

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Armstrong Rubber Company Building

Other names/site number: Pirelli Building

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 500 Sargent Drive

City or town: New Haven State: CT County: New Haven

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B XC ___D

	3/15/21
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

for Roger G. Reed
Signature of the Keeper

April 29, 2021
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/organizational

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: CONCRETE

Roof: ASPHALT, SYNTHETICS/Rubber

Other: GLASS, METAL

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building is an iconic Modern-style office building designed by internationally acclaimed architect Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) and structural engineer Paul Weidlinger (1914-1999) for the Armstrong Rubber Company in 1968-1969. The building is located in the Long Wharf area at the south edge of New Haven, Connecticut, adjacent to Interstate 95 (I-95) and New Haven Harbor. The current building is a truncated version of its original form. It is comprised of two distinct components: a 2-story base that was designed to house research, development, and production functions, and a 5-story office tower (with four stories of offices and a mechanical level) that appears to hover above a 2-story void between the two masses; massive central and end piers carry the load of the structure above. The two-story base of the building originally extended forty-one bays west of the tower housing research and development laboratories and a production facility. This portion of the building shared the building materials and design features of the office tower with some variation that reflected changes in interior function. The rear wing was demolished up to the office tower in 2003, and its west wall was re-installed. The remaining steel-frame structure is clad in pre-cast and cast-in-place concrete wall panels that create facades defined by a distinctive interplay of light and shadow. The building has a flat roof. It is designed as an urban landmark that was intended to serve as a dramatic gateway to the City of New Haven. The property also includes a contributing free-standing 3-story concrete structure that originally displayed the Armstrong Rubber Company Sign. The structure is located near the northeast corner of the building and was designed and built concurrently with the Armstrong Rubber Company Building.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building is sited on the northwest side of Sargent Drive within a commercial and business park setting (Figures 1-2). Located near New Haven Harbor, the Armstrong Rubber Company Building is a defining building in the area around Long Wharf, which was part of an extensive urban renewal project in the mid-twentieth century that aimed to reactivate the waterfront south of downtown New Haven. The Long Wharf area maintains industrial setting as imaged in the 1960s. I-95 is located immediately east of the building. Beyond the highway is Long Wharf Drive and a wide cove that connects to the Mill and Quinnipiac rivers. New Haven Union Station, which services the local Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) North line and Amtrak, and its affiliated train tracks and service area defines the west side of the Long Wharf area. The area between the train tracks and Long Wharf features single- and multi-story steel-frame buildings with commercial, corporate, and hospitality uses. The Armstrong Rubber Company Building was to serve as a defining building for the redevelopment of the Long Wharf area, especially located with a prominent view from I-95 for those passing to and from New York City. The Long Wharf area is now primarily defined by a few large, industrial buildings of varying ages (some original to the 1960s redevelopment plan, some newer) and expansive parking lots.

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The parcel on which the Armstrong Rubber Company Building sits is defined by Sargent Drive to the north and east, a twenty-first century commercial building to the south, and Brewery Street to the west. The majority of the parcel is currently devoted to expansive parking lots. While parking was incorporated into the original site plan for the building, the immediate surrounding was landscaped with the building surrounded by lawn, appearing as an object in a natural setting (Figures 9-12). The design intention was to promote the notion that work could be set in a bucolic landscape rather than in the traditional dense, noisy hardscape of the city.¹ The Armstrong Rubber Company Sign, an associated concrete structure that served as both storage in its base, and signage for the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, is located northeast of the building. The property is accessed by a two-lane road that extends northwest from Sargent Drive to Brewery Street.

Armstrong Rubber Company Building (contributing building, 1968-1969)

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building is a monumental building designed to match the scale of the adjacent interstate highway and to attract the attention of passing motorists. The building design served as a compromise between former New Haven Mayor Richard Lee and the Armstrong Rubber Company. It fulfilled Mayor Lee's desire for an architectural icon to represent New Haven from the new elevated I-95 while providing the research and development and production space necessary for Armstrong Rubber. Known for its clear separation of functions, the steel-framed, concrete-clad structure features a two-story base designed to accommodate research and development laboratories for the production of automobile and airplane tires, and a five-story office tower and mechanical level which contained the Armstrong Rubber Company's corporate offices with a 2-story void separating the masses. To accomplish this architectural feat, structural engineers Paul Weidlinger and Matthys Levy of Weidlinger Associates worked with Breuer to create an innovative cantilevered steel truss structural system that suspends the office tower above the now truncated base (Photographs 1, 5-8 and Figures 3-12). The 17-foot-high void is supported by massive central and end piers that carry the load of the structure above (Photographs 17-18), including the precast concrete window walls, utilities, service systems and elevator shafts. In its current form, the building extends 36 bays by 13 bays and has a flat roof. The original design included a substantial two-story wing with a flat roof that extended 41 bays west of the tower, creating a horizontal counterbalance to the vertical tower. The wing housed the research and development laboratories and a production facility known as the pilot plant. This rear wing was also clad in sculptural pre-cast concrete panels. The panels of the pilot plant were differentiated from those on the research and development laboratories, highlighting the interior change in function.

The building faces east onto Sargent Drive. The dominant features of the façade are the 2-story void between the base and the office tower and the repetitive fenestration of 36 bays of closely spaced, rectangular-shaped window openings. The single-pane fixed metal windows are set deeply into prefabricated concrete panels to create shadow and a sense of depth (Photographs 1, 3, 5-8). The contrast between open space, heavy concrete, and dramatic shadows accentuate the sculptural quality of the building. The only breaks in the geometric grid created by this pattern are the main entrance at the base and the mechanical level at the roofline. The main entrance system measures three bays wide and is centered on the elevation. A series of geometrically placed granite pavers provide ornament at the entryway, leading to a pair of metal-framed doors with metal panel infill set within a projecting entry vestibule with angled concrete walls. The entry doors are positioned beneath a wide, glazed transom. The vestibule is capped by a concrete canopy with a cement plaster soffit and is flanked on either side by large plate glass windows (Photograph 2). North of the vestibule, the building's date stamp is carved into the

¹The Alliance for Architecture, "Pirelli Building," Connecticut State Register Nomination, September 1997.

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adjacent canted concrete wall, along with the names of the principal architects: “1969 MARCEL BREUER and ROBERT F GATJE Architects” (Photograph 4). The mechanical level is two stories in height and unfenestrated with concrete divisions located every two bays. Apart from the entrance bay, the west elevation is identical to the façade.

The pre-cast base and tower walls are constructed out of a type of Plastacrete called Mo-sai, a white cement mix with an exposed quartz pebble aggregate. The panels are angular and vary in size and design; they are arranged in a way that emphasizes vertical and horizontal lines (Photographs 1, 3, 5-8). The panels are modeled in Breuer’s preferred crystalline form,² which has both a functional and aesthetic intent, as they provide protection from the sun and create variation in shadows depending on the time of day and location of the sun. Most panels are pebbled for a slight variation of the grayscale and to achieve a less than smooth surface texture (Photograph 3).

The north and south elevations are dominated by centered end piers that support the upper floors (Photographs 5, 7-8). The board-formed concrete panels retain the grainy imprint of their wooden plank molds. The end pier panels are differentiated from the rest of the building by projecting and recessed diagonal lines that indicate the vertical circulation found within the piers. Each has a single window at the eastern end of the pier. The piers are flanked by 6 bays of windows on the base and tower. The concrete panels at the mechanical level are molded to represent the diagonal steel trusses beneath the concrete. Two secondary entrances are located at the north and south elevations; each comprises a flush metal utility door with vision panels. The north entrance is accessed by a granite stair, and the south entrance features a glazed sidelight and transom accessed by a switchback ramp with granite pavers and concrete knee walls.

Interior

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building stands nine levels tall (including the two open levels) with approximately 100,000 square feet of usable office space. As noted above, the building’s two-story base was designed to house the Armstrong Rubber Company’s research and development laboratories and pilot plant and has been significantly reduced in scale due to the demolition of the pilot plant and majority of the research and development laboratory space. The original layout of the two floors of laboratories consisted of smaller laboratories, testing and office spaces arranged around the perimeter walls with larger laboratories, a cafeteria, and conference room concentrated in the center of the floor. The second floor was even more open in plan with large drafting, engineering, and expansion spaces occupying most of the floor and small offices lining the east wall (Figures 15, 17, 19). The pilot plant was primarily an open floor plate for tire production with storage, garages, loading docks and test areas around the perimeter (Figures, 16, 18). Selective abatement efforts were previously conducted on the remaining portions of the first and second floors of the research and development laboratory space. All of the original flooring, except for inlaid granite pavers in the entrance lobby, and all wall systems and ceilings were removed on the first and second floors. As a result, the existing unfinished spaces consist of open floor plates with exposed concrete walls, evenly spaced rows of heavy steel I-columns supporting steel I-beams, exposed corrugated metal ceilings, and poured concrete flooring (Photographs 10-13, 15-16). One of the areas left intact following the first and second floor abatement activities was the building’s modest

² The crystalline form is based on the arrangement of atoms in a crystal. In his lecture “Where do We Stand?” (Zurich, Switzerland, 1934), Breuer equates crystalline structures to “human laws and functions.” The structures are geometric and three-dimensional in a rational form that is well-suited to the construction methods favored by Modern architects.

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entrance lobby, which features granite floor pavers, a granite stair with hardwood handrails and steel guardrails measuring almost 15 feet in width (Photograph 10, Figure 14), and a polished granite desk.

Floors five through eight were designed to house the Company's corporate headquarters (Figures 20-21). All four floors feature offices lining the perimeter walls. The office layout and configuration allowed for sweeping views of the New Haven Harbor and of the downtown skyline. Conference rooms, lavatories and programming spaces occupied the center of each floor plate. The eighth floor contained the kitchen and dining room, as evidenced by the existing quarry and ceramic tiles cladding the walls and floor (Photograph 36). The tiles are laid in vertical strips with staggered horizontal joints, a design that emphasized their decorative rather than structural function. The eighth floor also housed the executive offices, with the President and Chairman's offices in the southeast and northeast corners with expansive views of the harbor. Offices had high-end modern finishes, including wood and twine wall covers and black granite furniture sourced from Breuer's preferred quarry Coldspring, in Minnesota³ (Figure 13). All furniture and some finishes have been either removed or compromised beyond repair by asbestos. Existing finishes were partially removed due to previous abatement efforts which involved the removal of the original vinyl asbestos flooring and adhesive, baseboards, interior doors, and some wall systems. Extant finishes include painted plaster walls, gypsum wallboard and glass partitions, some wood paneled office walls, and acoustical tile ceilings with inset light fixtures (Photographs 19-38).

Vertical access is provided by two runs of switchback stairs sited at the building's north and south walls, which provide egress from all floors of the building. Historically, there were also stairs located at the northwest and southwest corners of the now-demolished research and development laboratory space that accessed the first and second floors. Existing stairs feature concrete stringers, terrazzo treads and risers, continuous hardwood handrails with steel guardrails, and wall-mounted hardwood rails. The stairs ascend to terrazzo landings at each floor and are enclosed by board-formed concrete panel walls (Photographs 14, 31). Light fixture mounts and exposed wiring remain at each floor (Photograph 14), and metal louvers are set within the concrete walls below the window openings at each landing. The north stairhall provides further access to an open-tread metal stair at the ninth floor lightwell that leads to the roof. A passenger elevator and freight elevator are located together in concrete block shafts at the center of each floor plate (Photograph 24). Six-by-twelve-inch granite tiles clad the walls on either side of the elevator doors at each floor, and the interior of the passenger elevator features wood parquet accent walls.

