangular in plan, the Kennedy Center measures 630 feet long, 300 feet wide, and 100 feet high. It has ten stories – three levels of parking, a plaza level, box tier, first tier, second tier, attic, terrace, and penthouse. The flat, overhanging roof is supported by a peristyle of narrow columns stylized with exaggerated fillets. The penthouse, which also features a flat roof with deep eaves supported by narrow columns, is set back from the edge of the roof and surrounded by a wide terrace.

The front of the building faces east, overlooking a broad entrance plaza. The east facade features two symmetrically placed entrances set within recessed glass curtain walls. Bronze signage in the center bay of the east facade reads, “The John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts.” (See Figure 7.) Above this is a single row of regularly spaced vertical openings arranged in pairs. Similar openings in double rows are located to the north and south of the recessed glass

²⁵ On the south, the garage expansion created two tiers of terraces – the upper south terrace and the lower south terrace. Only the upper south terrace is accessible to the public.

²⁶ For the purposes of this report, the building description focuses on the building exterior and does not include a comprehensive narrative on the performance venues or other interior spaces.

²⁷ The General Services Administration (GSA) study *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s* identifies four commonly accepted styles of the Modern era – the International Style, Formalism, Brutalism, and Expressionism. See Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism*, 14-15.

window walls. The east facade of the penthouse features two window walls with doors accessing the roof terrace and an additional pair of window walls to the south that corresponds to the restaurant space on the interior. Large, floor-to-ceiling louvered vents are regularly spaced across the east facade of the penthouse. The west facade, overlooking the Potomac, is punctuated by a series of ten glass curtain walls that provide natural light to the foyer space on the interior. Doors in these window walls access the River Terrace, which affords panoramic views to Georgetown, the Roosevelt Bridge, and beyond. Several quotes are engraved into the marble walls of the west facade. The fenestration pattern of the west facade is repeated at the penthouse level. Louvered vents are located at regular intervals between the penthouse window walls. The thin-clad marble curtain walls of the north and south facades are broken only by stage access doors.

Site features of the entrance plaza include raised granite planting boxes, fountains, flagpoles, and several pieces of public art. Two 16-foot wide bronze panels titled *America* and *War and Peace* are located on either side of the entrance plaza. These are the work of sculptor Jurgen Weber and were a gift from Germany. Sculptor Aurelio Teno created the bronze and stone figure of *Don Quixote*, located in the northeast portion of the entrance plaza. (See Figure 11.) Nearby is an abstract aluminum sculpture by artist Eduardo Ramirez Vallamizar entitled *From Columbia to John F. Kennedy*.²⁸ The north terrace and the upper and lower south terraces, constructed over lower-level parking facilities, are simply designed. The north terrace and the upper south terrace feature raised granite planting boxes and, on the north terrace only, an outdoor seating area. (See Figure 12.) Low concrete perimeter walls with box hedges define the edges of the north terrace and upper south terrace. The west terrace, or River Terrace, cantilevers over the north-bound lanes of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. Features include granite pavers, raised granite planting boxes planted with a double row of willow trees, and two fountains. A low granite perimeter wall with guard rails and box hedges surrounds the River Terrace.

VII. Integrity Assessment

The Kennedy Center retains a high degree of exterior integrity for its location, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and to some degree its setting and materials.

Location is the place where a historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. The Kennedy Center's location continues to be defined by its prominent position along the Potomac River in the District's Foggy Bottom neighborhood. **Feeling** is a property's expression of the aesthetic of a particular period of time. The Kennedy Center's aesthetic is mid-century Formalist, which is unchanged and remains clear and evident. **Association** is the direct link between a property and its historic significance. The Kennedy Center is significant as a presidential memorial, and this function has not been modified or limited since the building's construction. The Kennedy Center is also significant as an important example of a Formalist style building by the American architect Edward Durell Stone. Although the terraces and features of the site design have been modified, the building retains enough of its original features to sufficiently convey its architectural character and its association with the Formalist style. **Design** is a combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Although the building and site have undergone various repairs and renovations since it was constructed, principal elements that compose the building's design are intact and accurately reflect Stone's design intent. **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. Workmanship can also

