

MEMORANDUM

TO: Historic Preservation Board
FROM: Merrilyn C. Rathbun, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society
SUBJECT: Agenda for November 4, 2013
DATE: October 29, 2013

1.

Case	19H13	FMSF #	
Applicant	<i>Dave Baber</i>		
Owner	Broward County Board of Commissioners		
Address	100 South Andrews Avenue		
General Location	NE corner of S. Andrews Avenue and SE 2 nd Street		
Legal Description	STRANAHANS SUB LOTS 13 TO 18 BLK 14 FT LAUDERDALE 3-10 D COMM NE COR BLK A, SLY 24.96 TO POB, NWLY 28.25, WLY 5 FT S OF THE N/L FOR 215.94, SWLY 35.39, S 23 FT E OF W/L FOR 235, SELY 35.32, ELY 215.99, NELY 28.31, NLY 245 TO POB		
Existing Use	Library		
Proposed Use	Library		
Applicable ULDR Sections	ULDR Section 47-24.11.B.6		
Request(s)	Historic Landmark Designation		

Property Background:

The applicant has provided a narrative that discusses the foundation of the Broward County Library system in detail. To re-cap, briefly, prior to 1973 Broward County did not have a county wide library system; however a number of municipalities in the county had established their own libraries that were free to residents and in some cases open to non-residents for a fee. In 1973 the County Commission provided a budget to start the development of the county system. In 1979 a bond issue was approved by county voters which included monies for library construction including a central library to be built somewhere in the area of I-95 and Broward Blvd. After considerable debate a downtown site, adjacent to Stranahan Park, was chosen by the selection committee.

Architect:

In 1980, the New York firm of Marcel Breuer and Associates was chosen from five finalists to design the new Main Library. Marcel Breuer studied architecture at the Bauhaus in Germany and later joined the faculty as head of the carpentry department. The Bauhaus school was founded in 1913 by the iconic modernist architect, Walter Gropius. The school philosophy taught the unity of the arts, i.e architecture, crafts and fine arts. The Bauhaus school sought to develop a functional architecture, which rejected ornament and traditional styles in favor of simplicity of form, geometric shapes, flat roofs and large areas of glass.

The Bauhaus school was publicly funded which left it vulnerable to the politics of the day. The school was considered radical and in 1933 the school's directors closed it under pressure from the National Socialists (Nazi Party). Many of the faculty and the artists and architects associated with the school left Germany. Breuer left Germany for London in 1935; there he worked as an architect and continued to design furniture. In 1937, Walter Gropius was appointed chairman of the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Breuer followed Gropius to America and joined the faculty at Harvard. In 1946 Breuer opened his office in New York where he became one of the foremost practitioners of the Bauhaus style, or, the International Style, and later developments of Modernism.

Robert F Gatje joined Breuer's practice in 1953. Gatje had trained as an architect at Cornell University College of Architecture Art and Planning. For Breuer, Gatje was director of the practice's European office. Working closely with his mentor, Gatje shared in the design for such projects as the IBM Building in Boca Raton, the Engineering Campus at the University of Buffalo and the Baldegg Convent at Lucerne, Switzerland.

By the 1960s Marcel Breuer, influenced by his mentor Gropius, designed the Whitney Museum of Art in New York in the Brutalist style,. However, the architect rejected the exposed concrete surface of the style and substituted granite cladding. The substitution may have earned Breuer the critical opinion that he practiced a “soft” Brutalism. In 1970, Robert Gatje joined with Breuer in the Brutalist design for the Armstrong Rubber Company building (Pirelli Tire Co.) now considered a prime example of the style.

Marcel Breuer retired from the practice of architecture in 1979. Robert Gatje, with other associates, then formed a partnership to be known as Marcel Breuer and Associates.

Criteria for Historic Designation:

ULDR Section 47-24.11.B.6	Consultant Response
<p>d. <i>Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation.</i></p>	<p>CONSULTANT RESPONSE The work of the architects, the internationally know Marcel Breuer and his talented associate and successor Robert Gatje have influenced the development of the city, state and nation.</p>

Building Description:

The applicant has provided a thorough physical description of the Main Library building in his narrative. With the sub-tropical climate in mind, Gatje and his design team oriented the library building south to north on the building site. The eight story library is a pre-cast and site cast concrete structure. The sun-struck south, east and west elevations are concrete curtain walls pierced with asymmetrically placed deep set windows with built-in pre-cast concrete shade elements. The curtain wall design has a strong Brutalist influence. Echoing his mentor, Breuer’s “soft” Brutalism, Gatje rejected the style’s exposed concrete surfaces and covered the library curtain walls with an elegant skin of Florida keystone

The north elevation of the library is a mass of stepped back glassed in terraces nestled between the curtain walls, rising from the second floor to the eighth. On the first floor of the building the architect provided an interior water feature, which opens to a small exterior waterfall, an architectural witticism that references the huge, glittering, glass assemblage above. The reading rooms and offices are provided with a view of the city and in daytime, they are illuminated with the cool north light that is so prized by artists.

Criteria for Historic Designation:

ULDR Section 47-24.11.B.6	Consultant Response
<p>e. <i>Its value as a building recognized for the quality of its architecture, and sufficient elements showing its architectural significance,</i></p>	<p>e. See Building Description above</p>

Summary Conclusion:

The Main Library is one of the most important buildings in the City of Fort Lauderdale. It meets both criteria d. and e. The Board should approve the application.

Historic Preservation Board Action:

For each requested Certificate of Appropriateness, the board may:

1. Approve the application as presented; or
2. Approve the application with modification; or
3. Deny the application