Sign (contributing structure, 1968-1969)

The Armstrong Rubber Company sign is a free-standing structure located northeast of the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, near the entrance to the property (Photographs 8-9 and Figures 7-11). It is constructed of a cast-in-place concrete base and precast concrete panels and is approximately thirty-six feet wide and forty-eight feet tall. The end walls have textured concrete in keeping with Breuer's aesthetic. Echoing the Armstrong Rubber Company building, the sign consists of two distinct parts separated by a void. It has a low, narrow base that contains an equipment room, with a larger rectangular volume above. The base is pierced by a door on its western end and a window on its eastern end, allowing for equipment to be stored in the structure. Half of the rectangular volume above the base is a void and the upper half is solid but has square openings on the east and west elevations. Sign lettering was attached to the upper portion of the structure, which is visible from the elevated highway and the street at grade. It originally featured Armstrong Rubber lettering and later held lettering that read Pirelli. Currently, there is

³ Peter Swanson, email message to author, February 11, 2021.

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LED signage mounted to the north elevation of the original structure advertising the nearby IKEA building.

Integrity

The Armstrong Rubber Company building has sustained notable alterations due to changes in ownership but retains its most iconic characteristics and is still widely recognized as a key example of Modern architecture in the state. The removal of the substantial rear wing that contained the pilot plant and part of the research and development laboratory resulted in the current truncated form of the building's base. This wing was integral to the original design both in its articulation of differing interior functions and in the counterbalancing weight its horizontality offered to the vertical office tower. Within the property, the original park-like setting, in which the building rose from a surrounding lawn, has been converted to an asphalt parking lot. Outside of the property, the building's original relationship to the highway and surrounding city remains intact. On the interior, some of the original finishes of the main building were removed as part of asbestos abatement.

Despite these losses, significant iconic features of the building are still prominent, including those resultant from Breuer's collaboration with Gatje and Levy (Weidlinger Associates), and the design solutions achieved by balancing City urban design goals with the needs of the Armstrong Rubber Company. The building's strong presence as a gateway to New Haven, visible from I-95 and the downtown contributes to its integrity of design, setting, and location. Additionally, its relationship to the waterfront and location within the Long Wharf area is unchanged, and the original accessory sign structure is intact on the property. The most notable features of the building's design—the highly distinctive separation of spaces by a 2-story void—made possible by an innovative steel truss suspension system remain intact, and the original pre-cast concrete panels continue to convey Breuer's design intention of protecting the interiors from sun while harnessing its light and shadows to sculptural effect, contributing to the building's integrity of design, feeling, and association. The use of engineering innovation, sculptural and modular concrete forms, and architectural chiaroscuro on display in the Armstrong Rubber Company building are part of Breuer's design signature. While the building is most celebrated for its exterior features, remaining interior finishes also contribute to the building's overall integrity of materials and workmanship. With the exception of the executive offices, the interior design was intended to be functional, with many flexible open laboratories and drafting spaces to allow for rearrangement and expansion. The current condition of open floor plates on the lower two floors, though devoid of finishes, is not vastly different from the historic condition. The most notable interior features of the building were the lobby, stairwells, and elevators, where the fine and rough materials were elegantly paired.⁴ All of these elements remain intact. Significant extant historic fabric includes granite pavers at the entry, sculptural stairs with terrazzo treads and risers, passenger elevator lobby ornament including granite tiles cladding the walls on either side of the elevator doors at each floor, and wood parquet accent walls on the elevator interior. Some upper floor historic finishes remain including painted plaster walls, gypsum wallboard, some wood veneer office walls, and acoustical tile ceilings with inset light fixtures. The Armstrong Rubber Company building remains a monumental example of Breuer's commercial work in Connecticut, achieved through productive collaboration with innovative design partners. The building retains its feeling and association as a distinctive example of Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern commercial architecture completed by a team of prominent designers and integrated into a larger municipal urban planning effort.

⁴ Peter Swanson, email message to author, February 11, 2021.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1968-1969

Significant Dates

1968-1969

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Breuer, Marcel (1902-1981)

Gatje, Robert F. (1927-2018)

Levy, Matthys, Weidlinger Associates, engineer

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Built in 1968-1969, the Armstrong Rubber Company Building is eligible for listing in the National Register at the state level under Criterion C in the categories of Architecture and Community Planning and Development. The building is a notable design by internationally renowned Modern architect, Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) in collaboration with architect Robert Gatje (1927-2018) and the structural engineering firm Weidlinger Associates, and it is a key site in the Long Wharf area which was an important feature in New Haven's prominent mid-century urban renewal program. The building represents Breuer's masterful solution to the challenge of marrying the needs of the Armstrong Rubber Company for office and production space with the aspirations of city officials who sought a cultural landmark that would serve as both a physical and symbolic gateway to the City of New Haven as seen from the new Interstate 95 (I-95). Among the design solutions that served both clients was Breuer and Weidlinger Associates' design of a steel truss, concrete-clad structural system that allowed the office portion of the building to be visually suspended above the research and development laboratories. This provided a substantially sized building that was in keeping with the scale of I-95 and signaled to passing motorists the progressive modernity of the City of New Haven while also meeting the programmatic requirements of the Armstrong Rubber Company. The Armstrong Rubber Company Building is an intrinsic part of the New Haven legacy of modern architecture. The period of significance for the building is relegated to its period of construction, 1968-1969.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion C: Architecture and Community Planning and Development

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building (Armstrong Rubber Building) was designed as a compromise between client and city development plans, structural engineer and grand architectural ideas, manufacturing requirements and monumental design. The building stands as a significant design solution to a complex problem of fulfilling a city's urban renewal requirements while satisfying the needs of the paying customer. At the end of the 1960s, the Armstrong Rubber Company needed more space to house its flourishing enterprise. Joseph R. Stewart, Vice-President of Armstrong, expressed interest in a piece of land along I-95 in the Long Wharf area where its headquarters would be seen by passing motorists and its research and development laboratories could be showcased. The size of the site also allowed for the desirable separation of the research and development laboratories from the noise of the production facilities, a key programming requirement for Armstrong.⁵ The land was part of Mayor Lee's plan for a modernized industrial and manufacturing section of the city, and he had strict expectations of what would be built on the parcel. The company expected to build 2 to 3-story corporate offices at the front of the site and a 1 to 2-story building for research and development laboratories and manufacturing located at the back of the site, where noise from the operations could be contained.⁶

This proposal did not satisfy the Mayor of New Haven, Richard Lee, who envisioned an eighteen-story tower on the site. In Lee's view, the Long Wharf site would mark the gateway to New Haven for traffic

⁵ Bob Gregson, email message to author, February 11, 2021.

⁶ Robert Gatje, I.M. Pei. *Marcel Breuer: A Memoir*. (New York: The Monacelli Press) 2000, 211.

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coming off the Connecticut Turnpike (I-95) into the city. He insisted that “anything built on the site should have an architectural presence and be designed by a master.”⁷ Lee stipulated that an architect of note must design the building. Breuer received the contract due to his lower bid and the recent successful (and under budget) completion of the Washington, D.C. headquarters for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).⁸ According to Robert Gatje, Breuer’s architectural partner in the design of the new building, “Armstrong was unhappy and couldn’t imagine building something it neither wanted nor needed.”⁹ Breuer’s challenge would be designing a building that satisfied the programmatic requirements of the Armstrong Rubber Company, while also completing the vision of Mayor Richard Lee.

Innovative Design Solutions by a Master Architect

The Armstrong Rubber Company was founded by George F. Armstrong in 1912 in a small loft in New Jersey. After a decade of steady growth, the company needed more space and purchased a small, defunct tire manufacturing concern in West Haven, Connecticut in 1922. The company prospered, particularly in the post-World War II era, when increasing numbers of Americans were reliant on their automobiles. By 1961, the Armstrong Rubber Company had become the fifth largest tire maker in the world, employing over 5,000 people. Armstrong’s net sales jumped nearly 15% from 1968 to 1969, netting in excess of \$201 million.¹⁰ Their significant growth and expanding operation meant that by the end of the 1960s the company needed to build a new headquarters and plant.

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building is undoubtedly significant by association as a design by internationally acclaimed architect, Marcel Breuer (and his partner, Robert Gatje), but more specifically it derives significance from the unique solutions to a number of challenges that Breuer and his team achieved in his design. Among these was how to resolve the programmatic requirements of the Armstrong Rubber Company outlined above with the lofty vision of Mayor Lee for a large, culturally significant building. The site added to the challenge: ground level was about twenty feet below the level of the turnpike. Armstrong’s original intent for 2 to 3-story buildings spread over the site would have resulted in a view of acres of rooftops from I-95. This reality led Mayor Lee to compromise and settled on requiring nothing short of a ten-story tower on the site. According to Gatje, Breuer listened to the concerns of Armstrong Company representatives and Mayor Lee and derived a solution almost immediately:

When he presented his thoughts after they had been drawn up, it was to propose that the office floors be put atop the two-story research and development wing at grade and then—in order to satisfy Dick Lee—that they be raised clear of the roof and ‘hung from above,’ leaving a two-story-high slot between the two building masses that could be filled with expansion space at a later time. Two levels of R&D plus two floors of air, with five floors of offices and a top level devoted to mechanical equipment between deep trusses, which were going to do the ‘hanging,’ equaled ten floors.¹¹

Though Armstrong never anticipated a tower, an added benefit of Breuer’s design to the company was an improved view of the New Haven Harbor and skyline from inside the building, as well as an eye-catching

⁷ Gatje and Pei, 210.

⁸ Rachel D. Carley, “Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement,” New Haven Preservation Trust, 2008, 37.

⁹ Gatje and Pei, 211.

¹⁰ “Armstrong Finds a Niche in the Tire Market.” *Connecticut History.Org*. September 7, 2013. <https://connecticuthistory.org/armstrong-finds-a-niche-in-the-tire-market/>. (Accessed 5/2/2019).

¹¹ Gatje and Pei, 211.

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structure that would draw attention to the business. Breuer's design also served Mayor Lee in unexpected ways. Not only did he get a building of the scale he desired, but the two-story void made the building truly remarkable, both in its structural feat and the way the void bridges views of downtown with the harbor. In his evaluation of the Armstrong Building, Guy Nordenson, structural engineer and professor of architecture and engineering at Princeton University, likens the space within the void to a billboard for the city.¹² Both Armstrong and Lee approved the innovative design. The only alteration was the reduction in office space from the proposed five floors, to four, at Armstrong's insistence to reduce cost (Figures 3-6, 9-12). Breuer tried to argue in favor of building the 9th floor without finishing it, allowing for the possibility of expansion, but Armstrong insisted on its elimination. Gatje recalls that Breuer was disappointed in the disruption to the originally proposed proportions of his design but understood the realities of serving his clients.