²⁸ James M. Goode, *Washington Sculpture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008): 211-12.

illustrate the application of technical practices and aesthetic principles. The Kennedy Center's masonry and glass curtain-wall system is a strong expression of the Modern era's experimentation with new construction methods and with mass-produced, prefabricated parts. In addition, the high quality materials used in the building's construction continue to demonstrate the aesthetic principles of the Formalist style. **Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property and refers to the character of the place where a property was built. Stone's vision for the Kennedy Center site was of a monumental building in a park-like setting. This design, however, was never fully realized. Instead, roadway development and other urban conditions put constraints on the site, and green areas were generally limited to confined spaces between access drives, freeways, and the parkway. Changes to the site – mainly the recent garage expansion and site renovation project – have further reduced the green areas around the building, which has had a minor impact on the character of the Kennedy Center's setting. **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. Original materials that have been altered include the plaza-level marble paving, the concrete paving on the roof terrace, the raised marble planting boxes of the River Terrace, the water features of the River Terrace and the entrance plaza, the marble perimeter wall of the River Terrace, and the glass curtain wall systems. The new paving, however, replicates the colors and patterns of the original design, and the size and location of the planting boxes and fountains of the River Terrace remains unchanged.

VIII. Identification of Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features of the Kennedy Center include intangible attributes of the building's aesthetic composition such as its bilateral symmetry; long, low horizontality; organized, hierarchical facades; and clear, geometric form. Additional contributing and noncontributing features include:

NORTH FACADE

Contributing Features

- Thin-clad marble curtain wall
- Roof overhang, including marble-paneled fascia
- Columns
- Stage access doors
- Bronze wall signage

Noncontributing Features

- Exterior lighting, including column washers and wall washers

NORTH TERRACE

Contributing Features

- none

Noncontributing Features

- Granite pavers and concrete slab
- Granite planting boxes and willow trees
- Stairs, ramps, and handrails
- Concrete perimeter walls
- Perimeter wall lighting

Perimeter wall plantings
Stairs from F Street

WEST FACADE

Contributing Features

Thin-clad marble curtain wall
Size and location of plaza-level glass curtain walls²⁹
Roof overhang, including marble-paneled fascia
Columns
Engraved quotations on facade

Noncontributing Features

Plaza-level glass curtain walls and doors
Exterior lighting, including column washers and wall washers

WEST TERRACE (RIVER TERRACE)

Contributing Features

River Terrace footprint and cantilevered structure
Marble panels of the north, west, and south fascia of the River Terrace overhang
Shape and location of planting boxes and double row of willow trees³⁰
Shape and location of water features³¹
Perimeter wall plantings

Noncontributing Features

Granite pavers
Granite planting boxes
Granite water features
Granite perimeter walls
Perimeter wall guardrails

SOUTH FACADE

Contributing Features

Thin-clad marble curtain wall
Roof overhang, including marble-paneled fascia
Columns
Stage access doors
Bronze wall signage

Noncontributing Features

Exterior lighting, including column washers and wall washers

²⁹ The Kennedy Center's glass curtain walls were all replaced as part of extensive repairs to the building envelope carried out in 2010. As part of this work, the glass curtain wall systems and doors of the plaza level and penthouse level were entirely replaced. As such, only the size and location of the plaza-level and roof terrace-level glass curtain walls are identified as contributing features.

³⁰ Originally, the River Terrace planting boxes were marble. As part of the garage expansion and site improvement project, granite planting boxes were installed. Their size and location, however, follows the original design.

³¹ Originally, the River Terrace fountains were marble. As part of the garage expansion and site improvement project, granite fountains were installed. Their size and location, however, follows the original design.

