

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 3701-15 Chestnut Street

Postal code: 19104

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: International House

Current/Common Name: International House

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Residential and Commercial

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1968 to 1970

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1968-1970

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Bower & Fradley

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: McCloskey & Company

Original owner: International House of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: _____

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization University City Historical Society & Docomomo US/Greater Philadelphia Date August 30, 2019

Name with Title George Poulin, President UCHS Email info@uchs.net

Street Address PO Box 31927 Telephone 215-219-4034

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19104

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 8/30/2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 9/13/2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 9/16/2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: International House

Address: 3701-15 Chestnut St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19104

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: December 3, 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: December 11, 2020

Date of Final Action: December 11, 2020

Designated Rejected Criteria A, D, E, H, and J

NOMINATION
FOR THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1: Looking northwest at the International House. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

THE INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
ERECTED 1968 - 1970

3701-15 CHESTNUT STREET
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA



Figure 2: The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in red. (Source: Google 2019)

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The International House is bordered on the north by Ludlow Street, the east by 37th Street, the south by Chestnut Street, and the west by new development on 38th Street, and is delineated as follows (Figure 2):

All that certain lot or piece of ground, with the buildings and Improvements thereon erected, situate in the 27th ward of the City of Philadelphia described according to a plan of property made for Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, by John Reilly, Surveyor and regulator of the 7th District dated June 21, 1967, to wit:

Beginning at a point of intersection formed by the northerly side of Chestnut Street (80 feet wide) and the westerly side of 37th street (60 Feet wide); thence extending north 78 degrees 59 minutes west along the said northerly side of Chestnut Street the distance of 269 feet 10 inches to a point; thence north 11 degrees 01 minute east passing through walls 214 feet 6 inches to a point on the southerly side of Ludlow Street (40 feet wide); thence south 78 degrees 59 minutes east along the said southerly side of Ludlow Street 269 feet 10 inches to a point on the said westerly side of 37th street; thence south 11 degrees 01 minute west along the said westerly side of 37th Street, 124 feet 6 inches to a point on the said northerly side of Chestnut Street, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Rising 14 stories from the northwest corner of 37th and Chestnut streets in the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania is the International House. The winning selection of an invitation-only design competition in 1965, the subject building was conceived by the Philadelphia architecture firm of Bower & Fradley. By 1970, following certain revisions to the design, construction of the new, mixed-used dormitory was complete. The soaring, Brutalist building was built using cast-in-place concrete, the formwork of which remains exposed today and serves as one of the building's character-defining features (Figure 3). This form of construction created a rhythmic pattern of formwork ties within the surface of the exposed concrete that is articulated across nearly the entire exterior envelope. Of note, too, is the horizontal banding evident on the stair/elevator towers that correspond to each floor level.

In plan, the International House bisects the rectangular parcel along a roughly centered east-west axis. Set back from Chestnut Street, the building's footprint consists of a slender, rectangular, 10-story tower that rises from a four-story, telescoping base; these are the tiers of terraced apartments that occupy levels three through five (Figures 4-7). The southern half of the subject property features a plaza and garden that is partially enclosed by a concrete wall lining the public right-of-way (Figures 8-15). To the north, lining Ludlow Street, are support and utility areas, as well as a parking garage, much of which is housed in secondary, yet connected, concrete structures of similar poured-in-place construction (Figures 16-18).

Described as a "vigorously sculpted façade of poured-in-place concrete" in George E. Thomas and David B. Brownlee's publication *Building America's First University*, the exterior of the International House effectively conveys the building's interior program (Figure 19). The lower level of the building rises from the landscaped plaza in a series of terraces and meets a concrete Vierendeel truss that facilitates the structural transition to the upper eight floors (Figures 20-21). Apartments for married students, offices, a gallery, theater, and other public and communal spaces, including an impressive interior atrium, occupy the lower levels with the upper levels containing single rooms. The single-room apartments share common living rooms, lounges, and kitchens. The upper levels contrast with the lower, more public interior spaces through the distinct concrete-gridded, deep-set windows which are of tinted glass set in dark, bronze-colored aluminum frames (Figures 22-27). Vertical circulation is similarly articulated on the exterior through the vertically arranged common rooms with open, cantilevered balconies on the south façade; on the north façade, the stair/elevator towers protrude from the primary mass and feature austere, expanses of concrete surfaces.

The primary entrance of the International House sits at the base of the east stair tower on the south façade, and is sheltered by a cantilevered, concrete canopy (Figures 28-32). To the west, lining the plaza, are retail shops and several secondary entrances. The east façade of the International House offers additional secondary entrances to the interior (Figures 33-34). Here, Bower & Fradley's design creates an interplay of weight and interpenetrations of space through glass and concrete to speak to the interior function and communal space lining the exterior. The variety of window types are emphasized by the concrete forms that create balconies, passageways, and partial concrete screens. Prominently visible on the upper lower levels on the east, north, and west facades is the gridded, double-skin glass wall that illuminates the interior atrium.



Figure 3 (top): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 4 (bottom): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 5: View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 6: View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 7: View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 8 (top): Overview of the plaza lining the primary (south) facade and Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 9 (bottom): Looking towards the plaza from the now brick-paved 37th Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 10 (top): Looking northeast along the plaza of the International House.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 11 (bottom): Looking east through the plaza lining the south facade of the International House.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 12 (top): Main entrance of the International House, from the front plaza, looking west.

(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 13 (bottom): View of outdoor communal space lining the east facade and the now brick-paved 37th Street, looking west from 37th Street. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 14: View of outdoor communal space lining the east facade and the now brick-paved 37th Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 15 (top): Front plaza of the International House, showing one of the entrances to some of the first-floor commercial areas. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 16 (bottom): North elevation of the International House, from Ludlow Street. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 17: Looking south along the pedestrian passageway lining the west elevation and that connects Ludlow Street with the plaza. Note the gridded, double-skin, glass wall visible on the upper lower levels. These windows provide natural light to the interior atrium. (Source: Allec Davis, August 2019)



Figure 18 (top): West elevation of the International House.

