



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

January 18, 2019

Stewart Gray
Preservation Planner
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
2100 Randolph Road
Charlotte, NC 28207

RE: Proposed Designation of the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building, 21126 Catawba Avenue, Cornelius, Mecklenburg County

Dear Mr. Gray:

Thank you for the report we received on the proposed designation of the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building located at 21126 Catawba Avenue in Cornelius. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

The Cornelius High School Agriculture Building possesses special local significance in the areas of education and architecture. As stated in the designation report, this PWA-funded agricultural education building, erected between 1937 and 1938, was among the first of its type in Mecklenburg County. The building is a significant reminder of how Mecklenburg County's rural and agricultural landscape were shaped by the technological advances of the early 1900s, and the correlative shift in the educational curriculum to prepare local youth for industrialized farming practices. The Cornelius High School Agriculture Building also possesses special local significance for architecture, as an excellent local example of a modestly interpreted Classical Revival style PWA building and a significant local example of the work of a regionally important architect, Willard G. Rogers.

We have shared recommendations with staff for minor changes to the report. With the recommended revisions, the designation report will provide the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission and the local governing board sufficient information to determine whether the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building possesses the requisite special significance and integrity for landmark designation.

Landmark designation means the community recognizes the property is worthy of preservation because of its special significance to the local community. Any substantial changes in design, materials, and appearance to the property is subject to the design review procedures of the preservation commission.

If the local governing board wishes to extend the Commission's design review authority to significant features of the interior, the owner must give written consent. The designation ordinance must specify the features and describe the nature of the Commission's design review authority over them.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report. Please note, our comments are advisory only and therefore, nonbinding. Once the governing board has received a recommendation from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, it should proceed in the same manner as would otherwise be required for an amendment to the zoning ordinance. Once the decision has been made, please return a completed copy of the enclosed form to our office.

This letter serves as our comments on the proposed designation of the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building. Please contact me at 919-814-6575 should you have any questions about our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amber E. Stimpson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Amber E. Stimpson
Local Preservation Commissions / CLG Coordinator

CC: Commission Chair

Enclosure

Good afternoon Stewart-

Attached is a copy of a letter written in response to the proposed designation of the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building. Two paper copies of this letter will be sent to you via US Postal Service mail this afternoon. One copy is intended for you and the other copy is for the Commission Chairman. Also attached is a copy of the designation confirmation form for the property. A paper copy of this form will be enclosed with the letter. Once the ordinance has been adopted to designate the property, please return a completed copy of the confirmation form to me with the date the ordinance was adopted.

National Register Coordinator, Jenn Brosz reviewed the report and offers the following comments.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The report provides thorough information regarding the special local significance of the property but does not offer a compelling explanation regarding how the property possesses requisite integrity for listing. The designation report form, Item 8, letter b., requests the applicant address the property's integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association. Unfortunately, instead of discussing how the property possesses integrity the form simply states, "the physical description demonstrates that it meets this criterion."

Although the physical description includes a general overall description of the property, as well as information about some of the changes that have occurred over time, e.g., infilled windows and changes to doors, it fails to discuss when and why four horizontal panels were attached to the rear facade. It is unclear from the photographs if the panels are solar or serve another purpose. The report should also address changes to the site, including; changes to the campus arrangement; the installation of a parking lot; and the installation of the metal educational buildings sited directly in front of the subject property.

The report should be amended to include a detailed explanation about changes that have occurred to the property since its construction and provide a statement of integrity that addresses *each of the seven aspects* of integrity. The integrity statement should include a specific *analysis of how* the historic resource retains the collective historic integrity required to convey its significance. With these changes, we believe the designation report will provide the preservation commission and local governing board sufficient information to determine whether the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building possesses the requisite special local significance and integrity for local historic landmark designation.

Please contact Jenn Brosz at jenn.brosz@ncdcr.gov or at 919.814.6587 with any questions you may have regarding staff comments.

Best wishes!

AMBER E. STIMPSON, MA

Local Preservation Commission/Certified Local Government Coordinator
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