UPPER SOUTH TERRACE

Contributing Features

none

Noncontributing Features

Granite pavers and concrete slab
Granite planting boxes and willow trees
Stairs, ramps, and handrails
Concrete perimeter walls
Perimeter wall lighting
Perimeter wall plantings

LOWER SOUTH TERRACE

Contributing Features

None

Noncontributing Features

Concrete slab
Concrete perimeter walls

EAST FACADE

Contributing Features

Thin-clad marble curtain wall
Size and location of plaza-level glass curtain walls
Roof overhang, including marble-paneled fascia
Columns
Vertical paired openings in north, south, and center bays
Bronze wall signage
Stage access doors

Noncontributing Features

Plaza-level glass curtain walls and doors
Exterior lighting, including column washers and wall washers

ENTRANCE PLAZA

Contributing Features

Size and location of water features³²
Public art including the sculptures *Don Quixote*, *From Columbia to John F. Kennedy*, and *America and War and Peace*³³

Noncontributing Features

³² Originally, the entrance plaza fountains were marble. As part of the garage expansion and site improvement project, granite fountains were installed. Their size and location, however, follows the original design.

³³ When the Kennedy Center was dedicated in 1971, the only public art on site were the panels *America and War and Peace*, located in the entrance plaza. The sculpture *From Columbia to John F. Kennedy* was installed in 1973 within the traffic circle south of the building, and *Don Quixote* was installed in 1976 within the landscape on the east side of the building. All three sculptures were relocated as part of the garage expansion and site improvement project to their current locations.

- Granite pavers and scored concrete pavement
- Granite planting boxes
- Granite water features
- Flagpoles
- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation features
- Street lighting
- Security booths
- Bus shelters
- Signage
- Landscaping

ROOF TERRACE

Contributing Features

- Columns
- Curtain walls
- Size and location of glass curtain walls
- Louvered vents
- Penthouse roof overhang, including marble-paneled fascia

Noncontributing Features

- Glass curtain walls and doors
- Granite pavers
- Granite perimeter wall
- Perimeter wall guardrails

IX. Statement of Potential Significance³⁴

Properties listed in the National Register must possess both historic significance and integrity. To be considered historically significant, they must meet at least one of four National Register Criteria. Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years are not considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts or if they meet special requirements called Criteria Considerations. Because the Kennedy Center functions partially as commemorative property and has achieved significance within the past fifty years, two Criteria Considerations must be applied in evaluating its significance.

The first, **Criteria Consideration F**, applies to commemorative properties designed or constructed after the occurrence of an important historic event or after the life of an important person. A property primarily commemorative in intent can be eligible if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance. A commemorative property may be significant for the architectural, artistic, or other design qualities of its period. Although a commemorative property may not qualify for the National Register for its association with the event or person it memorializes, it may qualify if it has come to symbolize the value placed upon

³⁴ For the purposes of this evaluation, the statement of potential significance – as it relates to the potential significance under National Register Criterion C – primarily focuses on the exterior of the building.

the individual and is widely recognized as a reminder of enduring principles or contributions valued by the generation that erected the monument.

The second, **Criterion Consideration G**, applies to properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years and states that special exception is made for properties of the recent past that are of *exceptional importance* at the national, state, or local level. Exceptional importance may reflect the extraordinary impact of a political or social event or it may apply to a category of resources so fragile that survivors of any age are unusual. Exceptional importance may also be represented by a building or structure whose developmental or design value is quickly recognized as historically significant by the architectural or engineering professions. Nominations for properties of less than fifty years of age must address two issues. First, they must provide a straightforward description of why the property is historically significant with direct reference to the specific relevant National Register Criteria. Second, the nomination must contain deliberate, distinct justification for exceptional importance under the applicable Criteria.³⁵

Potential Significance under National Register Criterion A (properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history):

The Kennedy Center does not appear to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as a resource associated with significant past events.

Potential Significance under National Register Criterion B (properties associated with the lives of persons significant to our past) and Criteria Considerations F and G:

Less than two weeks after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, a bill was introduced to Congress amending the National Cultural Center Act to establish the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as a national memorial to the late president. The John F. Kennedy Center Act, signed by President Johnson on January 23, 1964, stipulated that the National Cultural Center be renamed the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, that a suitable memorial in honor of the late president be located within the Center, and that the Center would serve as “the sole national monument to the late president within the city of Washington and its environs.”³⁶ Additionally, the Act authorized \$15.5 million in federal funding for the project, which represented a significant level of support for the financially stressed project.