(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 19 (bottom): Detail of concrete exterior the International House showing the exposed formwork from the cast-in-place construction. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

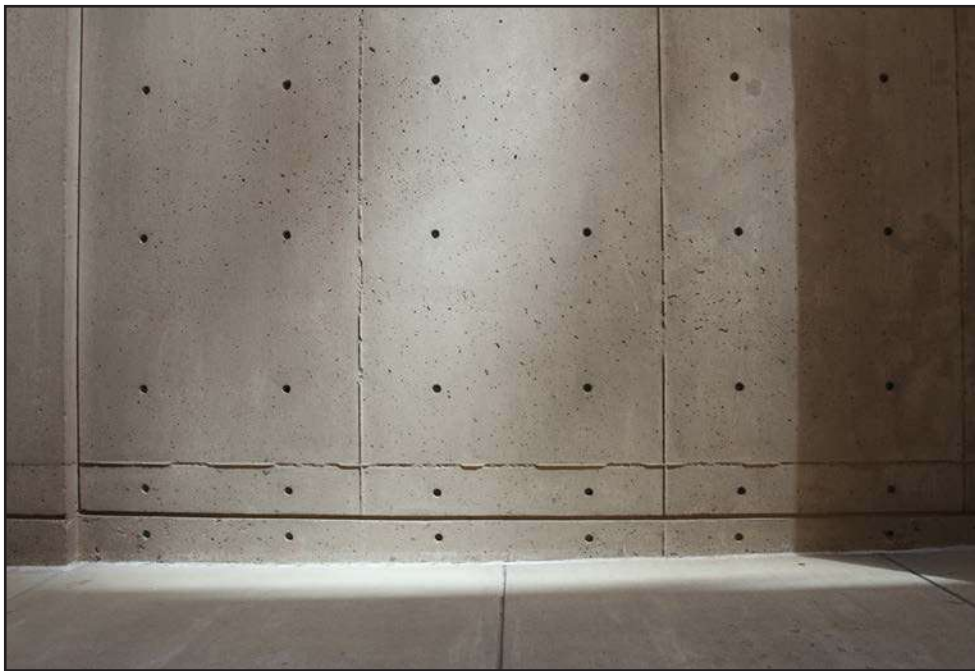




Figure 20 (top): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 21 (bottom): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 22: View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 23 (top): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 24 (bottom): View of the north elevation of the International House, from Ludlow Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 25 (top): View of the north elevation of the International House, from Ludlow Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 26 (bottom): View of the south elevation of the International House, from Chestnut Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

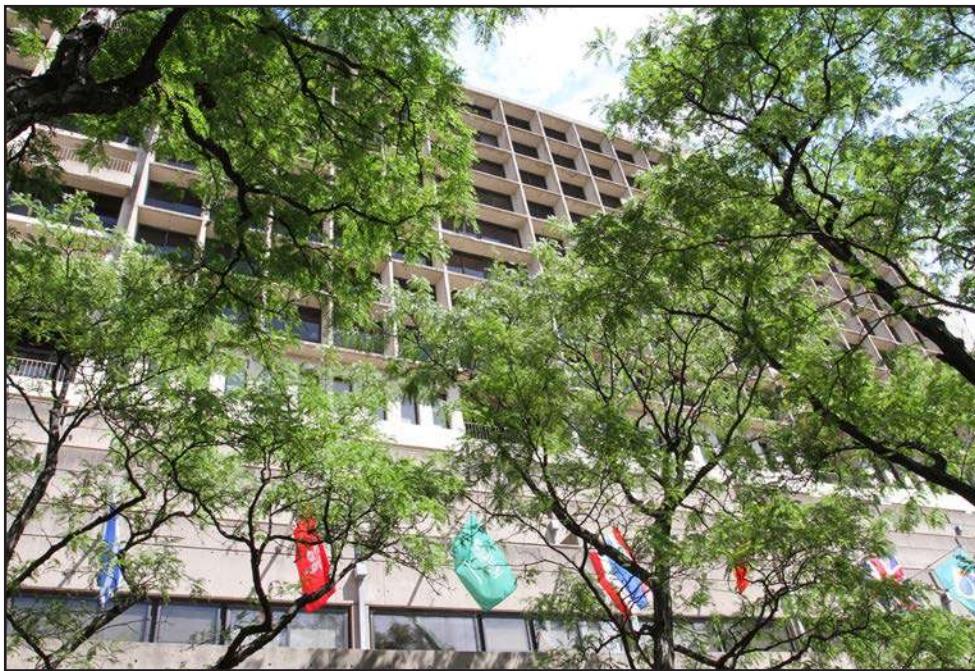




Figure 27: View of the south elevation of the International House, from 37th Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 28: Main entrance of the International House (south facade). Note the articulated aluminum framing of the windows above the main entrance which add additional depth to the primary (south) facade. (Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 29 (top): Main entrance of the International House (south elevation).
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

Figure 30 (bottom): Main entrance of the International House (south elevation).
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)





Figure 31: Main entrance of the International House (south elevation).
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 32: Partial view of the east facade of the International House, showing the enclosed exit stair that is connected to the main structure by a narrow bridge at each level.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 33: East elevation of the International House, from 37th Street. Note the gridded, double-skin, glass wall visible on the upper lower levels. These windows provide natural light to the interior atrium.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)



Figure 34: East elevation of the International House, from 37th Street.
(Source: Allee Davis, August 2019)

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The International House, located at 3701-15 Chestnut Street, is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code:

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The International House was designed in 1965 by the eminent Philadelphia architecture firm of Bower & Fradley (now BLTa). The building was constructed by McCloskey & Company between 1968 and 1970 at 3701-15 Chestnut Street, on the eastern half of the 3700 block of Chestnut Street between 37th and 38th streets. The period of significance begins in 1968, the year construction of the International House was started, and ends in 1970, when construction was completed.

The International House meets Criterion A for Philadelphia Register of Historic Places designation for its associations with International House as an organization. It is the oldest institution of its kind in the United States and since its founding in the early-twentieth century has become an integral component of daily life for many of Philadelphia's international students. Additionally, Philadelphia's International House established an ideology and framework for future likeminded organizations who sought to bring familiarity and community to international students across the country and the world. The subject building is the third official home of the organization and was specifically designed to meet their programming and lodging needs in the mid-twentieth century. Additionally, it was strategically relocated in University City, a neighborhood subject to redevelopment at the time, so that the International House's tenants could be within walking distance to the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University. Since the building opened in the Fall of 1970, the International House has been a staple of Philadelphia's cultural and international communities through its programming, educational activities and amenities.

Significant for its architecture, the International House meets Criterion D for listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places (PRHP) as a prominent example of Brutalism. Often characterized by its massive, monumental weightiness and broad, rough surfaces, Brutalism developed in the United States in reaction to the streamlined, minimalist International Style. Designed and built during the dissemination of this architectural movement, the International House stands today as a distinct example of Brutalism that appears visually heroic and democratic in design. The monumental building is vigorously sculptural and expressive of its internal function on the exterior. Its cast-in-place construction is prominently displayed through the exposed formwork that defines the concrete surfaces. The International House's degree of presence within University City and intensity of expression in materials is one of the defining tenets of Brutalism, further supporting the subject building as denoting distinguishing characteristics of a particular architectural style.

As the most notable building by the firm of Bower & Fradley, the International House is also significant under Criterion E as the work of architects who has influenced the architectural development of Philadelphia. While Bower and Fradley may not be as notable as names as some of their mid-century counterparts including Louis Kahn and Mitchell/Giurgola Associates, their mark on the city's built environment from the 1960s to the present cannot go unnoticed.