Other more 'formal' architects might have complained loudly, but that wasn't [Breuer's] style. He recognized that Joe had a responsibility to his shareholders and respected the fact that he was trying hard not to derail the entire project...I seem to remember [Breuer] expressing regrets once on his first visit to the job site after the frame was up, but he never showed anything but pride in the result to Armstrong and Mayor Lee.¹³

Breuer's design innovation extends to the structure and skin of the building, the design of which was a collaboration between Breuer and his structural engineer. Matthys Levy of Weidlinger Associates was the project engineer for the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, and for most of Breuer's buildings in the 1950s and 1960s. The tower structure consists of steel framing clad in precast concrete panels with cast-in-place concrete poured over the heavy steel truss support system and the stair towers. According to Gatje, Levy argued in favor of a glazed office tower suspended above the concrete research and development wing, but Breuer insisted on a single material for architectural unity.¹⁴ Breuer did, however, concede that the steel frame could be expressed on the end towers, which have molded concrete panels that resemble the shape of the steel frame beneath the surface. The concrete panels that enclose the stair towers also give a nod to structure by expressing the location of the stairs with diagonal lines and shadows (Figure 7). The window panels were composed of white cement and a dark aggregate. When lightly sandblasted, the aggregate became exposed and the color was thought to pair well with the cast-in-place grey concrete that was poured around the truss work and stair towers. The precast panels with their deeply inset windows served the dual purposes of protecting the interior from sun as well as using its light and shadow to create a sculptural façade. Other structures completed by Breuer in the 1960s featured similar deeply inset windows: the IBM Laboratory in La Gaude, France (1962) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Washington D.C. (1966). Breuer even designed another building in New Haven during this period with similar inset windows: the Becton Engineering and Applied Science Center (1970) at 15 Prospect Street. He continued designing buildings in this style, most notably the Hubert H. Humphrey Building in Washington, D.C (1976).

The Modernist movement took advantage of new advances in technology and building materials, which allowed architects such as Breuer to experiment with their designs. Breuer was especially fond of concrete, and by 1963 he had developed three methods that expanded and enhanced the possibilities of incorporating concrete into Modern design. The first method involved the creation of an overall rough surface texture using irregular patterns in the sandblasted board forms and poured concrete. The second

¹² Guy Nordenson, "Marcel Breuer: Structure and Shadow," in *Marcel Breuer Building Global Institutions*, ed. Barry Berdoll and Jonathan Massey (Zurich: Lars Muller Publishers, 2018) 2018, 118.

¹³ Gatje and Pei, 213.

¹⁴ Gatje and Pei, 212.

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method employed faceted or modular precast design to fragment large, flat expanses of concrete, and the third method utilized a system of visible joints in the concrete forms. When combined, the three methods enhanced the visual nuances presented by light, shadow, and darkness, as each appeared to temporarily alter the building's surface. All three methods were employed by Breuer in the Armstrong Rubber Company Building. Breuer preferred to represent the concrete and steel buildings in juxtaposition to natural forms, "in contrast to nature."¹⁵ But his ability to blend the needs of clients with his own architectural predilections showed his deep understanding that architecture does not exist in a vacuum, and no matter how much Modernists extolled the importance of form following function and eschewing the messiness of life and nature, it will creep in at some point.¹⁶ It brought him great success at the Armstrong Rubber Building, as he was able to listen and understand the needs of two clients on the opposite ends of the spectrum, as well as his structural engineer.

The sign structure, located just to the northeast of the building, is another example of the innovative design solutions Breuer employed in the Armstrong Rubber Company Building (Figures 7-11). When the Armstrong representatives approached Breuer about the design for a roof-top sign, Breuer responded that the building was so distinctive that it would not require signage but would just be known as the Armstrong Building. He argued further that a roof-top sign would interfere with the building's silhouette. Armstrong, and its investors, were not convinced. Architectural renderings of the building illustrate a period in which Breuer seems to have considered incorporating signage within the two-story void (Figures 3-4). Ultimately, Breuer proposed an ancillary 3-story structure that could be seen from the highway but that would not detract from the architectural integrity of the building. Armstrong approved the proposal, but here, as at the outset, Armstrong and the city clashed once more—the structure was not in keeping with a city ordinance that restricted the height of signs along the turnpike. The design team came up with a solution that would ultimately please both Armstrong and the city: he added a door and a window at the base of the structure, creating a storage shed—no longer a freestanding sign structure. The design was approved by the city. The structure itself is reminiscent of the main building in its materials and in its form—a base, a void, and an upper mass on which the signage was affixed.

The Armstrong Rubber Building has outlived both the company whose name it bears and the city of New Haven's urban renewal experiment. Breuer and Levy were able to marry structural engineering ingenuity with Brutalism's vast expanses of concrete to create a structure that serves its main purpose: welcoming those passing by on I-95 to New Haven.

New Haven Urban Renewal (Mayor Richard Lee)

The Armstrong Rubber Building's design is deeply tied to the urban renewal program undertaken by New Haven in the 1950s and 1960s. Like many cities across the country in the early twentieth century, New Haven was facing a bleak future by the 1920s. The Great Depression hastened the decline, and by the end of World War II the city of New Haven was in desperate need of radical changes. Industry was crumbling and residents were following the nation-wide trend of moving to the suburbs, fueled by the growing automobile industry. Manufacturing, which had built New Haven into the commercial center for most of Southern Connecticut, was rapidly dwindling and moving to cheaper (and non-unionized) parts of the country in the South and West. Around this time, New Haven elected Richard C. Lee as mayor. He had a

¹⁵ Guy Nordenson, "Marcel Breuer: Structure and Shadow," 119-120.

¹⁶ Marcel Breuer, "Speech at the Symposium 'What is happening to Modern Architecture?'" in *Marcel Breuer, Architect and Designer*, Peter Blake (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949), 122.

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vision of turning New Haven into “a national laboratory for physical urban renewal.”¹⁷ Mayors, city planners, and architects were proposing vast changes to urban landscapes in hope of saving America’s urban cores.

Richard C. Lee (1916-2003) was a life-long resident of New Haven with a vision for his city. Born in 1916 to a working-class family, Lee took a reporter job at the New Haven Journal-Courier after graduating high school. He was elected as a city alderman at the age of 23, and by the age of 33 was running for mayor of New Haven. His first two bids were unsuccessful, but in 1953 his strong vision and passion for the betterment of New Haven won him the election. He served as Mayor of New Haven from 1954-1970, but his influence on the landscape of the city – though somewhat marred in the decades following – lived on well after he left office.¹⁸

Lee’s 1953 campaign for mayor was run on the idea that he would “renew” New Haven and bring it back to its former glory.¹⁹ What set Lee apart from his rivals was his understanding that while everyone wanted to help New Haven, there was no central plan and “no unity of approach.”²⁰ One firm believer in Lee’s promise, Ed Logue, then an aspiring Yale law student, joined the campaign to try and bring real change to the city. Lee was so impressed with Logue, he hired Logue as his executive secretary once he won the election. By 1955, Lee appointed Logue as the development administrator of the New Haven Redevelopment Agency. Together, Lee and Logue undertook one of the most expansive urban renewal projects in the nation. In her book on Logue and his legacy of urban renewal, Lizabeth Cohen describes Logue and Lee’s collaboration:

Logue’s brilliance at garnering newly available federal urban renewal funds, combined with Lee’s intimate knowledge of New Haven, made them an irrepressible and nationally admired team who could boast that they were attracting more federal dollars per capita to New Haven than any other American city was getting.²¹

The federal government was not blind to the problems facing the country’s urban centers. They realized federal funding could help rebuild many failing urban cores and passed significant acts in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s to help finance projects. Lee and Logue were able to tap into the Housing Acts of 1937, 1949, and 1954 as well as the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 to fund their radical urban renewal plan. The Housing Acts, primarily of 1949 and 1954, provided federal money to tear down urban slums and build new housing in their place. During his campaign in 1953 for mayor, Lee visited the “slums” of New Haven (primarily Oak Street and Wooster Square), and he was appalled at the condition the people were living in.²² Substandard urban housing was a national issue, and the new federal acts were aimed at providing a decent and healthy living option to every citizen in the form of new modern buildings. New Haven’s early adoption of urban renewal and its dedicated leader allowed it to have the highest per capita federal urban renewal funding through the 1950s and 1960s. While they were able to receive significant federal funding, Lee and Logue also acknowledged that private investments were still going to be necessary. Their plan for urban renewal, though, put Logue and his redevelopment agency in complete

¹⁷ Lizabeth Cohen, *Saving America’s Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 2019, Introduction.

¹⁸ Connecticut History, “Richard Lee’s Urban Renewal in New Haven,” CT Humanities, July 28, 2020, <https://connecticuthistory.org/richard-lees-urban-renewal-in-new-haven/>.

¹⁹ Cohen, *Saving America’s Cities*, Introduction.

²⁰ Cohen, *Saving America’s Cities*, 25.

²¹ Cohen, *Saving America’s Cities*, 14-15.

²² Douglas W. Rae, *City, Urbanism and Its End*, (New Haven: Yale University Press) 2003, 323.

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control of planning projects and applying for government aid.²³ This would become a point of contention for companies like Armstrong Rubber who did not want their building designs and budgets heavily dictated by the mayor's office.

In order to receive federal aid, the city had to have a plan in place for how the funds were to be used. Tasked with creating a plan that would drastically change the future of New Haven, Logue drew upon the existing plans proposed by modernist urban planner Maurice Rotival in 1941. Logue was introduced to Rotival's ideas about urban planning policy during his time as a law student at Yale, where Rotival was an influential member in the city planning faculty. The plans placed the emphasis on the automobile, updating the city's means for distribution (Rotival's original plan included what would later become I-95).²⁴ Logue's urban renewal strategy focused on increasing and improving automobile access through the city and into downtown, retaining and growing its manufacturing industry, and creating new postindustrial economic opportunities.²⁵ Another important facet of their plan was separating functions into different parts of the city through strategic zoning. City zoning was not a new theory, but it was one that gained popularity amongst Modern city urbanists and planners for its ability to neatly organize functions. The newly filled in land at Long Wharf provided 350 new acres to build industrial buildings separated from downtown commercial and residential areas.²⁶ This allowed manufacturing companies like Armstrong the space to expand while maintaining easy proximity to transportation. It was a strategy directly aimed at competing with the cheap, large plots of land available in the suburbs.

One of the most lasting legacies of Lee and Logue's urban renewal plan is the Mid-Century Modern architecture it built. Government funding during the mid-twentieth century was given with the understanding that blighted and crumbling buildings would be torn down and new modern buildings would replace them. Lee was able to finagle such a large quantity of federal funding in part because "he could offer up the kind of vision that the feds were looking for: an urban army to call in the bulldozers, knock down the bad stuff and put up something pretty in its place."²⁷ Both Lee and Logue wanted the city's new buildings to announce their modern and dramatic approach to rebuilding. The pair also took their interest in Modern architecture a step further and wanted to focus on attracting master architects to design the new buildings to bring even more attention to New Haven's rebirth. They were able to attract many of the top Modernist architects of the time, supported in part by Yale University's School of Architecture.²⁸

Mayor Lee and Logue's plans for urban renewal were well funded, well planned, and partially carried out through the 1960s. In the 1960s, official city delegations, architects, engineers, planners, and many others came through New Haven to see the "success" of its urban renewal project.²⁹ But the legacy of New Haven's urban renewal has been left with a complicated history. Many blighted cities across the country followed in New Haven's footsteps and undertook large urban renewal strategies in the mid-twentieth century. One of the main tenets of this philosophy, though, was demolishing "blighted" buildings and the forced relocation and displacement of many residents. The process never lived up to its promise, and instead of building decent housing for lower-income residents who were displaced, new higher-income

²³ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 26-27.

²⁴ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 27.

²⁵ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 28.

²⁶ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 30.

²⁷ Laurence D. Cohen, "Urban Renewal's Mad Scientist," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Connecticut), February 9, 2003.

²⁸ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 32.

²⁹ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 35.