In the wake of Kennedy’s death, no memorial was seen as a better tribute to the president than the National Cultural Center. During his administration, Kennedy was responsible for sparking a revival of national interest in cultural matters.³⁷ He believed that the life of the arts was an indicator of the quality of a nation’s civilization and was committed to establishing a climate within which the arts could flourish. During his administration he

³⁵ The District of Columbia’s historic preservation law does not contain a fifty-year rule-of-thumb, but requires a sufficient amount of time to have passed to judge a property in its historical context. This is partly to avoid excluding obviously exceptional buildings of more recent eras.

³⁶ The John F. Kennedy Center Act, 88th Cong., 1st sess., H. Rept. 1050.

³⁷ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, “Preface to online transcript of President Kennedy’s Remarks at Amherst College, October 26, 1963,” <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/80308LXB5kOPFEJqkw5hlA.aspx> (accessed June 1, 2011).

worked to further the cultural appreciation of the arts among all people, to increase respect for the creative individual, and to widen participation in the artistic process. Accordingly, the National Cultural Center project was given his top-level support. The White House appointed Jacqueline Kennedy and Mamie Eisenhower as co-chairman of the Center and issued all announcements about the project as official White House press releases.³⁸ Kennedy spoke at Washington's National Guard Armory as part of a televised kick-off event for a national fund-raising drive on behalf of the Center, stating: "I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit."³⁹ Furthermore, in an address made a few weeks before his death, President Kennedy remarked: "I look forward to an America which will steadily raise the standards of artistic accomplishment and which will steadily enlarge cultural opportunities for all of our citizens. And I look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well."⁴⁰ The National Cultural Center project embodied Kennedy's deep convictions about the role of culture in our national life and furthered his desire to encourage arts appreciation among all people. It quickly became a national showcase, symbolizing Kennedy's efforts to revitalize the arts in America.

The Kennedy Center possesses exceptional significance as the sole national memorial to President John F. Kennedy within the National Capital and its environs. The Kennedy Center is an important landmark that, more than any other memorial constructed in Kennedy's honor, successfully embodies his passion and appreciation for the arts and culture and symbolizes his belief that a civilization's legacy is shaped by the quality of its artistic contributions. By promoting the arts on a national level and making culture accessible to all, the Kennedy Center is widely recognized as a reminder of Kennedy's enduring values and convictions. For these reasons, it possesses exceptional significance at the national level as a presidential memorial honoring John F. Kennedy in the Nation's Capital and qualifies as eligible for the National Register under Criterion B and Criteria Considerations F and G.

Potential Significance under National Register Criterion C (properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction) and Criteria Considerations F and G:

Edward Durell Stone achieved great professional success and wide recognition during his career. As noted above, while Stone's early work employed the architectural idiom of the International Style, later he became an influential practitioner of what became known as the Formalist style. This style, "tempered the abstraction of modernism by reintegrating

³⁸ See Meersman, "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: From Dream to Reality," 546 and Becker, *Miracle on the Potomac*, " 38.

³⁹ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, "John F. Kennedy Quotations," <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Quotations.aspx> (accessed June 1, 2011). This quotation can also be found inscribed on the west facade of the Kennedy Center.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

ornamentation and historicist symmetries.”⁴¹ It was characterized by flat projecting rooflines, smooth wall surfaces, high-quality materials, columnar supports, and strict symmetry. Stone received two highly-regarded public commissions that established his reputation internationally – the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi (1959) and the U.S. Pavilion at the 1957 Brussels World’s Fair. These projects came at a time when public officials eyed Modernism warily, and Stone’s designs represented an early attempt by the federal government to endorse the style.⁴² Stone was later selected to design the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Transportation (1969) in Washington, D.C.⁴³ This project came after the development of Kennedy’s *Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space* and the subsequent “Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture,” which directed that new federal design should embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought and construction. Public buildings of the 1960s, particularly in Washington, D.C., were considered to be more successful and of a higher design quality than buildings of immediately prior and later eras. Other notable Modern-era buildings constructed during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and the years following the release of the *Ad Hoc Committee* recommendations include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by Marcel Breuer (1965-68) and the U.S. Tax Court by Victor Lundy (1972-1975).⁴⁴ Stone received critical acclaim during his career and won numerous awards. He was the recipient of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honor Award several times – in 1958 for the Stuart Pharmaceutical Plant Headquarters in Pasadena, CA, in 1961 for the U. S. Embassy in New Delhi, and in 1967 for the Museo de Arte de Ponce, in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He was also the recipient of the AIA Merit Award in 1958 for the U.S. Pavilion for the Brussels World’s Fair and in 1963 for the General Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula in Carmel, CA.⁴⁵ Today, the Kennedy Center is one of the most iconic and recognizable achievements of Stone’s career.