Both professionally trained at two of the country's premier architecture schools, the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, Bower and Fradley were also mentees of Vincent Kling. With their traditional training and Kling's influence, Bower & Fradley designed both innovative and thoughtful buildings including the International House, which solidified their place in Philadelphia's architectural community after they won a competition for the new design in 1965. Bower & Fradley were the first iteration of a long-standing and trusted architecture enterprise. Now known as BLTA, their portfolio includes some of the city's most notable buildings including 1234 Market Street, the Gallery at Market East, Cira Center, and the FMC Tower at Cira South.

The International House also meets Criterion H for listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places due to its unique location in the heart of University City. As one of the first high-rises in the neighborhood, it was constructed during a period of Urban Renewal in West Philadelphia and has become a distinct visual feature of the West Philadelphia Chestnut Street corridor. Additionally, the property meets Criterion J for PRHP designation. The building's siting and associations with the Urban Renewal of University City as part of Unit 3 of the University Redevelopment Area through the West Philadelphia Corporation and Redevelopment Authority has solidified its place as one of the most important and integral construction projects of the era in University City.

Criterion A: Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past.

Historic Context: The International House

As the oldest institution of its kind in the United States, the International House was founded nondescriptly in 1908 (some sources cite 1903 as the founding date) when University of Pennsylvania graduates Edward Cope Wood and the Reverend A. Waldo Stevenson met several Chinese students on the University of Pennsylvania campus. The two men were told of the students' "overall loneliness and the prejudice and discrimination them and their friends experienced."¹ Stevenson soon opened up his Larchwood Avenue home to international students attending the University of Pennsylvania. Stevenson's informal organization operated informally until 1910 when the "International Students House" was officially founded under the sponsorship of the Christian Association of the University of Pennsylvania (Figures 35 and 36). The group



Figure 35: Early members of the International Students House at the Stephens house prior to the purchase of the William A. Potts house. Source: Lloyd, "Carriage House" at the Rear of 3905 Spruce Street, 2000.

was established "for the cultivation of friendly relations among the students of the world."² Despite the official charter of the group, they still did not have a permanent headquarters. In 1918, the International Students House then moved into the William A. Potts house at 3905 Spruce Street after the Association acquired the property (Figure 37). Potts sold the building to the Association for \$20,000, which was \$30,000 below the property's value.³ The building opened on New

1 "International House Philadelphia's New Permanent Historical Exhibition," *University of Pennsylvania Almanac*, Vol. 59, No. 23, February 16, 2013. Electronic document, <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v59/n23/ihouse.html>, accessed August 13, 2019.

2 "Foreign Students Mark Anniversary," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 3, 1935.

3 "Foreign Students' Home Opened on New Year's Day," *The Pennsylvania* (U. of Pennsylvania), January 3, 1918.

Year's Day. The building had living quarters for 15 students as well as a reading room and dining room.⁴ The organization fulfilled their mission and programming out of their Spruce Street headquarters throughout the following decades.

The International House officially disbanded from the Christian Association in April 1943. It was around that time too that the organization realized that the Spruce Street location did not suffice for their operations. Unlike the early years of the International House, students were not living at the Spruce Street headquarters and the building was primarily used for programming and recreational spaces.⁵ Moreover, the International House was unable to promote their programs and mission to the public because they did not have reasonable accommodations to host events.⁶ In the 1940s, the international student population in Philadelphia began to exponentially grow. It was reported that at the time of the construction of the subject building, this population had grown by 15% each year since 1945.⁷ While many of the students were at the University of Pennsylvania, some did attend the Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University), as well as the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (now University of the Sciences in Philadelphia). With the international student



Figure 36: Edward Cope Wood (center) with Chinese students. Source: John Corr, "International House: 75 years of blending cultures at Penn," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1985.



Figure 37: The William A. Potts House at 3905 Spruce Street, circa 1918. Source: Lloyd, "Carriage House" at the Rear of 3905 Spruce Street, 2000.



Figure 38: The Whittier Hotel at 150 North 15th Street, circa 1970. Source: Graham, 'Taking Action for the Community: The International Students' House at Penn.

4 Alison D. Graham, *A Brief History of Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania*, 2007. Electronic document, <https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-history/global-engagement/ish>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

5 Mark Frazier Lloyd, "Carriage House" at the Rear of 3905 Spruce Street: *A Brief History*, 2000. Electronic document, <https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-history/3905-spruce>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

6 Graham, *A Brief History of Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania*, 2007.

7 "City Is Asked to OK Building Project for International House," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 19, 1965.



Figure 39: International House students with the model of the International House, circa 1965. Source: University of Pennsylvania Archives.

population at approximately 1,200 in 1954, the organization was forced to reevaluate their facilities.⁸ In 1959, the International House moved from their West Philadelphia headquarters to the former Whittier Hotel at 15th and Cherry streets (140 North 15th Street). The building, owned by the Society of Friends, had capacity for 110 students, which was 10 times the amount as the Spruce Street location (Figure 38). By 1965, the facilities had become nearly obsolete due to overcrowding and insufficient amenities and the organization was looking to upgrade. Additionally, the city was planning a large infrastructure project that included the widening of North 15th Street by 1969. This would ultimately result in the demolition of the Whittier Hotel, thus the International House understood that “if [they] do not provide a new headquarters, there will not be one.”⁹

In May 1965, plans were officially established to relocate the International House to West Philadelphia. The decision to move the headquarters across the Schuylkill River and back to its original home in West Philadelphia was likely partially due to its premier location between two of the area’s largest universities. The organization received an anonymous \$4 million challenge grant from a “Philadelphia charitable foundation” if the International House board could raise an additional \$1million from the Philadelphia

community by May 1966. However, the organization realized an additional \$2.8 million would be needed to complete the project.¹⁰ Ultimately, the organization received sufficient funds for construction, including a \$2.5 million loan from the United States Department of House and Urban Development, \$25,000 from the Independence Foundation, and some of the allocated \$362,800 United States Steel Grants for Pennsylvania and New Jersey Schools. The organization ultimately surpassed their million-dollar goal from their community by nearly \$10,000.¹¹ The following month, it was announce that three local architecture firms would compete to design the new building: Bower & Fradley; Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham; and Mitchell/Giurgola Associates. Each firm submitted designs to the judging panel which consisted of several prominent figures in mid-century architecture and planning at the time including Pietro Belluschi, Dean of MIT School of Architecture; J. Roy Carroll, Carroll Van Allen; Edgar Kauffman, Jr., a protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright; and Philip Klein, Vice Chairman of the City Planning Commission, President of the International House, and Secretary of Rohm and Haas (the headquarters of which was designed, in part, by Belluschi).¹²

The competition closed on August 30, 1965.¹³ The panel ultimately selected Bower & Fradley’s 14-story “multi-purpose structure” (Figure 39). The building was designed to have both a residential and public space. The residential areas, which would accommodate 425 to 450 students, was to be divided into seven “houses” with eight-, six-, and one-bedroom suites and efficiency apartments for married couples. Residents also had access to the ‘residence commons’ which included a library, hobby rooms, a lounge, and dispensary. The bottom three floors of the building were deemed the “program commons” and included a 750-seat auditorium, dining room, meeting rooms, retail spaces and an outdoor recreation area. These spaces were also intended to be used by International House residents, but were also open to

8 Graham, *A Brief History of Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania*, 2007.

9 “Putting Snowflakes Together,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 19, 1965.

