



STAFF REPORT

MEMPHIS LANDMARKS COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM: G.2

CASE NUMBER: NR#: 19-001 **COMMISSION MEETING:** January 24, 2019

LOCATION: 360 Metal Museum Drive
U.S. Marine Hospital

OWNER: Desoto Pointe Partners

APPLICANT: National Register

REPRESENTATIVE: Greg Morrison, LRK, Inc.

REQUEST: Multiple Listing for Nomination of Properties to be Placed on National Register of Historic Places

LANDMARKS DISTRICT: N/A

DESCRIPTION OF WORK: N/A

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The proposed multiple listing for properties stated above are associated with national trends in public health; at a local level, additional significance comes from being the first federally-funded public health facility constructed in the city. The property also provides significant evidence of the work of the U.S. Office of the Supervising Architect, contributing to its significance in the area of architecture.
2. The nominated property consists of the original hospital, nurses' quarters and steam laundry building bounded by Metal Museum Drive on the south and the east, West Illinois Avenue on the north, and Metal Museum on the west.

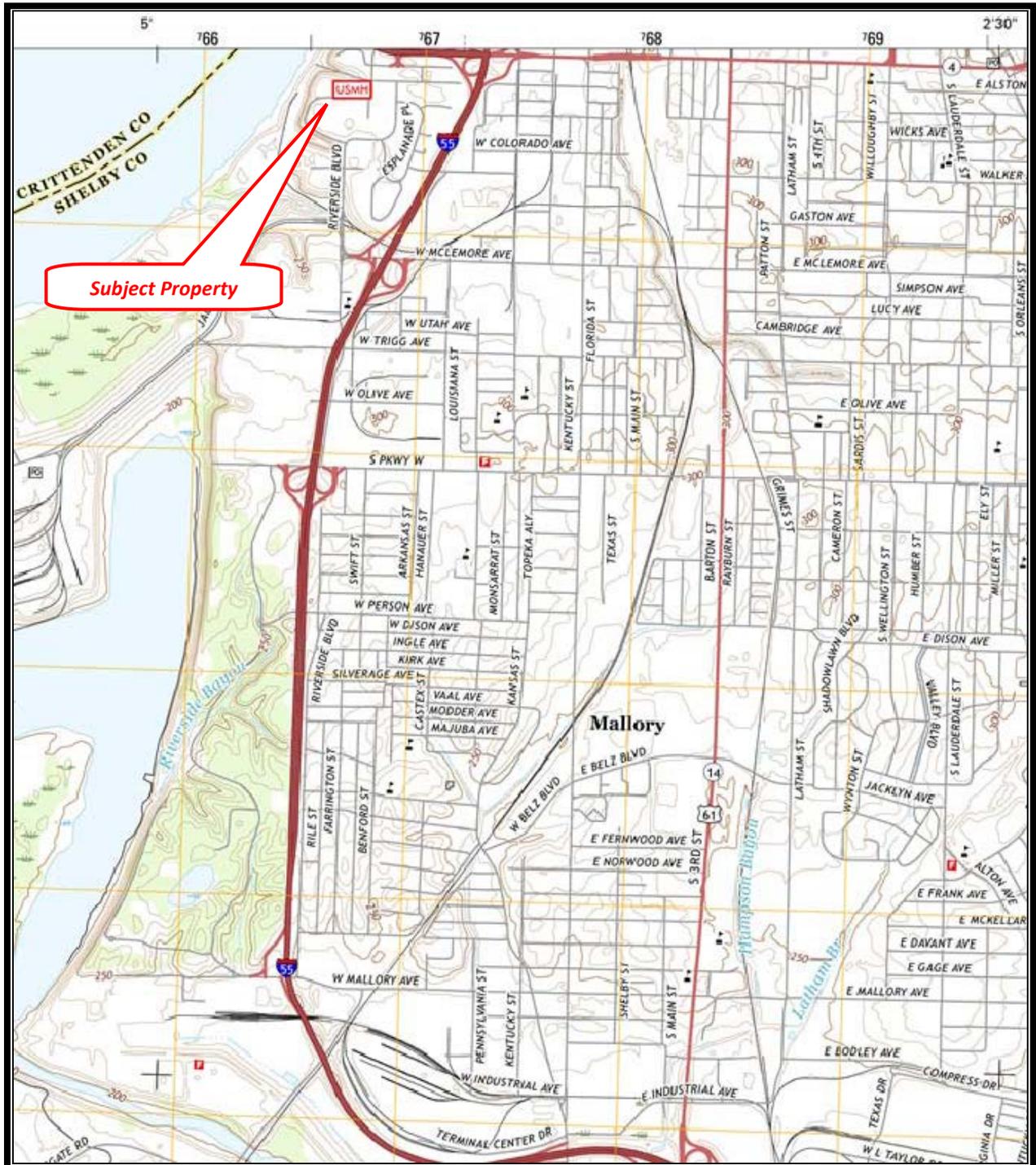
RECOMMENDATION:

Approval

Staff Writer: Ayse Tezel

E-mail: aysetezel@memphistn.gov

HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP



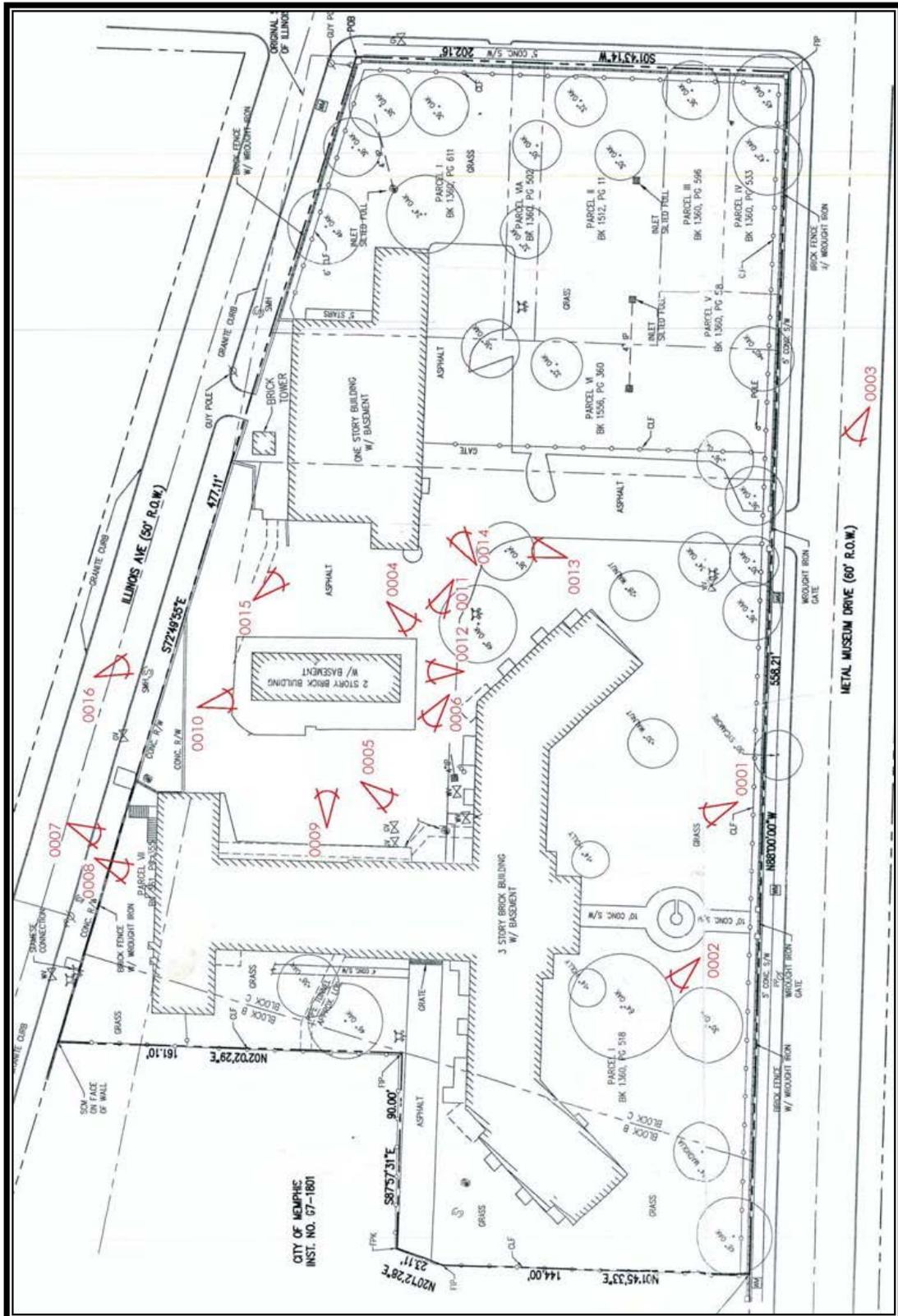
USGS Topographic Map, Southwest Memphis, TN-AR.

ZONING MAP



Subject property outlined in yellow.

SITE PLAN



STAFF ANALYSIS:

District Description:

The proposed multiple listing includes property located at **360 Metal Museum Drive** and not within a local historic district.