The Modern Movement in architecture has been the subject of numerous conferences, symposia, and scholarly evaluations. Within this context, Edward Durell Stone is recognized to have been one of the era’s most influential practitioners. In 2003, when 2 Columbus Circle (originally the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art designed by Stone in 1964) was threatened with a major renovation that would essentially destroy the building’s original facade, there was considerable outcry from architects and preservationists across the country. Architect Robert A.M. Stern came to Stone’s defense, arguing that he was “one of the most important and admired architects of his generation.”⁴⁶ Others pointed out that although today Stone may be considered “hopelessly unfashionable,” it would be a misfortune to lose such an interesting example of his work and shortsighted to decide the building’s fate based on current tastes and

⁴¹ Alan Hess, “Coming to Terms with the Sixties,” *National Trust Forum* 24, no. 4 (2010): 24.

⁴² Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (New York: Dutton, 1998): 110.

⁴³ The Department of Transportation, also known as the Nassif Building located at 400 7th Street, NW, was substantially renovated in 2006 and renamed the Constitution Center.

⁴⁴ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites on June 26, 2008, and is listed in the National Register. The U.S. Tax Court was listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites on June 26, 2008, and is listed in the National Register. Evaluation of the District’s Modern-era resources is ongoing.

⁴⁵ American Institute of Architects, “Honor Awards 1949-1959,”

http://aiawebdev2.aia.org/about2_template.cfm?pagename=library_honorawards (accessed June 3, 2011).

⁴⁶ Robert A.M. Stern, “Critique,” *Architectural Record* 188 (2000): 63.

trends.⁴⁷ Stone's collective body of work is recognized as having a significant impact on Modern buildings, and many of his designs have garnered considerable acclaim. Examples include the Richard H. Mandel House (1933-35) in Mount Kisco, NY, which was listed in the National Register as an outstanding and highly intact example of an International Style house and Stone's first private commission, and the Stuart Pharmaceutical Company (1958) in Pine Bluff, CA, which was listed as an outstanding example of the Formalist style, among others.⁴⁸ Stone's influential contributions to the Modern Movement are considered responsible for much of the widespread use of the Formalist style in federal buildings of the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁹

While there are other examples of Stone's work and other examples of the Formalist style in Washington, the Kennedy Center is the most highly visible and important due to its role as a national performing arts center by a Modern master and its iconic status as the only presidential memorial to John F. Kennedy in the Nation's Capital.⁵⁰

Under National Register Criterion C and Criteria Considerations F and G, the Kennedy Center possesses exceptional significance as an important example of the work of Edward Durell Stone, a nationally recognized master architect of the Modern Movement, and as a public monument to President John F. Kennedy that is immediately recognizable as one of the nation's most iconic memorials.

Potential Significance under National Register Criterion D (properties that have yielded, or are likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history):

The Kennedy Center was not evaluated using Criterion D. A comprehensive archaeological survey of the entire site has not been conducted to determine whether archaeological resources are present.

Potential Period of Significance

The Kennedy Center is significant for the period 1964 to the present. The period of significance begins in 1964, marking the beginning of construction and the signing of the John F. Kennedy Center Act by President Johnson, and continues to the present, corresponding to its ongoing function as a presidential memorial.

⁴⁷ Phillip Lopate, Robert A.M. Stern, Theodore H.M. Prudon, and Witold Rybczynski, "What Should We Do with 2 Columbus Circle?" *Preservation* (November/December 2004): 25.