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producing housing was built.³⁰ The displaced residents ended up moving into other dilapidated neighborhoods, only perpetuating the cycle.³¹ Lee failed to recognize that new buildings and roadways alone would not solve New Haven's underlying issues, and therefore no amount of government spending on urban renewal would create lasting change.³² In addition, not all of Lee and Logue's plans came to fruition. Many lots were cleared for new construction projects that ultimately were not built; these vacant lots remained unoccupied for decades. The Long Wharf redevelopment attracted new industry, but ultimately it was not enough to replace the number of lost jobs. In later years, Lee and Logue would ultimately agree that their urban renewal plan for New Haven had largely not lived up to their hopes for the city.³³

Long Wharf Redevelopment

The plot of land that interested the Armstrong Rubber Company for its expanded new corporate headquarters was located in the Long Wharf area. The redevelopment of Long Wharf and the surrounding area was known as the Long Wharf Redevelopment Project and was a key part of Lee and Logue's ambitious planning efforts for New Haven. The parcel was one of the last available lots in the Long Wharf area, and with its industrial zoning and proximity to I-95, it was the logical choice for their new building. Long Wharf and its surrounding area have been an integral component of transportation changes in New Haven. The first known iteration of Long Wharf was built at the end of the seventeenth century during the initial growth of New Haven. Long Wharf and the surrounding area became a commercial hub for the city, and the wharf was built and expanded upon throughout the next century and a half. By the later nineteenth century new wharfs with better facilities were constructed to serve the new railroad lines and Long Wharf went into a period of decline. The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad purchased the wharf in 1890 to expand their operation and prevent impacts from the Long Wharf public right-of-way. The railroad company cleared the buildings from the north of the wharf to expand its freight yard tracks and perpetuated the area's decline.³⁴

Over the next few decades Long Wharf and the surrounding area further declined, until the Connecticut State Highway Department decided to use the land along the waterfront to expand U.S. Route 1. The private use of automobiles expanded so rapidly after World War II that the state had to drastically expand many of its larger roadways. The proposed plan for Route 1 became known as the Harborfront Relocation Project, and work began with the dredging of the New Haven Harbor in 1949 to enable large vessels to use the port. The resulting fill was used to create a bed for the future elevated road, frontage roads, and further infill between the freight train tracks and the wharf. By 1953, while work was underway, the Harborfront Relocation Project became part of the creation of the Greenwich-Killingly Expressway, which a few years later was renamed the Connecticut Turnpike, and later Interstate-95.³⁵

The new expressway project opened up the opportunity for the City of New Haven to undertake an urban renewal project in the land created at Long Wharf. The Long Wharf Redevelopment Project was carried out by the New Haven Redevelopment Agency in the mid-1960's. The project was the most ambitious of Lee's administration and was regarded as a major engineering and planning achievement at the time. It

³⁰ Cohen, "Urban Renewal's Mad Scientist."

³¹ Rae, *City, Urbanism and Its End*, 357.

³² Rae, *City, Urbanism and Its End*, 333.

³³ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 66.

³⁴ Bruce Clouette, "Historical and Archaeological Assessment Survey: Long Wharf Pier Structure, New Haven, Connecticut," Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc, March 2008, 7-13.

³⁵ Clouette, "Long Wharf Pier Structure," 14.

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was the only urban renewal project undertaken by Lee that was not federally funded and was heavily zoned to create an industrial hub with easy access to utilities and transportation. The project was able to receive state funding through the 1958 Public Act 8, which funded non-residential projects in Connecticut that were part of urban renewal plans.³⁶ This reclamation area was planned as a showcase of modern industry at the entrance to the city. The redevelopment project opened up new opportunities for manufacturers and businesses in the New Haven area, a ploy by the city to woo companies to stay in New Haven.³⁷ Logue believed that skilled workers, transportation, and proximity to suppliers would no longer suffice to attract manufacturers to cities. While Long Wharf did provide new easier transportation with the completion of I-95, Logue also focused on replacing “factory buildings which are obsolescent, or worse’ with new-style, horizontally sprawling plants in proper industrial corridors.”³⁸ The waterfront became a park, and the historic remains of Long Wharf were left untouched. The parcel of land that the Armstrong Rubber Company bought was one of the last pieces of the Long Wharf redevelopment.³⁹

In her guide to the architecture and urban design of New Haven, Elizabeth Mills Brown describes the Long Wharf Redevelopment Project as “the modern city advertising itself, an imposing lineup of architect-designed factories and commercial buildings in which landscaping and architectural standards have been fostered by the city. She concludes, “the city brilliantly seized the opportunity to create a motor-age industrial park on its new front doorstep.”⁴⁰ The other industrial buildings in the Long Wharf Redevelopment Project were primarily low-profile, simple Modern industrial structures. One of the first buildings located in the area was the Sargent and Co. Building (1964) designed by the local firm of Orr, DeCossy, Winder & Associates. The building more closely resembles Armstrong Rubber’s original design wish with a prominent tinted-glass two-story office structure along Sargent Drive and a large manufacturing warehouse behind. The other major structure built in the first years of the Long Wharf Redevelopment Project was the Long Wharf Market Buildings (1965). The two parallel buildings were only two stories and were designed also by local architecture firm Granbery, Cash & Associates. The buildings were surrounded by trees and grass, leading to a more suburban feel made possible by the large amount of land set aside by the city for industrial use. They represented the new, professional industrial park Lee wanted, but none reached the monumentality of the Armstrong Rubber Building.⁴¹

New Haven Mid-Century Modern Architecture

Urban renewal of the mid-twentieth century is most often recognized through large swaths of highway and stately, sometimes imposing, Modern buildings. New Haven, as the “ideal” example of urban renewal at the time, sought the biggest and brightest names in architecture, engineering, and design to complete its new structures that were to define the rebirth of the city. Yale University was the first institution to bring Modernism to New Haven, with its completion of Eero Saarinen’s Ingalls Hockey Rink in 1957. Yale President Whitney Griswold led a deliberate program by the university to commission and build works by the country’s most noted architects. Following Yale’s example, Lee and Logue engaged many of the same architects who were working for Yale to contribute to the

³⁶ Rachel D. Carley, “Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement,” New Haven Preservation Trust, 2008, 34.

³⁷ Clouette, “Long Wharf Pier Structure,” 15.

³⁸ Cohen, *Saving America’s Cities*, 31.

³⁹ Clouette, “Long Wharf Pier Structure,” 15.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Mills Brown. *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 1976, 22-23.

⁴¹ Carley, “Tomorrow is Here,” 38-39.

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rebuilding of New Haven. Some of these architects were teachers in the School of Architecture at Yale, which at the time, was one of the two most vital and creative schools of architecture in the United States. Like Griswold, Lee wanted to create a showplace of the best of the age while also protecting the city from being overshadowed by the Ivy League university.⁴²

New England had become a hub of Modern architecture in the late-1930s with the hiring of Walter Gropius as the director of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD). With the closing of the Bauhaus School in Weimar in 1933, many prominent Modernists were out of work and came to the United States looking to escape the rise of the Nazi party and to find work. Gropius brought Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) to the Harvard GSD.⁴³ Breuer was born in Hungary in 1902, he attended the Bauhaus as an architecture student from 1920 to 1924, and he was a teacher at that institution from 1924 to 1928. The Bauhaus, which was a crucible for the development of modern design in the early twentieth century, relied on a pedagogical method that stressed direct knowledge of crafts and materials. This is reflected in Breuer's architectural work through his experimental use of concrete to play with shadow and create contemporary architectural shapes. During the Bauhaus period Breuer became known for furniture design. In 1928 he designed the continuous bent steel tube cantilever chair, the Cesca or Breuer chair, which was an influential and frequently copied piece of furniture designed in the twentieth century.

Breuer practiced as an architect in Berlin, Germany until 1932 when he left for England. During this first professional period, Breuer built very little due to the economic and political instability in Europe at the time. He was invited to the U.S. in 1937 by Walter Gropius, and Breuer began teaching at Harvard in 1938. Breuer was able to form an architectural partnership with Gropius. Among the houses designed by Breuer and Gropius between 1938 and 1946, several were highly influential in the development of modern architectural residential design in the United States and in other countries. Peter Blake, an architect and architectural critic, wrote of Breuer that these houses were noted for their assimilation of "the tradition of New England building to the demands of the new architecture."⁴⁴

In 1946, Breuer left Harvard and Gropius to start a practice in New York. One year later he built the first of two houses in New Canaan, Connecticut, where he lived.⁴⁵ Four of his students from Harvard eventually followed him to New Canaan and designed houses for themselves and their neighbors. The group – Breuer, John M. Johansen, Landis Gores, Philip Johnson, and Eliot Noyes – became known as the Harvard Five and left their mark on southern Connecticut architecture.⁴⁶ Modernists in the Northeast formed a tight-knit group, often socializing, vacationing, and working together. The Harvard Five left their mark on New Haven as well. Johansen's Helene W. Grant School (1964, now demolished) and Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church (1967, listed in the National Register of Historic Places) have both become important components of New Haven's Mid-Century Modern architecture inventory. Johnson designed what was then the tallest building in New Haven with Richard Foster – the Kline Science Buildings completed in 1967. Noyes Associates designed the Long Wharf Park in 1976-1977.

⁴² The information on New Haven's legacy of Modern architecture is excerpted with edits from the Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory Form completed in 1997 by the Alliance for Architecture.

⁴³ Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residences in Connecticut MPDF, CT SHPO, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 9

⁴⁴ Peter Blake, *Marcel Breuer, Architect and Designer*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art) 1949, 72.

⁴⁵ See "Marcel Breuer House II," National Register of Historic Places nomination form by Jenny Fields Scofield and Virginia H. Adams (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010) for more information about Breuer's house design.

⁴⁶ Nancy Finlay, "Who Were the Harvard Five – And What Do They Have to do with Connecticut?" Connecticut Historical Society, July 15, 2014, <https://chs.org/2014/07/who-were-the-harvard-five-and-what-do-they-have-to-do-with-connecticut/>.

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Breuer's Modernist circle extended beyond the Harvard Five and included structural engineer Paul Weidlinger, whose firm worked closely with Breuer on the Armstrong Rubber Building. Weidlinger was also a Hungarian immigrant forced out of Europe by the impending World War. In Breuer he not only found a professional partner but someone who could understand the personal struggles of living in a different country. Weidlinger had a strong resume, having worked under Le Corbusier and with many other prominent Modern architects, including Gropius and Gordon Bunshaft.⁴⁷ They first worked together on the St. Francis de Sales Church in Muskegon, Michigan (1948). Their professional relationship grew, and eventually Breuer convinced Weidlinger to join the Modernist group that vacationed on Outer Cape Cod. Weidlinger built houses that faced Breuer's on Higgins Pond in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. Weidlinger grew a strong structural engineering firm in New York City known as Weidlinger Associates, and the firm collaborated often with Breuer on his commissions.⁴⁸ While Weidlinger was the principal of the firm, his associate Matthys Levy was often the project engineer for Breuer.