Description: *(As Stated in Application)*

The U.S. Marine Hospital site is a healthcare campus consisting of three buildings constructed between 1884 and 1939 by the federal government in Memphis, Tennessee. The main U.S. Marine Hospital Building (Building 1) was constructed in two phases between 1934 and 1937. The Nurses' Quarters (Building 2-NR Listed July 2, 1980 as part Hospital Executive Building and Laundry-Kitchen) dates from the earliest development on the site in 1884, although it was moved to its present location in 1936. The final building constructed on the site, the Steam Laundry (Building 3), was completed in 1939.

While the three contributing buildings on this site represent three distinct architectural styles, the predominant style of the property is defined by the three-story Colonial Revival U.S. Marine Hospital Building. An ornamental brick and metal fence along Metal Museum Drive provides additional Colonial Revival detailing and helps to define the site's primary, public face.

Despite a long period of limited use followed by years of vacancy, the three buildings on this site remain in stable condition. Although in need of repair, most of their character-defining features remain intact. Presently, these three buildings are slated for restoration and redevelopment as a multi-family residential development and are adjacent to the NR Listed 1884 Executive Building, located on a separate parcel.

Located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River just south of Memphis' South Bluffs District, the site is bounded by W. Illinois Ave. to the north, Metal Museum Drive to the east and south, and the bluffs and riverfront to the west. A noncontributing chain-link fence separates the property from the National Ornamental Metal Museum to the west, which occupies additional buildings historically associated with the U.S. Marine Hospital. Chickasaw Heritage Park provides a buffer between the site and its neighboring residential and industrial developments to the east and south. A significant change in elevation exists along the northern boundary of the site, providing access to the basement levels of two of the buildings along Illinois Ave. A combination of fencing and retaining walls define the boundary of the site along this street. Although one building (Building 2) on the site dates to the original development of the property in 1884, the present site plan reflects the 1930s building campaign, when the original buildings were relocated to accommodate the main hospital structure. An asphalt drive accessed from gates facing Metal Museum Drive provides vehicular access to the interior of the site, with large paved areas around each of the secondary buildings.

Interior to the site, the Nurses Quarters/Laundry-Kitchen (Building 2) is included in an existing National Register Listing, under the name "U.S. Marine Hospital Executive Building and Laundry-Kitchen." Along with the Executive Building included in this earlier listing, the Nurses Quarters represents a remnant of an earlier building campaign. Completed in 1884 in the Italianate style, both buildings were relocated within the site and modified during its 1930s redevelopment. Historic photographs provide evidence of efforts made during this time to neutralize some of these buildings' Italianate detailing and create a more cohesive campus surrounding the new hospital building. Following the closure of the hospital in 1965, the

Executive Building was sold to the City of Memphis along with two buildings from the 1930s campaign, establishing two separate parcels within the outline of the original property.

Constructed in 1939, the Steam Laundry building (Building 3) abuts the northern property line. Set back from the east and south boundaries, it takes on a secondary presence within the property, befitting of its original utilitarian use. Although not highly expressive, it exhibits elements of the modernistic, streamlined detailing found in other government-funded construction of this period.

Significance: *(As Stated in Application)*

The Marine Hospital represents an excellent physical record of the history of what is today known as the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Originally known as the Marine Hospital Service, the agency was created through an act signed by President John Adams in 1798, establishing the groundwork for a network of hospitals for the treatment of "Sick and Disabled Seamen." The Marine Hospital's initial construction, following closely on the heels of the Memphis' 1878 yellow fever epidemic, establishes a significant tie to local and national social and public health histories. When completed, the hospital was Memphis' first federally-funded public health facility and the only government hospital in the area.

Conversations about the desire for a Marine Hospital in Memphis began in the U.S. House of Representatives as early as 1829, although it took over fifty years for funding to be secured. While the original intent was that capital for the construction of the marine hospitals would come exclusively from vessel registration fees and payments made by seamen entering port cities, they were eventually funded through appropriations from the federal government. An 1836 Report to the United States by the Committee on Commerce acknowledged the need for the construction of marine hospitals along the "Western waters," but argued for more thorough enforcement of required contributions to the fund established in 1798 rather than the use of federal appropriations. The momentum behind the 1836 interest came from an outbreak of cholera throughout the South in 1833. By 1855, marine hospitals had been constructed in Louisville and Paducah, Kentucky, Natchez, Mississippi, and Napoleon, Arkansas. The collapse of the Napoleon hospital in 1868 is generally credited as the reason for the construction of the new facility in Memphis in 1884.