10 “House Granted Funds to Move,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 22, 1967.

11 “US Approves \$2.5 Million for Student House,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 13, 1965.; “\$25,000 Given to International House Drive,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 3, 1966.; “Student House Tops Fund Goal,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 13, 1967.; “\$362,800 in US Steel Grants Go to Pa. and Jersey Schools,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 18, 1966.

12 “3 Architects Compete to Design \$5.3 Million International House,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 27, 1965.

13 “Architectural Contest,” *The Charette: Pennsylvania Journal of Architects*. Vol. 45, No. 8, August, 1965, pg. 10.

the public.¹⁴ Fradley described this part of the building as “One of the most unique features of the building... It’s active, it’s vital and it contains, in character, an exterior street, paved ‘in bricks’ and surrounded by a shopping bazaar, dining room, lounge, entrance to the auditorium and a snack bar.”¹⁵ In 2011, Bower reflected on the building and its intentional design to promote interaction stating: “This was not just a dormitory with rooms down a hallway. A very rich mix of activities occur in that location. It was [meant to be] a community.”¹⁶ Their design, according to Belluschi, was “the most promising on all counts;” however, it was clear Bower & Fradley were the underdogs of the competition, going against Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham who recently completed the award-winning Philadelphia Police Headquarters and the Philadelphia-founded, internationally renowned firm of Mitchell/Giurgola. Bower & Fradley’s entry was described as a “long shot [that] pay[s] off” by *The Architectural Forum*.¹⁷



Figure 40: Groundbreaking for the International House, 1968. Source: Brin, Film Center at International House Set to Expand, hiddencityphila.org, 2017.



Figure 41: 1970 photograph of the International House shortly after construction. Source: University of Pennsylvania Archives.

The design of the new International House garnered critical acclaim upon its unveiling. It received the Gold Medal at the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects’ Annual Exhibition of Architecture at Penn center in September 1967.¹⁸

Groundbreaking began on April 1, 1968 but was soon halted due to the contractor McCloskey & Company’s non-adherence to the Philadelphia Plan, which was spurred from an executive order which required a ‘representative’ number of African Americans to be included on the construction teams of federally funded projects (Figure 40).¹⁹ While they had hoped the building would be open for the 1968 academic year, the

14 Thomas and Brownlee, *Building America’s First University*, 276.

15 “International House Wins Design Award,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 29, 1967.

16 Tirdad Derakashshani, “International House: A cultural melting pot in West Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 2, 2011.

17 “Competitions.” *Architectural Forum*. Vol. 123, No. 3. October, 1965. Urban American, Inc.: New York City, New York.. pg. 65.

18 William R. Collins, “This IS House Herman Built.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27, 1967.

19 Donald A. McDonough and Leonard J. McAdams, “Three More Projects Imperiled Here Over Issue of Negro Hiring,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 18, 1968.

dedication for the building did not occur until November 22, 1970.²⁰ It was during the 1970s that the International House began to establish their community programming and art centers which solidified their presence in the City of Philadelphia including the Folklife Center and the Neighborhood Film/Video Project (Figure 41). In 1992, the International House started the Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema which is their most notable and well-received programming to date.²¹ Throughout the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the International House remained a vibrant and occupied space for residents, University City, and the greater Philadelphia community. Today, the building is an integral part of the University of Pennsylvania campus and West Philadelphia. It was described by architectural historians George E. Thomas and David E. Brownlee as “hold[ing] its own very effectively in the now crowded University City skyline.”²²

Additionally, the International House is further significant under Criterion A for its place in the international community of the Philadelphia area’s higher learning institutions. Since its founding over 100 years ago, the organization has played an integral role in welcoming students from abroad to colleges such as the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University. Moreover, the International House’s educational and cultural programming has become mainstay for both University City’s educational institutions and the city as a whole.

Criterion D: Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

The International House embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style due to its Brutalist style of architecture. Like many of the Modernist architectural styles that were developed in Europe and later adapted in America, Brutalist architecture has come to be characterized as massive, monumental, weighty buildings with broad, rough-surfaced, exposed concrete walls and deep-set, recessed windows.²³ Buildings of this style typically manifest Brutalist tenets through a direct expression in materials, “the separation of pieces and elements, the accentuation of service towers and circulation, the overlapping of geometries in plan, and the interlocking of spaces in section.”²⁴ Such design vocabulary is evident in the International House, making the building a prominent example of Brutalist architecture.

Monumentality was a prevailing theme throughout all of Modernism and is not necessarily exclusive to Brutalism, further solidifying the International House as a strong example of Modern architecture. As the Modern movement developed during the second and third quarters of the twentieth century, the concept of monumentality arguably became a design quality dealing in not only size but also intensity of expression.²⁵ This sense of monumentality is discernable in Bower & Fradley’s design for the International House. The commanding height and sculptural quality solidify the building’s presence in University City and all of Philadelphia. Its expression of the internal program on the exterior also emphasizes the building’s intended expression as a mixed-use student residence with public programming.

With its soaring monumentality at 14 stories and vigorous sculptural qualities, the International House displays its poured-in-place concrete construction as evidenced by the exposed formwork on the building’s exterior envelope. Such expression is further emphasized along the broad surfaces that help to define the building’s distinct volumes that also help denote internal functions. The stair towers, for example, are accentuated on the exterior and also serve to organize the living quarters of the building’s program. One could also argue the stair towers of the International House take visual cues from Louis I. Kahn’s Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building and Biology Building, completed a few years earlier and located a few blocks to the south on the University of Pennsylvania campus; perhaps, to elicit contextual associations with the building’s immediate surroundings.

20 Lloyd, “Carriage House” at the Rear of 3905 Spruce Street: A Brief History, 2000.; “McCloy to Open Fund Drive,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 26, 1965.

21 “International House Philadelphia’s New Permanent Historical Exhibition,” 2013.

22 Thomas and Brownlee, *Building America’s First University*, 276.

23 Robinson & Associates, Inc., Judith H. Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, United States General Services Administration, *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s* (Center for Historic Buildings, U.S. General Services Administration, March 2006), 15.

24 William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 550.

25 Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 514.