Within his own firm, Breuer, as principal, designed each project in collaboration with his staff. The Armstrong Rubber Building was overseen by Robert Gatje, one of several partners in Breuer's architectural practice in New York. Gatje had a long and successful architectural career working for two AIA Gold Medalists, Breuer and Richard Meier, as well as in his own practice. He was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1927 and received his B.Arch in 1951 from Cornell University. He was a Fulbright scholar at London's Architectural Association school in 1951-52, after which he was hired as a draftsman by Breuer.⁴⁹ He worked in Breuer's office until 1982, rising to associate and partner. He was involved in the design of the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, New York University in the Bronx, as well as the IBM research center in La Gaude, France. He eventually became the resident director of Breuer's European office and oversaw the design of a residential quarter in Bayonne, France and the Flaine ski resort, which has been listed on the French Historical Monuments Survey. He served as president of the New York Chapter of the AIA from 1975-1976. Following Breuer's retirement, Gatje formed an architectural office with Tician Papachristou and Hamilton Smith, both former Breuer designers. Gatje joined Richard Meier's firm in 1987 where he worked until 1995.⁵⁰

The major portion of Breuer's practice in New York was focused on the design of buildings for educational institutions, the government, corporations, and the church. He was the architect for the UNESCO building in Paris, the headquarters for HUD in Washington, DC, the Whitney Museum in New York, St. John's Abbey and University, in Minnesota, and the University of Massachusetts Campus Center at Amherst. In Connecticut he was architect for the Litchfield High School, the Torin Corporation in Torrington, and in New Haven for the Becton Engineering and Applied Science Center at Yale as well as the Armstrong Rubber Company Building. Breuer was a Modernist architect, however his interest in the vernacular – in the use of local materials and methods – which became evident in his New England houses, and was apparent very early in his career –and can be seen informing his larger works. Breuer lived in New Canaan until 1976. He received the AIA Gold Medal for his contribution to architecture in 1968. He died in 1981.

Breuer and the other Modern architects designing in New Haven found urban renewal a prime candidate for the many of the guiding theories of Modernism. City and urban leaders wanted buildings that

⁴⁷ Matthys P. Levy, "Paul Weidlinger," in *Memorial Tributes Volume 12: National Academy of Engineering* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2008), 329-331.

⁴⁸ Jenny Fields Scofield and Virginia H. Adams, Paul Weidlinger House National Register of Historic Places Nomination, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014.

⁴⁹ "Obituary, Gatje—Robert Frederick," *The New York Times*. April 4, 2018.

⁵⁰ Justin Chan. "Obituary, Robert F. Gatje, 1927-2018," *Architectural Record*. April 5, 2018.

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demonstrated their modernity. Modernism relied heavily on the new construction materials and methods that emerged during this time, especially steel and concrete construction. Large expansive window systems were also now possible and further pushed the buildings towards something new and different. Part of New Haven's urban renewal plan required smaller lots and buildings to be torn down and combined to create large, empty lots along highways that required larger, streamlined buildings.⁵¹ Modern architecture would also represent the city's rebirth and its move into its next phase.⁵² Rather than the stuffy, highly decorated but dilapidated buildings that had begun to define New Haven, the sleek, pared-down, concrete structures were a visual representation of the drastic change Lee was hoping to create. Built towards the end of Lee's tenure as mayor of New Haven, the Armstrong Rubber Building became the culmination of years of experimenting to find the best combination of Modern design and his urban renewal vision. Renowned Modern architects and designers such as Eero Saarinen, Paul Rudolph, Breuer, Louis Kahn, Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Edward Larrabee Barnes, Philip Johnson, John Johansen, and Gordon Bunshaft all contributed structures to New Haven's Modern architecture inventory.⁵³

New Haven's collection of Modern architecture is speckled throughout the city, demonstrating the wide reach of Lee's urban renewal undertaking.⁵⁴ Due to the high number of Modern architects practicing in the area, the buildings represent a wide range of Modern styles. Brutalism, with its large concrete masses and minimized windows, can be found in other projects in New Haven beyond the Armstrong Rubber Building. To the north of the Armstrong Rubber Building is the Oak Street Connector, one of Lee's more ambitious urban renewal projects. New buildings were erected along the street, including two Brutalist structures: Crawford Manor (Paul Rudolph, 1965) and the Yale Laboratory for Epidemiology and Public Health (Philip Johnson, 1965, renamed Yale School of Public Health). To the northwest of the Armstrong Rubber Building, along the new Oak Street Connector, sits the Knights of Columbus Building (Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates, 1967-1969). While covered in clay tile to create a unique appearance, the building was designed to serve a similar purpose as the Armstrong Rubber Building – it is highly visible from intersecting highways and was a welcoming sign to the “new” New Haven.⁵⁵ As the first skyscraper in New Haven, the building's scale seemed to jar with the rest of the city, but it suited and was necessary for the large elevated swaths of highway now cutting through town.⁵⁶

The Armstrong Rubber Building has served its purpose as an identifier for New Haven since 1968 even though Armstrong Rubber left the building in 1980. The expanding success enjoyed by the Armstrong Rubber Company through the 1960s began to slow not long after the company moved into its monumental new headquarters. An economic recession and severe gasoline shortages in the 1970s drastically reduced the number of drivers on the road, resulting in a diminishing demand for tires. Just a decade after opening the plant, Armstrong closed the West Haven facility in 1980, one of seven operating in the country at the time; 600 workers lost their jobs. The facility operated as a warehouse until Armstrong's parent company, the Armtek Corporation, sold Armstrong to the Italian tire manufacturer, Pirelli S.p.A in 1988. The acquisition resulted in the creation of the Pirelli Armstrong

⁵¹ Rae, *City, Urbanism and Its End*, 352.

⁵² Rae, *City, Urbanism and Its End*, 356.

⁵³ Rachel D. Carley, “Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement,” New Haven Preservation Trust, 2008, 2.

⁵⁴ For a more complete inventory of New Haven Modern Architecture, visit www.newhavenmodern.org which houses the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office Historic Resource Inventory for each structure.

⁵⁵ “Knights of Columbus Building,” New Haven Modern, accessed August 17, 2020, <http://newhavenmodern.org/knights-of-columbus-building>.

⁵⁶ Carley, “Tomorrow is Here,” 28.

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Tire Corporation.⁵⁷ In the late 1990s, Pirelli began to phase out the Armstrong brand and the Breuer-designed building was vacated when the occupants departed New Haven.⁵⁸ Preservationists concerned about the fate of the building when a regional mall was proposed for the site at the time succeeded in listing the building on the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places in 1997. This effort was led by the Alliance for Architecture, a program of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven.⁵⁹ The mall was not constructed but the building, though preserved, remained vacant. In 2003, IKEA Property Inc. purchased the parcel that included the Armstrong Rubber Company Building and constructed a new building on the southern side of the lot. In order to make their entrance more visible and to provide additional surface parking, the store sought and received approval to demolish the horizontal wing of the Armstrong Rubber Company Building up to the office tower, despite strong opposition from a coalition of architects, student activists, and environmentalists.⁶⁰

Breuer, Gatje, Levy, Weidlinger, Lee, and the Armstrong Rubber Company all left their mark on the design of the Armstrong Rubber Building. The building is a relic of what urban renewal could be, even though the building also represents the city's failure to retain manufacturing enterprises into the later part of the twentieth century. But even with economic shifts in New Haven, the building has remained an important part of the Long Wharf landscape. It continues to be an iconic design within the Mid-Century Modern architecture of Connecticut.

⁵⁷ Armstrong. *About*, 2019. Electronic resource, <https://www.armstrongtire.com/about-armstrong/>, accessed May 2019.

⁵⁸ Armstrong *About*, 2019; Tim Nelson, "A Marcel Breuer Building Owned by IKEA Could Become a Hip New Hotel." *Architectural Digest*, 27 April 2018. Electronic document, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/marcel-breuer-ikea-pirelli-tire-building-could-become-ahip-new-hotel>, accessed May 2019.

⁵⁹ Daniel J. Pardy, "Saving a Landmark, Letter to the Editor," *New York Times*, Feb 2, 2003.

⁶⁰ Architecture Week. "IKEA Threatens Breuer Icon," *Architecture Week*. November 13, 2002, N:1.1; C.J. Hughes, "The View/From New Haven; As Business Sets Up, A Group Takes Steps to Preserve and Landmark." *New York Times*, January 26, 2003.

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Armstrong Rubber Company Building

New Haven, CT

Name of Property

County and State

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Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property
www.historicaerials.com.

New Haven, CT
County and State

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Scofield, Jenny Fields, and Virginia H. Adams. *Paul Weidlinger House*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. On file, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2014.

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Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

New Haven, CT
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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.76 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

New Haven, CT
County and State

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.296814 | Longitude: -72.918196 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building property includes two parcels that total 2.76 acres. The first parcel, known as 500 Sargent Drive (identified in City of New Haven assessment records as Parcel ID 108067, MBLU 205/1304/01801) includes the office building and parking lot between the building and Sargent Drive. The west boundary is defined by the western edge of the sidewalk on the west elevation. The north boundary is defined by common drive that leads to Ikea's parking lot to the west of the Armstrong Rubber Building. The second parcel, known as 510 Sargent Drive (identified in City of New Haven assessment records as Parcel ID 108087, MBLU 205/1304/01802) encompasses the Armstrong Rubber Company sign and the parking lot to the north of the building. The west and north boundary is defined by Sargent Drive.

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundaries include the original office building and sign structure designed by Marcel Breuer on the site. A portion of the original Armstrong Rubber Company property to the north and west of the Armstrong Rubber Company building is excluded from the boundary because it has been subdivided and does not contain any historic resources.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Roysin Younkin and Kendra Waters with Alisa Augenstein
organization: Macrostie Historic Advisors (with PAL)
(Edited by Jenny Scofield, National Register Coordinator, CT SHPO)
street & number: 313 Washington Street, Suite 308
city or town: Newton state: MA zip code: 02458
e-mail: ryounkin@mac-ha.com
telephone: 617- 892-7518
date: March 12, 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

New Haven, CT
County and State

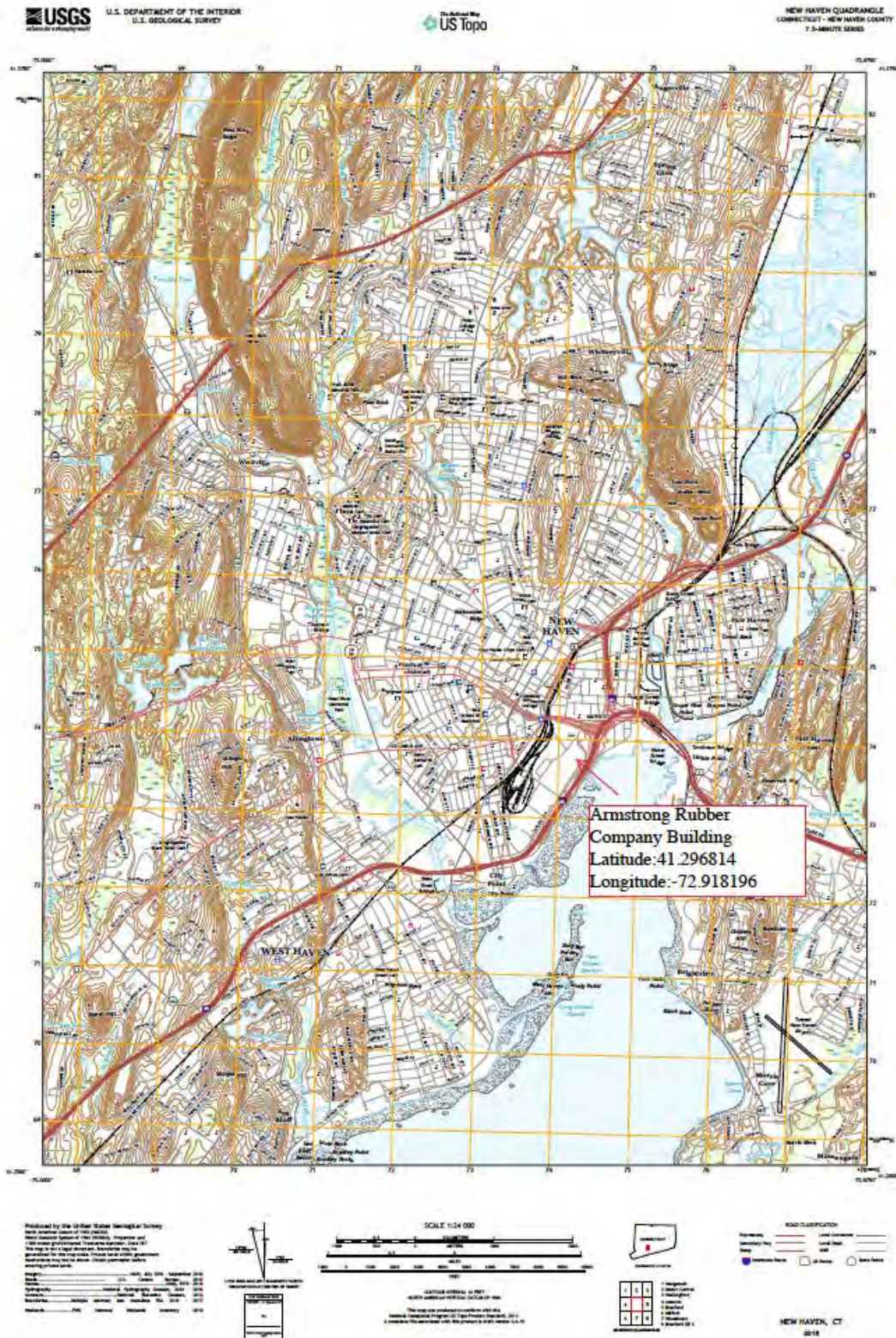


Figure 1. USGS Map, 2018. Latitude: 41.296814, longitude: -72.918196.