Period documents suggest that the city's 1878 yellow fever epidemic influenced the reemergence of the discussion about the need for Marine Hospital in Memphis. Further documentation shows that the greater scope of reconstruction and tension between the North and South in the post-Civil War-era may have contributed to the delayed appropriation of funding for the Memphis facility after the loss of the Napoleon hospital. Ultimately, in 1883 work began on a complex of frame and masonry buildings, exhibiting elements of the then-popular Italianate style. These buildings, completed by 1884, remained in use for approximately fifty years, when they were removed or relocated in phases for construction of the present facility.

By 1936, a total of 26 marine hospitals operated under the auspices of the United States Public Health Service. A June 1936 edition of Public Health Reports identified beneficiaries of the services offered in such facilities as the following:

1. *Merchant seamen*
2. *Officers and enlisted men, active and retired, of the United States Coast Guard*
3. *Officers and seamen on vessels of the United States Coast Guard and Geodetic Survey*

4. *Officers and crews of vessels, certain keepers and assistant keepers of the Lighthouse Service, active and retired*
5. *Officers and crews of vessels of the Bureau of Fisheries*
6. *Seamen (not enlisted in U.S. army) from vessels of the Army Engineer Corps, Army transports, and other vessels of the United States Army*
7. *Seamen on vessels of the Mississippi River Commission*
8. *Seamen (not entitled or commissioned in the Military or Naval Establishments) employed on vessels of the United States Government (other than those of the Panama Canal) of more than 5 tons' burden and on State school ships*
9. *Cadets on State school ships*
10. *Aliens detained in hospitals of the Public Health Service under the immigration laws and regulations act*
11. *Beneficiaries of the Employees' Compensation Commission*
12. *Lepers*
13. *Officers of the Public Health Service and those employees of the Public Health Service on field duty*
14. *Officers and employees of the Public Health Service at national quarantine stations, on board quarantine vessels, and at foreign ports*
15. *Persons eligible for treatment or confinement in a United States narcotic farm*
16. *Federal prisoners confined in public institutions under the control of the Department of Justice*
17. *Pay Patients:*
 - 1) *Foreign seamen*
 - 2) *Patients of the Veterans Administration*
 - 3) *Officers and enlisted men of the United States Army*
 - 4) *Officers and enlisted men of the United States Navy*
 - 5) *Enrollees in the Civilian Conservation Corps*
18. *Patients with diseases affecting the public health, subject to special study*

The same document also provided the dates of the acts that made each of these beneficiaries eligible for treatment at the marine hospitals. Only one of the 18 categories included in this list, merchant seamen, would have been included at the time of the 1884 building campaign. This information, paired with period accounts of overcrowding in the Memphis facility, helps to understand the need for the development of the 1930s campus.

Design work for the current hospital building began in 1931, when the Memphis firm of Regan & Weller was hired by the federal government to design what was initially described as a three-story addition to the existing facility. By the end of that year, a rendering was released showing a new freestanding building. The published design closely matched what appears to have been constructed in 1934, although changes in planning altered its relationship to other buildings on the site. By the time of its completion, the new building was once again referred to as an addition and was connected to the 1884 Administration Building by a rudimentary covered walkway.

In 1933, additional funds had been secured and plans were being drawn by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, under the supervision of Louis A. Simon. With nearly three times the amount budgeted in 1931, the proposed new facility would include a new main hospital building and two smaller buildings for staff quarters. A newspaper article published in this year, only two months after he took office, cited President Roosevelt's personal interest in the project, referring to his concern over crowding in the existing building and calling the expansion part of his "new work relief program."

Typical of the work associated with the Office of the Supervising Architect during Simon's tenure, the new hospital building exhibited a sense of monumentality in its massing and orientation. Its restrained Colonial Revival detailing further evidences the level of refinement often associated with work created under Simon's direction. In his AIA fellowship application, Simon's contemporaries described his work as "characterized by an effort toward simplicity and restraint and the attainment of pleasing results, by a studied consideration of mass and proportion, rather than by excess of elaboration or non-functional expression..."

The architectural expression of the Memphis facility appears to be typical of expansion projects undertaken by the Public Health Service in the 1930s. Most of the twenty-six facilities identified in the 1936 report referenced above began as nineteenth-century campuses that underwent major expansions during the 1930s. In most cases, the 1930s expansions made use of the Colonial Revival style. Interestingly, the Evansville, Indiana hospital, originally constructed ca. 1888, bore a strong resemblance to the buildings constructed in Memphis in 1884; its twentieth-century addition was smaller in scale, but still made use of the Colonial Revival style.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends *approval* of this nomination for the U.S. Marine Hospital.

MLC#: 19-001
360 Metal Museum Drive
Prepared by: Ayse Tezel