As Modern architecture was being disseminated around the world and in the United States, evoking changes in architectural theory and design, architect and critic J. M. Richards summarized best the changing trends in his 1940 book, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, when he said:

The principal reason why a new architecture is coming into existence is that the needs of this age are in nearly every case totally different from the needs of previous ages, and so cannot be satisfied by methods of building that belong to any age but the present. We can satisfy them in the practical sense, by utilizing modern building techniques and modern scientific inventions to the full; and we can satisfy them in the aesthetic sense, both by being honest craftsmen in our own materials and by taking special advantage of the opportunities these materials offer of creating effects and qualities in tune with our own times.²⁶

In many ways, this quote can be directly applied to the International House. Post-war Philadelphia restructured its government which resulted in a vast number of building campaigns in the name of urban revitalization. The International House was one of many nodes among these efforts as it bulldozed its way into a blighted neighborhood. As a strong example of Brutalist architecture, the International House speaks to Richards's call for being honest craftsmen with its exposed formwork of the cast-in-place construction. This exploration of materials and form paralleled the nation's enthusiasm for mass production and drive for continuous technological advancement. As such, the International House is significant for its association with this moment in architectural design of the post-war years that created significant, unprecedented forms and structural systems.

Historic Context: The International House & Modernism

Bower & Fradley designed the International House in the Brutalist style, a style that falls under the umbrella of architectural Modernism. Modernist styles, like Brutalism, were used in conjunction with many other buildings constructed in the midst of urban revitalization efforts; these can be found in Philadelphia and other cities throughout the United States.

As Modernism pervaded all aspects of society, architecture did well to visually translate what the United States was thinking during the 1950s and 1960s. Transcending the bounds of traditional, historic styles, architects began to explore new materials, technologies, and forms with which to build.²⁷ Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe continue to be considered two of the most influential architects during this time, influencing the appearance of new construction across the states. Being the most appropriate expression of a new age for the nation following World War II, Modernism was found to be rational, efficient, and confident in expressing power and wealth, as well as expressive of the individual.²⁸ As translated to the built environment, this burgeoning optimism was often found to have been achieved primarily through these Modern architectural styles: the International Style, Brutalism, Formalism, and Expressionism.

The International Style was first introduced with Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock's publication, *The International Style*. This was written in 1932 to accompany an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. In considering the work of Mies van der Rohe, his buildings did not focus on social aspects, rather, they focused on the technical and visual problems the architect believed needed to be solved through design.²⁹ His famous "Less is more" motto stripped architecture to its fundamental essence; buildings are to be simple, rational, based on a geometric grid, and austere.³⁰ Architecture across the United States took note of these ideals and emulated them in a number of building types including shopping centers, schools, office parks, corporate headquarters, apartment buildings, and government buildings.³¹ Mies van der Rohe provided a form of building that consisted of a rational structural frame with nothing more than a thin curtain wall cladding.

26 J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1940 and 1962), 28.

27 Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, 260.

28 Ibid., 263.

29 Ibid., 266.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

In reaction to the International Style developed ideas of Brutalism. This design theory, along with additional reactionary designs, emerged due to the general mood of dissatisfaction with the restrictive minimalism often felt by the International Style in America.³² Prior to Brutalism's arrival in the states, Alison and Peter Smithson first introduced the term in the December 1953 issue of *Architectural Design*.³³ In describing their Soho House Project in London, the Smithsons "decided to have no finishes at all internally, the building being a combination of shelter and environment" using bare brick, concrete, and wood.³⁴ The term 'New Brutalism' was coined as an allusion to the *béton brut* of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation (1946-1952) in Marseilles; this building came under attack during construction when a French official described it as "brutal."³⁵ Such criticism carried itself over the years causing many Brutalist buildings to be tainted with this kind of negative stigma.

Regardless, Le Corbusier helped to propagate the style of Brutalism that is today both praised and hated. The word originates from the French phrase *béton brut*, which translates into "raw concrete." Buildings of this style celebrate rough concrete due to its texture and aesthetics created from the casting process. The International House emulates this particular design tenet as observed by the exposed formwork from the building's cast-in-place construction. Other prominent examples of Brutalist architecture include Paul Rudolph's School of Art and Architecture Building (1959-1963) and Louis I. Kahn's Art Gallery (1951-1953) both at Yale University and, most famously, Boston City Hall (1963-1968) by Kallman, McKinnell, and Knowles. In Philadelphia, the United States Mint (1965-1969) on Fifth Street between Race and Arch streets by Vincent Kling & Associates, and Mitchell/Giurgola's United Way Headquarters (1968-1971) on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and William Penn High School (1967-1975) at 15th and Mount Vernon streets are local representations of the Brutalist style, all of which have become ingrained in the City of Philadelphia's built environment.

As seen in these examples and many other Brutalist examples of architecture, truth in materials persists as a dominant theme in this particular style. This belief was further substantiated by the Modern Movement's notions on monumentality firmly established by Sigfried Giedion, José Luis Sert, and Fernard Légar's 1943 publication, "Nine Points on Monumentality." In thinking about the coming years, the authors asserted that architecture's new task in the postwar years would be the reorganization of community life through the planning and design of civic centers, monumental ensembles, and public spectacles.³⁶ The problem architects faced with handling public buildings was determining the appropriate degree of presence and accessibility; arguably, monumental architecture was to be a democratic design.³⁷ Bower & Fradley's design for the International House is certainly a strong example of this architectural theory. In their publication, *Building America's First University*, preeminent historians George E. Thomas and David B. Brownlee astutely compared the International House with Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, arguing the design pays homage to the architecture giant's symbolic work in both form and theory. Thomas and Brownlee assert that the International House integrates "the program requirements of private suites for students with shared common spaces, thereby mandating a sense of community."³⁸ In wrestling with the development of an architectural vocabulary that could effectively express the nation's newfound progressive ideals, the International House skillfully achieved such an embodiment with its unquestionable democratic monumentality.

Historic Context: The International House in the Context of Post-War America

Post-war America is often described as a country burgeoning in the economic and political realms, as well as in technological advancements. As it recovered from the Great Depression, the nation was faced with new challenges that sparked a plethora of reforms in both government and architecture. With the population and economy booming, there

32 Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 517.

33 Joan Ockman, comp., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation: Rizzoli, 1993), 240.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ockman, *Architecture Culture*, 27.

37 Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 514.

38 Thomas and Brownlee, *Building America's First University*, 276.

was a pressing need, or desire, to bulldoze the old to make way for the new.³⁹ Modern architecture used this opportunity as a catalyst to pervade the landscape of the United States. The American people latched on to a newfound emphasis on family which fueled the demand for new houses, home-based consumer goods, and schools.⁴⁰ Paralleling this trend was the nation's enthusiasm for investing in new technologies in the face of both the Cold War and Vietnam War. Mass production proliferated and, as a result, so did building materials. As architecture took advantage of these developing technologies, new construction, such as the International House, took on styles that have managed to capture and preserve the zeitgeist of this pivotal time.