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

New Haven, CT
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Source: Esri World Imagery

Figure 2. Number 1 is the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, Number 2 is the historic sign.

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

New Haven, CT
County and State

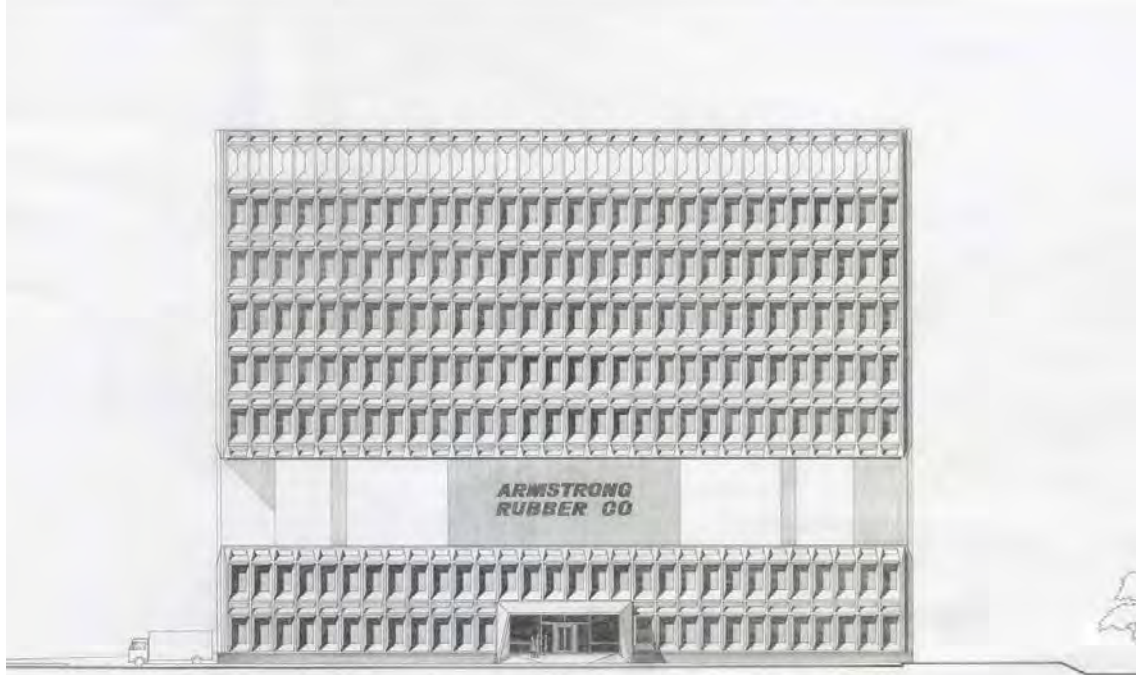


Figure 3: Armstrong Rubber Company, Headquarters, 1967-1970 (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)



Figure 4: Armstrong Rubber Company, Headquarters, 1967-1970 (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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Figure 5: Construction photograph of the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, view towards east elevation, 1969 (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University Libraries 2018)



Figure 6: Construction photograph of the Armstrong Rubber Company Building, view towards east elevation, 1969 (Source: Syracuse University Libraries 2018)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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Figure 7: Armstrong Rubber Company Building and Sign ca. 1968 (Source: New Haven Museum)

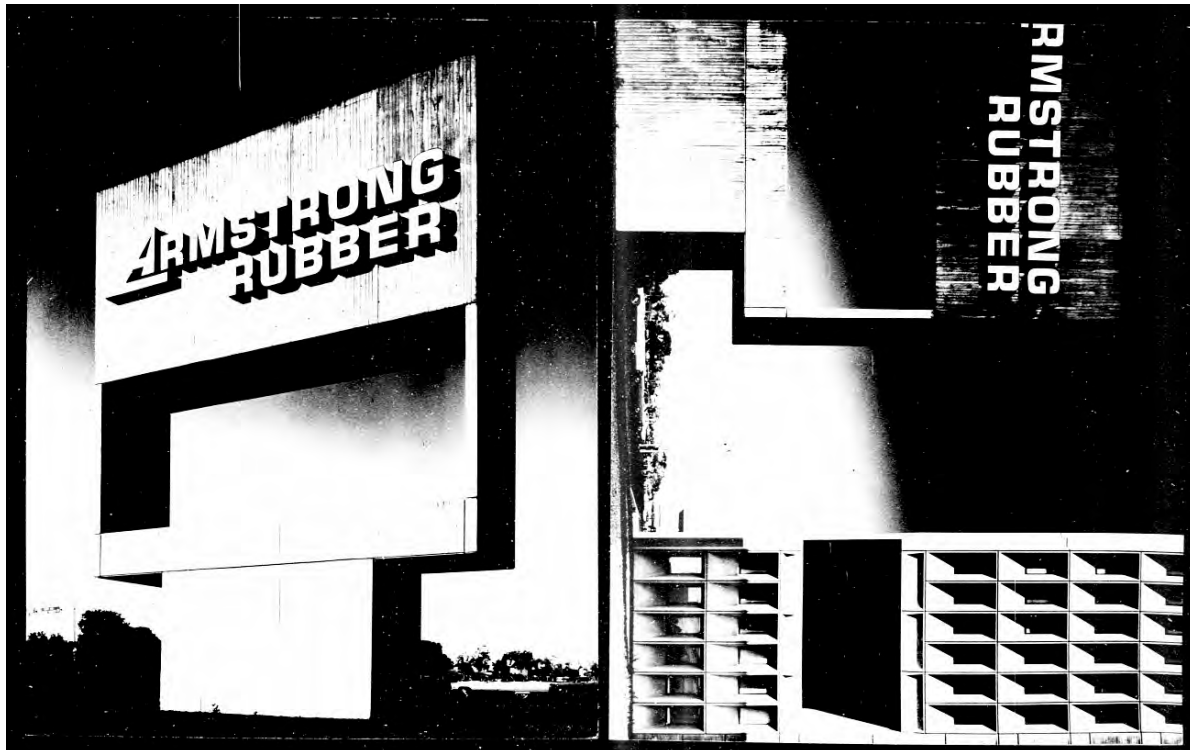


Figure 8: Armstrong Rubber Company Building and sign, 1965-1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

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Figure 9: Armstrong Rubber Company Building, east and south elevations, and sign, 1973 (Source: New Haven Modern, New Haven Preservation Trust)



Figure 10: Armstrong Rubber Company north elevation, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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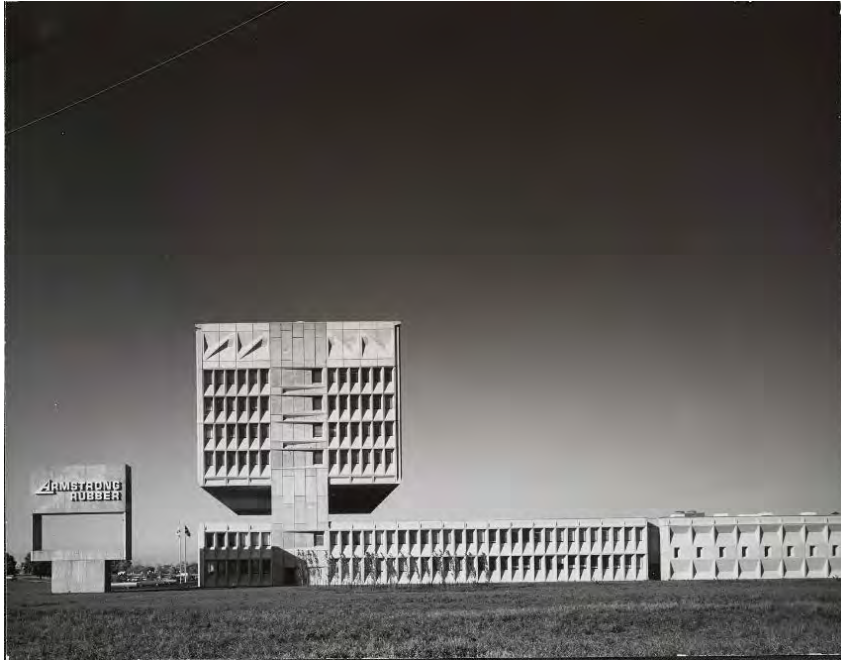


Figure 11: Armstrong Rubber Company, partial north elevation with sign, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)



Figure 12: Armstrong Rubber Company, partial north elevation showing differentiated panels marking the division between the research and development laboratory and the pilot plant, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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Figure 13: Interior view, corporate offices, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986).

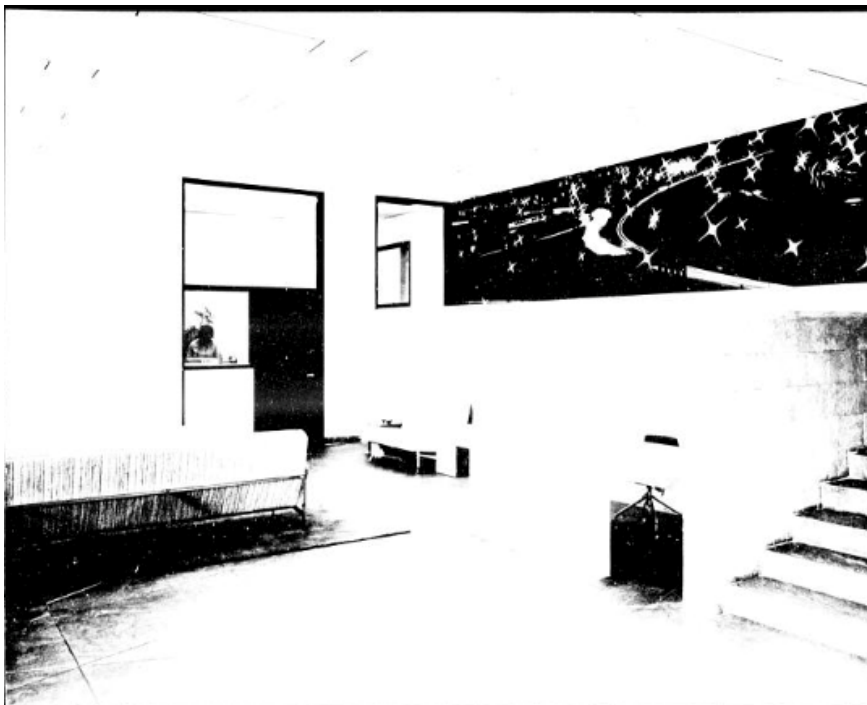


Figure 14: Interior view, lobby ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986).