⁴⁸ To date, eight buildings designed by Stone have been listed in the National Register, including two under Criteria Consideration G for buildings less than fifty years old.

⁴⁹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism*, 32.

⁵⁰ Other examples of Stone's work in Washington include the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (1955) at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the National Geographic Society Headquarters (1964), U.S. Department of Transportation (1969), and the Georgetown University Law Center (1971). Another example of the Formalist style in the District is the Federal Reserve Board Building (1971-74) by Harbeson, Hough, Livingston & Larson.

X. Bibliography

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XI. Images

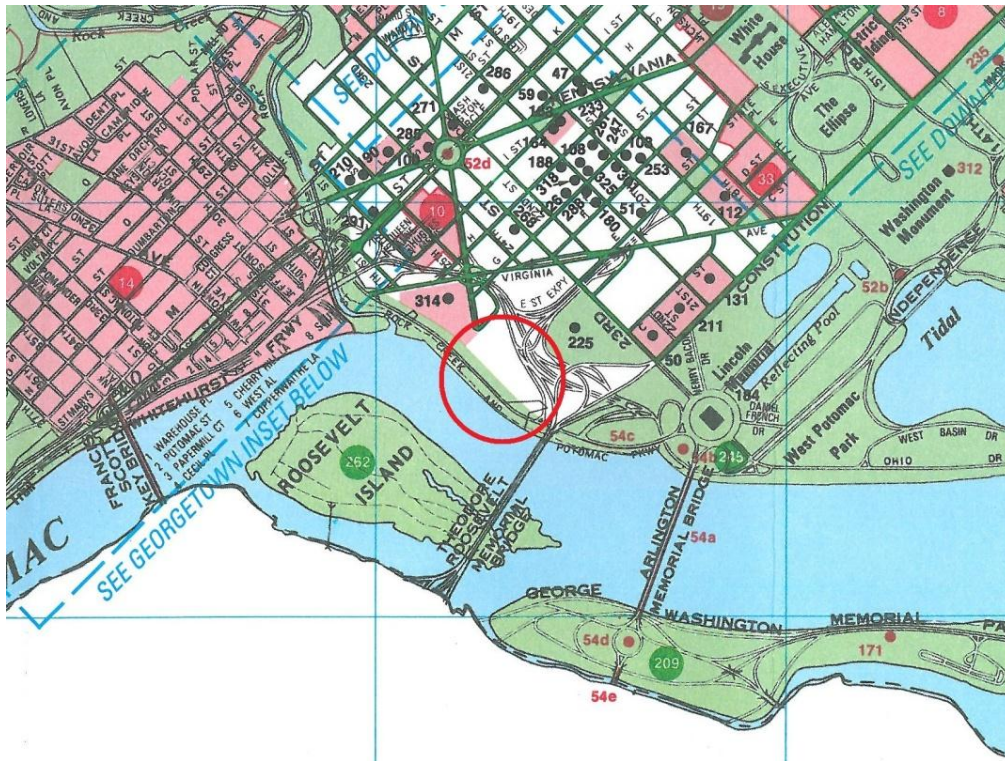


Figure 1: The Kennedy Center is located at 2700 F Street along the Potomac River.



Figure 2: Stone's original proposal for the National Cultural Center featured a clamshell design.
(Photo from *John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts* by Brendan Gill)



Figure 3: A model of Stone's design for the Kennedy Center illustrating the proposed naturalistic, park-like setting (date unknown). (Photo from *John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts* by Brendan Gill)



Figure 4: The Kennedy Center under construction (date unknown). (Photo courtesy the Kennedy Center)



Figure 5: The west facade of the Kennedy Center (2010). Stone aspired to endow the design of the Kennedy Center with a sense of permanence, relating it to Washington's other Classical Revival monuments. (Photo courtesy Greenhorne & O'Mara)