Philadelphia, much like many other major cities, went through a series of political reform that consequently affected development and the city's architecture. Restructuring of the city's government is said to have begun with the elections of Mayor Joseph Clark in 1951 and Mayor Richardson Dilworth in 1955.⁴¹ As a result, local government became increasingly more involved with housing and city planning in addition to a newly empowered City Planning Commission. Commercial and institutional buildings were being revived and urban renewal was bursting at the seams.⁴² Philadelphia's architecture, and its architectural education, would emerge as leaders in the field as propagated by the Philadelphia School. George Holmes Perkins (1904-2004) described it best: "A city that for nearly a quarter-century had been in the doldrums awoke with the energy to transform its center and assume a national architectural leadership through its urban renewal."⁴³ Bower & Fradley's design of the International House is representative of both these national and local architectural and legislative trends that occurred during the mid-twentieth-century.

While the beginning of the Modernist style in the United States is not easy to pinpoint, it is largely accepted by historians and scholars that Modernism hit the shores of America when Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock wrote *The International Style* in 1932. Architects began to abandon historical styles and move towards ahistorical, austere forms.⁴⁴ Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe perpetuated and influenced these shifts in architectural design. A plethora of different sects fall under the encompassing umbrella of Modernist architecture, including such styles as Internationalism, Brutalism, Formalism, and Expressionism; the International House being a strong example of Brutalism. This variety of Modernist architectural styles allowed architects to explore and invent new vocabularies that, at times, would simultaneously meet the needs of Post-War America. Modernism was found to be the most appropriate expression for the burgeoning country.⁴⁵ It appealed to the public as a rational, efficient, and practical style for solving an assortment of problems.⁴⁶ Additionally, architects took this as a much-needed opportunity to be inventive, explorative, and to aesthetically create new forms and shapes.⁴⁷

Modernism in Philadelphia can be marked by two national trends. One being the spread of the International Style and the subsequent Modernist styles that followed. And the second being regional modernism, which arguably preceded the nationwide notions of Modernism.⁴⁸ Architecture in the City of Philadelphia and the surrounding area was on the pulse of larger trends as both the national and local government encouraged and supported substantial redevelopment. Two important factors that set the stage for design and development for Philadelphia after the Second World War was first, a series of planning initiatives that set the direction for areas pinpointed for redevelopment and growth; and second, the arrival of a group of significant designers—known as the "Philadelphia School"—at the University of

39 Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, 261.

40 Ibid., 262.

41 Perkins, "Part Four: Philadelphia Phoenix," 204.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, 260.

45 Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, 263.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Malcolm Clendenin with Introduction by Emily T. Cooperman, "Thematic Context Statement: Modernism: 1945-1980," (2009). Available: Preserve Philadelphia, www.preservephiladelphia.org/wp-content/uploads/HCSModernism.pdf.

Pennsylvania (Penn) in the early 1950s.⁴⁹ The architects and engineers of the Philadelphia School were responsible for revamping architectural education and consequently the city.⁵⁰ With G. Holmes Perkins leading the way for Penn and the Philadelphia School, city planning and urban design became intertwined and more intimately involved with the city's architecture.⁵¹

The International House is reflective of the city's architectural soul-searching for a national heritage.⁵² The Brutalist style employed for the design created a sculptural, iconic building that has been prominently keyed into both West Philadelphia and the city as a whole. Investing in such deft, innovative architecture, it became readily apparent that Philadelphia supported and encouraged emerging high architectural ideals. By the 1960s, the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was considered to be one of the most energized chapters in the United States.⁵³ In 1967, the chapter awarded Bradley & Fradley the American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal Award for best Philadelphia architecture for their design of the International House.⁵⁴

Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation.

Bower & Fradley (1961-1978)

The International House is the work of the architectural firm of John A. Bower, Jr. (1930-) and Frederick MacDonnell Fradley (1924-2017). Bower, the son of early-twentieth century architect John A. Bower, Sr. (1901-1988), was born in Philadelphia. He followed in his father's footsteps, graduating with an architecture degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1953. Two years later, he began working as a senior designer in the office of renowned Philadelphia architect Vincent Kling.⁵⁵ Bower's largest project as senior designer under Kling was as chief designer of the Municipal Services Building at 15th Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard (completed 1962) in Center City.⁵⁶

While with Kling, it is there that Bower met Fradley, who served as one of Kling's project managers. Born in Bronxville, New York, Fradley began his architecture career after serving for four years in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater with the United States Air Force during World War II. He received a Bachelor's of Science in Engineering from Brown University in 1948 and a Master of Fine Arts in Architecture, with architectural scholarship, from Princeton University in 1954. While at Princeton, Fradley had a decorated tenure, receiving the Lowell M. Palmer Fellowship, the Howard Crosby Butler Prize and the American Institute of Architects student medal. Prior to joining Kling's practice, Fradley worked as an engineer for Turner Construction in Philadelphia from 1948 to 1951. Three years later, he started his post as Kling's project manager.⁵⁷

In 1961, Bower and Fradley left Kling and formed their own practice, Bower & Fradley Architects. They established an office on the first floor of a former rowhouse at 2025 Walnut Street.⁵⁸ One of their first large commissions was the 1964 addition to the First National Bank Building (then the General Waterworks Building), a circa 1928 Ritter and Shay-designed Art Deco office building. The addition, which is still extant, is a 21-story bronzed aluminum building

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Perkins, "Part Four: Philadelphia Phoenix," 204.

52 Ibid., 206.

53 Clendenin, "Thematic Context Statement."

54 "Police Building Wins Awards of Architects," *The Evening Bulletin*, April 1, 1963.

55 Emily T. Cooperman, "Bower, John A., Jr. (b. 1930)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, accessed August 14, 2019, http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22776.

56 Thomas Hine, "Phila. Influence in architecture on decline," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 7, 1980.

57 "Frederick Macdonnell Fradley," *The Lincoln County News*, April 11, 2017.; Emily T. Cooperman, "Frederick Macdonnell Fradley (b. 1924)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, accessed August 14, 2019, http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22505.

58 "Latest Leases," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 8, 1962.

with tinted glass.⁵⁹ By the end of 1964, the firm had completed over \$5 million worth in projects. While most of their commissions were primarily buildings, the firm also oversaw the multi-year, multi-study Central Germantown Urban Renewal project which including “preserv[ing] and renew[ing] those structures which were still serviceable” in that section of Philadelphia.⁶⁰ Other notable works by Bower & Fradley include Addison Court, a 33-home residential development at 5th and Lombard streets, and Laurence Court in Washington Square East.⁶¹