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Figure 15: Interior views, research and development laboratories, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)

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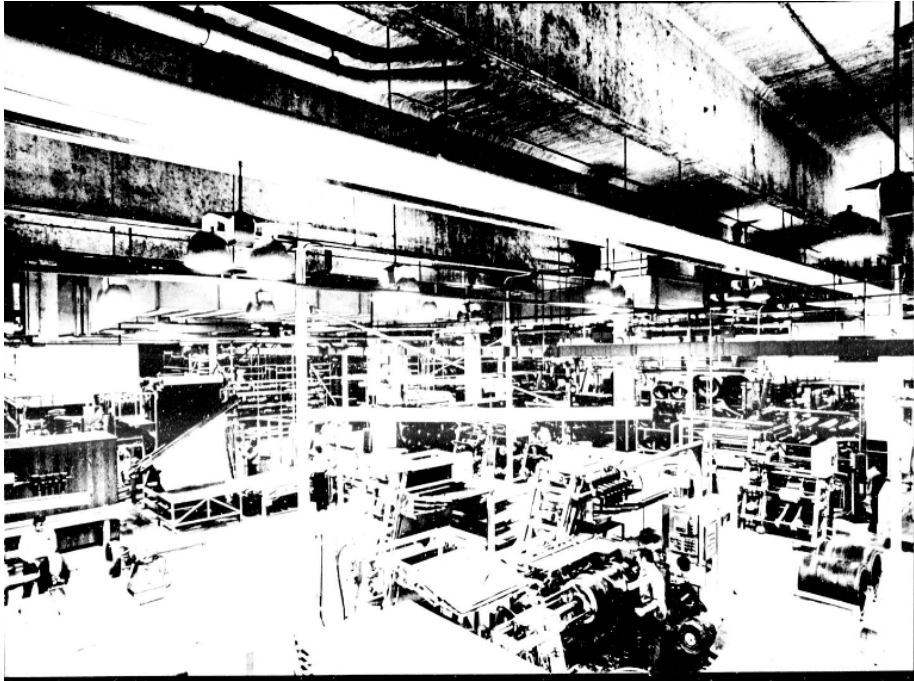


Figure 16: Interior view, pilot plant, ca. 1970 (Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986)

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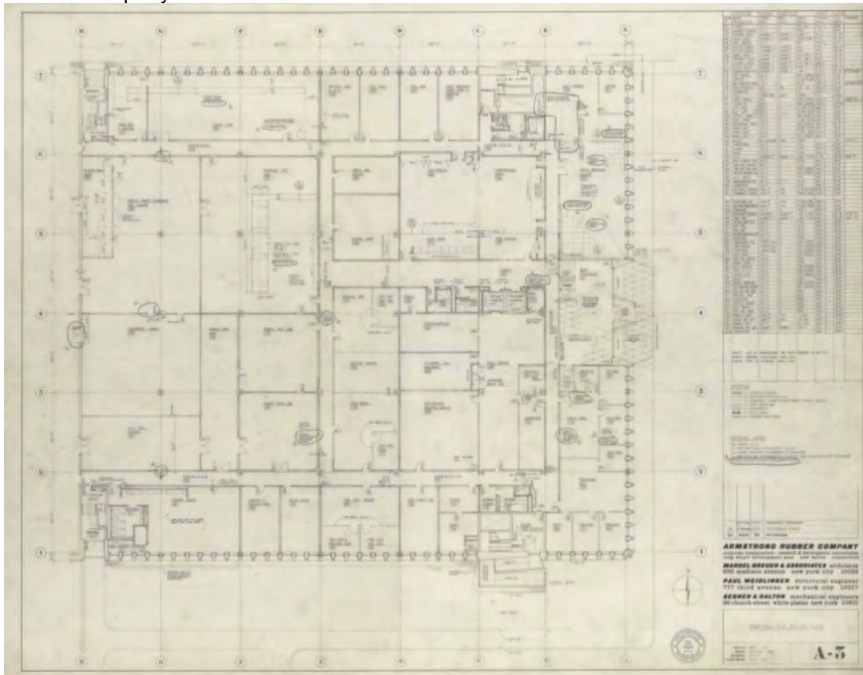


Figure 17: Partial 1st Floor Plan, research and development laboratories (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

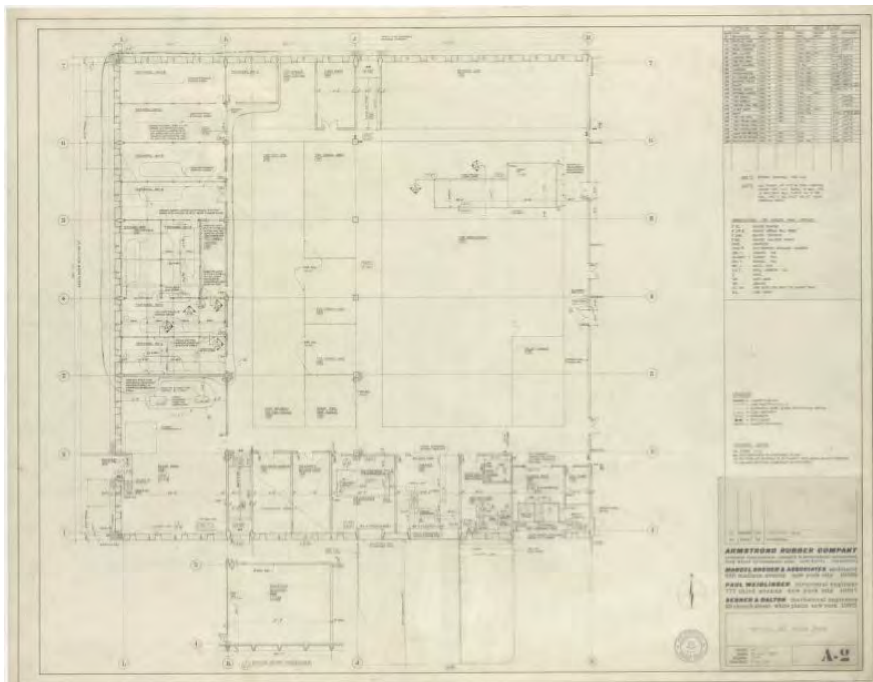


Figure 18: Partial 1st Floor Plan, pilot plant (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

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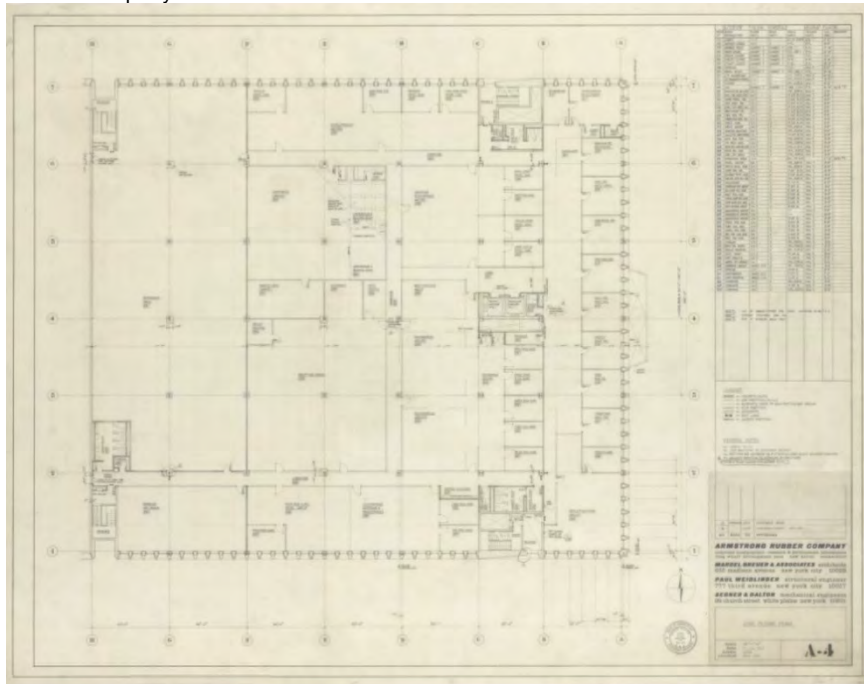


Figure 19: 2nd Floor Plan, research and development laboratories (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

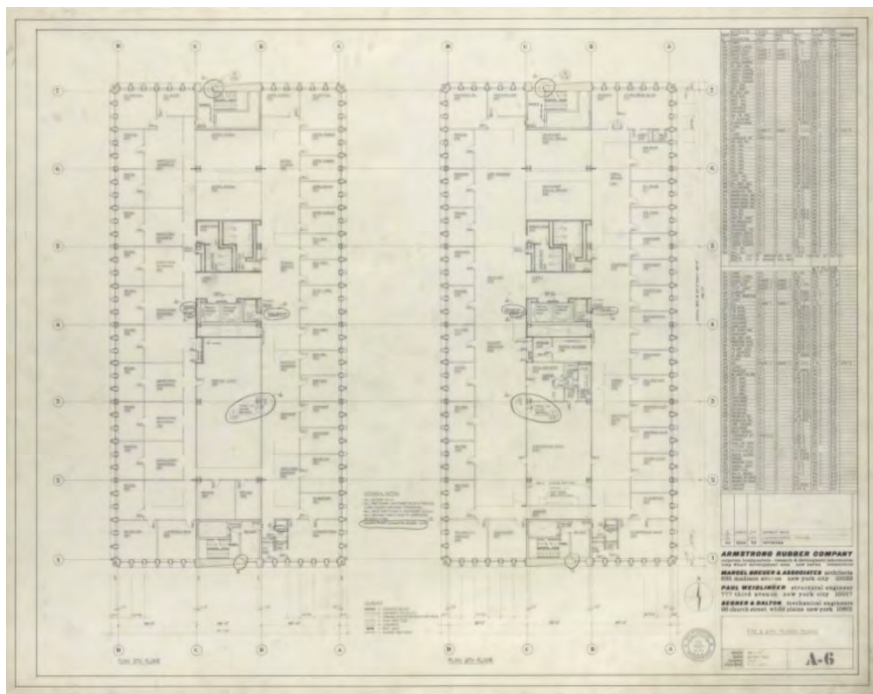


Figure 20: 5th and 6th Floors (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