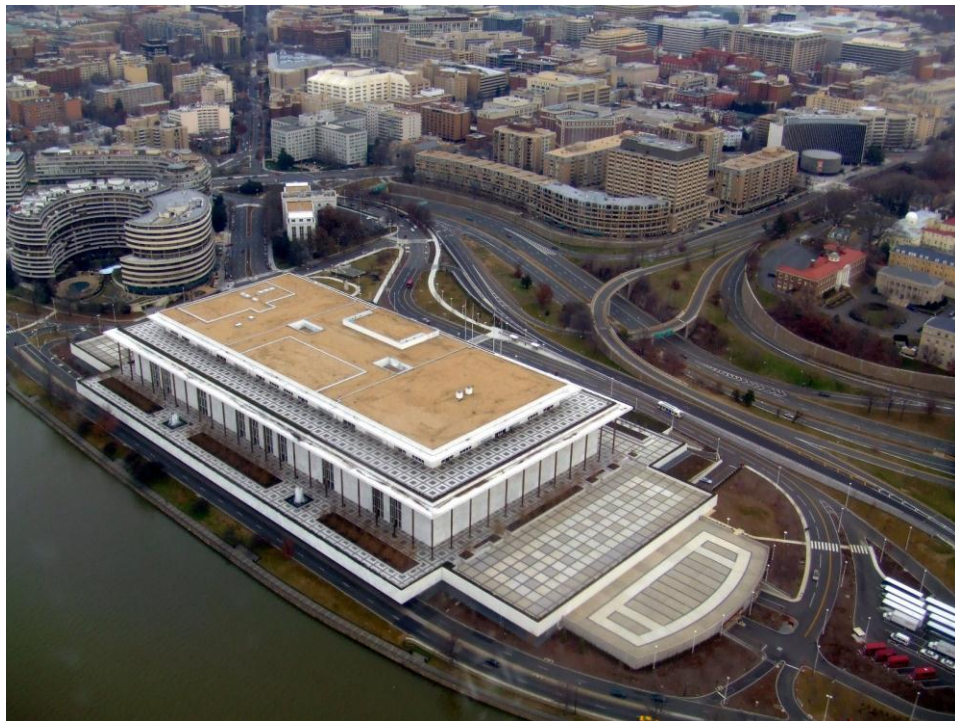


Figure 6: Kennedy Center, looking northeast (ca. 2006). As part of recent garage renovations, three levels of the parking garage were expanded to the north and south, and terraces were constructed over the new parking areas. (Photo courtesy the Kennedy Center)



Figure 7: East facade of the Kennedy Center, looking west (date unknown). Recent site renovations on the east side of the building involved reconfiguring roadways, sidewalks, and access ramps; updating street lighting; relocating public art; and installing new security booths, bus shelters, granite planting boxes, and fountains. (Photo courtesy the Kennedy Center)



Figure 8: River terrace, looking north (2011). Recent renovations on the River Terrace included the installation of granite perimeter walls with handrails and the resurfacing of the terrace deck. In addition, the original marble planting boxes and fountains were replaced with granite. (Robinson & Associates)



Figure 9: Aerial photograph of the Kennedy Center site (1999). This aerial was taken before the garage expansion and site improvement project. (Google Earth)



Figure 10: Aerial photograph of the Kennedy Center site (2010). As part of the garage expansion and site improvement project, the north and south terraces were constructed and the entrance plaza was redesigned. (Google Earth)



Figure 11: Public art on the Kennedy Center site includes the bronze and stone figure of *Don Quixote* by sculptor Aurelio Teno. (Robinson & Associates)



Figure 12: North Terrace, looking east (2011). The terraces on the north and south were constructed to cover the expanded lower-level parking facilities. (Robinson & Associates)

DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

PREPARER'S DETERMINATION

Eligibility Recommended ☒

Eligibility Not Recommended ☐

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A ☐ B ☒ C ☒ D ☐

Applicable Considerations:

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☒ G ☒

Prepared By: (specify Name, Title & Organization):

Date:

Wdith Robinson

Principal, Robinson & Associates

1/19/2012

DC SHPO DETERMINATION AND COMMENTS

Determined Eligible ☒

Determined Not Eligible ☐

D. Maloney

Reviewed By (specify): David Maloney, Andrew Lewis and Kim Williams

Date: 2/13/12

DC Government Project/Permit Project Log Number (if applicable): 11-122