When Bower & Fradley were awarded the contract for the International House, it solidified their place within Philadelphia’s architecture community. According to historians George E. Thomas and David Brownlee, the design “Marked the emergence” of the firm and along with Kahn’s Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building and Biology Building, and Eero Saarinen’s Hill College House dormitory, was one of the new innovative and modern buildings on the University of Pennsylvania campus.⁶² Throughout the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, the firm received several high-profile commissions including the redevelopment of Market Street East (1969-1971), Eastwick High School and George Pepper Middle School (partnered with New York firm Caudill Rowlett Scott) (1969), 1234 Market Street (1972), and the Gallery at Market East (1975).⁶³ The firm was also one of several firms slated to work under Louis Kahn for the master plan for the ultimately unbuilt Philadelphia’s Bicentennial Exposition near Philadelphia International Airport.⁶⁴ Like the International House, several of these works including Addison Court, Laurence Court, Eastwick High School, George Pepper Middle School, a sculpture installation in Fairmount Park received top prize with the Philadelphia American Institute of Architects. Fradley left the firm in 1978 and ultimately retired from architecture. It was renamed Bower Lewis Thrower/Architects that same year when associates Roger B. Lewis and John E. Thrower were made partners. Bower remained a partner well into the twenty-first century and received the American Institute of Architect’s lifetime achievement award in 2004.⁶⁵ The current iteration of the firm, BLTA, which “has helped shape the built environment [of Philadelphia] of 50 years,” still is in practice today with major ongoing projects in Philadelphia and throughout the United States.⁶⁶ They have designed some of the most notable buildings of twenty-first century Philadelphia including the Cira Center, the FMC Tower at Cira South, the Alexander apartment building, and the Ludlow apartment building.

Bower & Fradley, alongside Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974), Vincent Kling (1916-2013), Romaldo Giurgola (1920-2016), Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham, and others, worked to reshape the city of Philadelphia at the behest of Mayor Dilworth and Edmund Bacon. The resulting architecture represented the city’s desires to expand and adapt to an urban environment that is often largely defined by brick. Mid-century architecture was employed by Philadelphia to erase blight, as well as to implement a series of planning initiatives that set the direction for redevelopment and growth.⁶⁷ The International House is one of the many structures built as part of this effort.

Criterion H: Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City.

An architectural landmark of the mid-twentieth century, the International House represents an established and familiar visual feature of University City and the larger City of Philadelphia. “Owing to its unique location,” set on the north side of Chestnut Street in the heart of University City, the building was one of the first high-rises in this section of the city and was at the center of the Urban Renewal of University City in the 1960s. The building can be seen from

59 “Waterworks Co. Plans 21-Story Building,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 7, 1964.

60 “Firm Chosen to Plan Germantown Renewal,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 10, 1964.

61 “Design Awards,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 1, 1966.

62 Clendenin, “Thematic Context,” 19.

63 “Pacts Totalling 500Gs OKd For Market Street East,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 19, 1970; “Architectural Firm Gets Renewal Job,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 13, 1969.; Oscar B. Teller, “Reality Roundup,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1969.; Hine, “Phila. Influence in architecture on decline.”; Clendenin, “Thematic Context,” 22.

64 Anthony Lame, “Louis Kahn Heads Team of Architects to Design Expo Plan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 15, 1972.

65 “AIA hails 12 local architecture firms,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 2004.

66 Diane Mastrullk, “Rebuilding after the recession,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 14, 2011.

67 Clendenin, “Thematic Context Statement.”

numerous points throughout West Philadelphia and has been a focal point of the neighborhood since its completion in 1970, despite the recent development of taller nearby buildings. On the street level, the building's plazas, commercial space and relationship to Chestnut Street and the surrounding thoroughfares has also become an inviting and familiar visual feature of the area. They are fully associated with the International House and the building itself, but at the same time links the various institutions in the neighborhood including the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University and the Science Center.

Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Historic Context: Redevelopment of University City

In regards to Criterion J, the cultural and political heritages are germane to the International House and do well to provide a general description of the complicated legacy that begun at the building's inception and continue through to today. The various associations that the International House evokes reflect key aspects of Philadelphia's social heritage, especially in West Philadelphia and that of the city's international community.

The International House reflects the environment of the mid-twentieth century, when both the City of Philadelphia and the nation were moving away from traditional architectural styles and toward modern ideals about design that were directly influenced by contemporary aesthetic principles and movements. Such a transition was further justified by economic, political, and social theories of urban development, design, and planning. During this time most large American cities, especially Philadelphia, witnessed the local government's increased involvement in the city's physical development and growth, which resulted from reform and legislation from the Federal Government. As private investment in cities generally declined, the municipal government took an increased interest in architectural trends as a means to redevelop depressed areas of the city.

For the United States, the years following World War II are often described as being economically prosperous, reinvigorating, and booming in population. Embracing its newfound position as the economic and political leader in the Western world, America began to shift its attention to the physical appearance of its great cities. New legislation, coupled with substantial funding, supported and encouraged emerging urban renewal initiatives across the country. New construction during these years hastily took the place of older existing buildings; this was no exception in Philadelphia. The city pioneered in legislative reform for redevelopment.

In 1945, Pennsylvania passed the Urban Redevelopment Law; this is one of the first urban redevelopment laws to be enacted in the United States. This established the state's redevelopment authority, an agency that was responsible for enacting projects with public monies and was given the ability to acquire properties and land by eminent domain. Shortly after in 1949, President Harry S. Truman passed the Federal Housing Act granting the government the necessary authority to acquire land in city centers, which would then be sold or leased to redevelopment agencies and private developers.⁶⁸ This legislation would be revised in 1954 under President Dwight D. Eisenhower resulting in new programs and financing options for renewal projects. The Federal Government felt that redevelopment initiatives had an inherent responsibility to relate to larger city plans and so, by law, required a workable program to be established at the local level. These programs were to identify plans that encompassed total city development.

In Philadelphia, from the 1930s until the end of the Second World War, new construction was sparse. George Howe and William Lescaze's Philadelphia Savings Fund Society tower (1929-1932) at 12th and Market streets was one of few buildings that reinvigorated optimism for a struggling urban center. The Great Depression left architects and city planners facing new challenges that beckoned for reform. It was not until 1947 with the "Better Philadelphia" exhibition, held at Gimbels Department Store, that newly revived efforts in urban design began to surface and excite the city. This exhibit was meant to educate the public about the city's physical development as well as to demonstrate the benefits of

⁶⁸ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1999), 265.

urban renewal. Visitors were subjected to an array of projects that ultimately spoke to a larger vision for Philadelphia. This didactic effort segued into one of the earliest citywide redevelopment programs in postwar America.⁶⁹

During the 1950s, Philadelphia's government underwent substantial restructuring. The Home Rule Charter of 1951 created a stronger mayoral executive branch than had previously existed. Additionally, the city's Planning Commission was allotted increased power allowing them to more effectively direct the physical planning activities of the city's government.⁷⁰ Philadelphia pioneered in redevelopment legislation that paralleled the Federal government's urban renewal programs during the 1950s and into the early 1960s.⁷¹ With the election of Mayor Joseph Clark in 1952, the city's government shifted from Republican to Democratic that, in turn, shifted Philadelphia towards a more rigorous urban renewal agenda. This rigor continued as Mayor Richardson Dilworth came into office in 1956. The success and effectiveness of this reform hinged on the involvement of the city's government in housing and city planning affairs in addition to non-profit organizations that consisted of concerned citizens and businessmen. These organizations included the Old Philadelphia Corporation, the Greater Philadelphia Movement, the Philadelphia Housing Association, and the Citizens' Council on City Planning.