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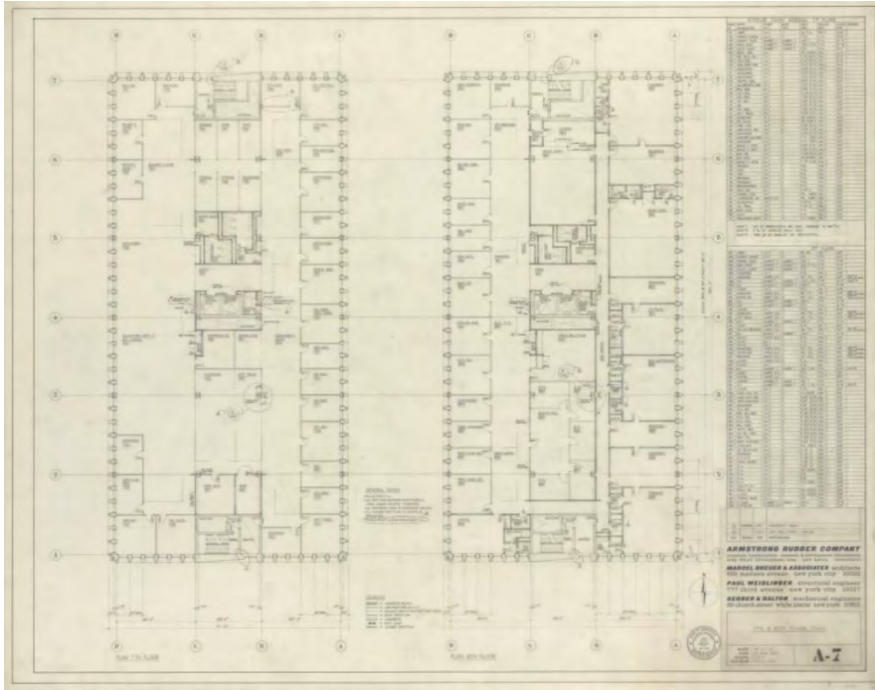


Figure 21: 7th and 8th Floors (Source: Marcel Breuer Digital Archive, Syracuse University)

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
Name of Property

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Armstrong Rubber Company Building
City or Vicinity: New Haven
County: New Haven
State: Connecticut
Photographer: Kim Smith and Ryan Cameron, MacRostie Historic Advisors
Date Photographed: May 2019 and September 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 38. East elevation, facing northwest (9/13/19).
- 2 of 38. East elevation, main entrance detail, facing west (9/13/19).
- 3 of 38. East elevation, panel detail, facing north (9/13/19).
- 4 of 38. East elevation, date stamp detail, facing north (9/13/19).
- 5 of 38. North elevation, facing south (9/13/19).
- 6 of 38. West elevation, facing east (9/13/19).
- 7 of 38. South elevation, facing north (9/13/19).
- 8 of 38. East and south elevations, facing northwest (9/13/19).
- 9 of 38. Sign Structure, north and west elevations, facing southeast (5/17/19).
- 10 of 38. First floor lobby facing west (9/13/19).

Armstrong Rubber Company Building
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- 11 of 38. First floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 12 of 38. First floor, facing southeast (9/13/19).
- 13 of 38. First floor, facing northeast (9/13/19).
- 14 of 38. First floor stairwell, facing west (9/13/19).
- 15 of 38. Second floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 16 of 38. Second floor, facing northwest (9/13/19).
- 17 of 38. Third floor void, facing south (9/13/19).
- 18 of 38. Third floor void and sign structure, facing north (9/13/19).
- 19 of 38. Fifth floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 20 of 38. Fifth floor, facing northwest (9/13/19).
- 21 of 38. Fifth floor, facing north (9/13/19).
- 22 of 38. Fifth floor, facing northeast (9/13/19).
- 23 of 38. Sixth floor, facing southwest (9/13/19).
- 24 of 38. Sixth floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 25 of 38. Sixth floor, facing northeast (9/13/19).
- 26 of 38: Sixth floor, facing east (9/13/19).
- 27 of 38: Sixth floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 28 of 38: Seventh floor, facing south (9/13/19).
- 29 of 38: Seventh floor, facing southwest (9/13/19).
- 30 of 38: Seventh floor, facing north (9/13/19).
- 31 of 38: Seventh floor, facing north (9/13/19).
- 32 of 38: Seventh floor, facing east (9/13/19).

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33 of 38: Eighth floor, facing south (9/13/19).

34 of 38: Eighth floor, facing east (9/13/19).

35 of 38: Eighth floor, facing north (9/13/19).

36 of 38: Eighth floor, facing east (9/13/19).

37 of 38: Eighth floor, facing east (9/13/19).

38 of 38: Eighth floor, facing south (9/13/19).

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Armstrong Rubber Company Building, New Haven, New Haven County, Connecticut
Selection of National Register Nomination Photographs**



1 of 38. East elevation, facing northwest (9/13/19).



4 of 38. East elevation, date stamp detail, facing north (9/13/19).



5 of 38. North elevation, facing south (9/13/19).



6 of 38. West elevation, facing east (9/13/19).



7 of 38. South elevation, facing north (9/13/19).



8 of 38. East and south elevations, facing northwest (9/13/19).



9 of 38. Sign Structure, north and west elevations, facing southeast (5/17/19).



14 of 38. First floor stairwell, facing west (9/13/19).



27 of 38: Sixth floor, facing south (9/13/19).



37 of 38: Eighth floor, facing east (9/13/19).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 3/15/2021 Date of Pending List: 4/6/2021 Date of 16th Day: 4/21/2021 Date of 45th Day: 4/29/2021 Date of Weekly List: 4/30/2021

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 4/29/2021 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Roger Reed Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2278 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Department of Economic and
Community Development

State Historic Preservation Office

March 15, 2021

Mr. Roger Reed
National Park Service
National Register and National Historic Landmarks Programs
1849 C St., NW
Mail Stop 7228
Washington, D.C. 20240

Subject: Armstrong Rubber Company Building, New Haven County, Connecticut, National Register
Nomination

Dear Mr. Reed:

The following National Register nomination materials are uploaded via electronic submission, for your review:

- National Register form. This PDF is the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Armstrong Rubber Company Building to the National Register of Historic Places.
- PDF of Select Photographs. The full photo documentation (CD with TIFF files) will be mailed when requested by NPS.
- CLG response forms and letters of support

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Review Board (SRB) approved this National Register nomination on September 18, 2020. Mr. Bruce Becker, owner and developer of the property, initiated the nomination. SHPO sent notice of the SRB meeting to the owner, the City of New Haven, New Haven Historic District Commission and New Haven Preservation Trust 30 days before the meeting. The Certified Local Government (CLG) response was positive, and CLG signature forms are attached. Letters of support was received from the City and the New Haven Preservation Trust. No letters of objection to the nomination were received. The owner of the property, nomination author, New Haven Preservation Trust, and members of the community who helped saved the building from demolition in the 1990s, attended the Board meeting.

If you have any questions, or if this office can be of assistance, please email me at jenny.scotfield@ct.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenny F. Scofield".

Jenny F. Scofield,
National Register Coordinator

State Historic Preservation Office

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5 | Hartford, CT 06103 | ct.gov/historic-preservation

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer An Equal Opportunity Lender



CITY OF NEW HAVEN

JUSTIN ELICKER, MAYOR

165 Church Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510
T: 203.946.8200 F: 203.946.7683



SINCE 1958

October 19, 2020

City of New Haven
165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Subject: Armstrong Rubber Company (Pirelli) Building at 500 Sargent Drive, New Haven-Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

To: The State Historic Preservation Review Board

This letter is to express my support in listing the Armstrong Rubber Company (Pirelli) Building on the National Register of Historic Places status.

The Armstrong Rubber Company Building, located on the northwest side of Sargent Drive, is one of New Haven's most iconic and recognizable buildings. This urban landmark was designed internationally renowned Modern architect, Marcel Breuer in collaboration with architect Robert Gatje and the structural engineering firm Weidlinger Associates for the Armstrong Rubber Company in 1968-1969. One of the most dominant features of this iconic Brutalist-style building is the 2-story void between the base and the office tower. The building reflects the desire of City leadership in a symbolic gateway that would project the modernist and progressive character of the City of New Haven. It was scaled to be undeniably visible from the new Interstate 95 (I-95). The sophisticated design of this monument allowed to meet the needs of the Armstrong Rubber Company while satisfying the aspirations of City Officials.

I was delighted to learn that the State Historic Preservation Review Board will consider the Armstrong Rubber Company Building nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. I strongly support the listing of this urban landmark not only for its remarkable appearance but also for its scale, location, and design, which jointly tell the story of urban renewal in New Haven.

I hope that the State Historic Preservation Review Board will find that the property meets the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

Kind Regards,


Justin Elicker,
Mayor, City of New haven

Certified Local Government Program
Chief Elected Official's Comment Form
For Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places


District/Property Name Pirelli Building
Address (For individual nomination) 500 Sargent Drive

As Chief Elected Official for City of New Haven
(Name of Municipality)

I hereby:

- Approve
- Do not Approve

of the submission by the State Historic Preservation Officer of the Pre-Move Documentation for the National Register-listed William Pinto House to the National Park Service. This documentation has been prepared to request that the Pinto House maintain its National Register status during the move.



Name/Signature

Mayor
Title

10/19/2020

Date

Certified Local Government Program
Chief Elected Official's Comment Form
For Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places

District/Property Name Pirelli Building

Address (For individual nomination) 500 Sargent Drive

As Chief Elected Official for City of New Haven
(Name of Municipality)

I hereby:

- Approve
- Do not Approve

of the submission by the State Historic Preservation Officer of the Pre-Move Documentation for the National Register-listed William Pinto House to the National Park Service. This documentation has been prepared to request that the Pinto House maintain its National Register status during the move.



Aicha Woods on Behalf of
Commissioner Trina Mace Learned

Name /Signature

Chair, New Haven Historic
District Commission

Title

11.12.2020

Date

September 10, 2020

Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP, National Register & Architectural Survey Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
Department of Economic and Community Development
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5
Hartford, CT 06103

Subject: New Haven Preservation Trust support for the nomination of the Armstrong Rubber Company/Pirelli Building to the National Register

Dear Ms. Scofield:

We submit this letter as testimony to the State Review Board for its meeting on September 18, 2020 in regard to considering the proposed nomination of the Pirelli Building (500 Sargent Drive, New Haven) to the National Register of Historic Places (NR). The importance of the building's architect, Bauhaus-trained Marcel Breuer, is thoroughly acknowledged in the nomination form; our testimony particularly highlights this building's significance to the City of New Haven.

The New Haven Preservation Trust has worked with the City of New Haven, community groups, and other preservation organizations over the course of 16 years to find a way to preserve the Pirelli Building for productive reuse. It has been at risk for almost two decades, despite its importance as visible evidence of New Haven's mid-century economic development efforts. The National Register nomination form prepared by Macrostie Historic Advisors concludes, "Built towards the end of [Richard] Lee's tenure as mayor of New Haven, the Armstrong Rubber

Building became the culmination of years of experimenting to find the best combination of Modern design and his urban renewal vision.”

Highly visible from the nearby highways, the Pirelli Building was for years a marker of the “new” New Haven. This building is known around the world and praised as a heroic product of its era.

The international preservation group DOCOMOMO describes the Pirelli Building this way:

“The Pirelli Tire Building is a fantastic embodiment of the design ideals held by architect Marcel Breuer. The building is composed of a two-story structure at grade, with four stories of administrative offices ‘hanging’ above... giving the tower the illusion of suspension. Enveloping the entire building are pre-cast concrete panels of varying scale and design. The panels provide protection from the sun, a Breuer preoccupation, and give the façade a tremendous physicality and depth. The end result is a continually changing impression of the building, depending on the day, season, and weather.”

The Trust supports the proposed National Register listing of this building as a symbol of New Haven's mid-century embrace of Modern architecture and a distinctive feature of the cityscape.

We urge you to approve the nomination and recommend it to the National Park Service.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rona Johnston

Board President, New Haven Preservation Trust

cc: Mayor Justin Elicker, City of New Haven
Aicha Woods, City Plan Department, City of New Haven
Maya Vardi, City Plan Department, City of New Haven
Bruce Becker, FAIA, Becker + Becker
Trina Learned, Chair, New Haven Historic District Commission
Jane Montanaro, Preservation Connecticut
Chris Wigren, Preservation Connecticut
Susan Godshall, New Haven Preservation Trust