The site on which the International House would be built was seated amid a number of Philadelphia's most prominent neighborhoods targeted for the city's planned urban renewal projects, the University City Core Area, which was the central portion of the West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area. This was also known as the University Redevelopment Area Unit 3. The University City Core Area covered approximately 300 acres bounded by Powelton Avenue, 38th Street, Lancaster Avenue, Powelton Avenue, 32nd Street, John F. Kennedy Boulevard, 22nd Street, Walnut Street, 33rd Street, Spruce Street, a line 294 feet west of 40th Street, Irving Street, a line 350 west of 40th Street, Locust Street, a line 376 feet west of 40th Street, Chancellor Street, a line 300 feet west of 40th Street, Walnut Street, and 40th Street. The newly empowered Planning Commission, backed by recent Federal legislation, was quick to activate the project for the West Philadelphia Redevelopment Area in 1966.⁷² A year later, the Redevelopment Authority took technical title of 53.4 acres between 34th and 40th streets and Chester, Lancaster, and Powelton avenues. The International House was one of five large-scale projects slated for the area. The others included a \$50 million University of the Sciences Center on Market Street between 34th and 40th streets, a Food and Drug Administration building on the south side of Market Street, west of 48th Street, an apartment building at the corner of 34th and Chestnut streets and a "science-oriented high school" near Lancaster Avenue (the former University City High School).⁷³ The redevelopment project was spearheaded by the West Philadelphia Corporation, a non-profit development organization comprised of a coalition of "higher education and medical institutions that included the University of Pennsylvania as the senior partner and the Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University), the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (now University of the Sciences in Philadelphia), Presbyterian Hospital (now Penn Presbyterian Medical Center), and the Osteopathic Medical School (now Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine) as the junior partners."⁷⁴ The West Philadelphia Corporation also penned the name "University City" for the new development, a name that has stuck with and defined the neighborhood to this day.⁷⁵

69 Madeline Cohen, "Postwar City Planning in Philadelphia: Edmund Bacon and the Design of Washington Square East" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 2.

70 Ibid, 387.

71 G. Holmes Perkins, "Part Four: Philadelphia Phoenix: Postwar Civic Renaissance and the Philadelphia School," in *Drawing Toward Building: Philadelphia Architectural Graphics 1732-1986*, ed. James F. O'Gorman et al. (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania, 1986), 204.

72 Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *University City Core Plan: 1966*. (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1966), no page.

73 Francis M. Loran, "Court Action Readied to Acquire Tract for University City," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 1967.

74 John L. Puckett, "The West Philadelphia Corporation: 1959-2018," *West Philadelphia Collaborative History Project*. Electronic document, <https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/stories/west-philadelphia-corporation>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

75 John L. Puckett and Mark Frazier Lloyd. *Becoming Penn: The Pragmatic American University 1950-2000*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 97.

During the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, this section of West Philadelphia was a bustling streetcar suburb thanks to the numerous streetcar networks that ran from the center of the city westward. This, along with the construction of the Market Street Elevated subway, led to swaths of speculative development in the form of brick rowhouses and semi-detached twin houses constructed between the 1870s and 1920s. It was also during this time that the University of Pennsylvania and the Drexel Institute began to develop just west of the Schuylkill River. The 3700 block of Chestnut Street contained rowhouses, semi-detached twins, and detached dwellings. One such row, at the northwest corner of 37th and Chestnut streets (the future location of the International House) was designed by famed architect Willis G. Hale.⁷⁶ By the mid-twentieth century, however, this area was targeted for redevelopment and renewal as noted in the *University Redevelopment Area Plan, September 1950*. In this new redevelopment plan, approximately 3,000 dwellings in the area would be demolished for apartment, commercial, industrial, and institutional development which led to the displacement of thousands of residents, with the “families of low income to be accommodated in other sections of the City where new public housing will be developed.”⁷⁷

These residents, mostly African American, resided in a neighborhood north of Market Street called the ‘Black Bottom.’ The displacement of over 2,500 residents resulted in negative press for the Redevelopment Authority and the West Philadelphia Corporation. A sit-in protest occurred near the end of the redevelopment initiative in 1969 for the Black Bottom displacement, among other political situations of the day including the Vietnam War. Historian John L. Puckett also noted that the Black Bottom incident also led to the University of Pennsylvania’s promise of transparency in dealing with community members regarding plans for any future expansion of the campus.⁷⁸

During the 1950s and 1960s, this area was “warranted by the following conditions: a) unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded conditions of certain buildings; b) inadequate planning of the area; c) excessive land coverage; d) lack of proper light, air, and open space; e) faulty street or lot layout; f) defective design and arrangement of buildings; and g) economically or socially undesirable land uses.” The 1966 plan also cited the “blight along Market Street, resulting from an elevated transit structure that was torn down and replaced by a subway in 1956.”⁷⁹ The loss of much of this building fabric meant a loss of residential character that once defined West Philadelphia. In May 1967, the Redevelopment Authority approved the sale of the 58,000 square-foot tract of land on the northwest corner of 37th and Chestnut streets for \$272,000. Two months later, under Bill Number 2606, the redevelopment contract between the Redevelopment Authority and International House Center, Inc. for Parcel No. 30 of Urban Renewal Area of Unit No. 3 was executed.⁸⁰ The design and construction of the International House from 1965 to 1970 is discussed further below.

Socially, the International House is reflective of the vast urban redevelopment projects that swept across the city during the 1960s. When it was constructed, this section of West Philadelphia known as University of Pennsylvania Redevelopment Area Unit 3, was seen by local planners as a blighted, unsanitary, and unsafe. In their seminal work on the development of the modern University of Pennsylvania campus entitled *Becoming Penn: The Pragmatic American University 1950-2000*, historians John L. Puckett and Mark Frazier Lloyd state “it is important to note the role of the International House, Inc., as a developer in Unit 3” along with the Presbyterian-University Medical Hospital, the Science Center, among others.⁸¹ Thus, its importance in the history and development of modern University City has not gone unnoticed. Today, the building is located on a vibrant institutional corridor that is undergoing another wave of development. However, the International House was one of, if not the first building constructed in this section University City that ultimately defined it as a series of high-rise office, residential, and educational buildings.

76 Robert Morris Skaler, *West Philadelphia: University City to 52nd Street*. (Charleston, SC: Images of America Press, 2002), 33.

77 Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *University Redevelopment Area Plan, September 1950*, (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1950), 15.

78 Puckett, “Collateral Damage in Unit 3.”

79 Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *University City Core Plan: 1966*, 3.

80 “Bill No. 2606,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 7, 1967.

81 Puckett and Lloyd, *Becoming Penn: The Pragmatic American University 1950-2000*, 381.

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