

Staff Report and Findings of Fact Nomination to the Spokane Register of Historic Places Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership – 827 W 2nd Avenue

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. **SMC 17D.100.090: "Generally a building, structure, object, site, or district which is more than fifty years old may be designated an historic landmark or historic district if it has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, county, state, or nation."**
 - Originally built in 1919; the Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership meets the age criteria for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

2. **SMC 17D.100.090: The property must qualify under one or more categories for the Spokane Register (A, B, C, D, E).**
 - The Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership meets Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places under **Category A** for its significance as a building associated with the evolution of the automobile and automobile-related businesses in Spokane.
 - The 1920s was the decade in which most of the buildings that were built downtown Spokane were specifically used to house automobile sales and accessories. The subject building was constructed with a showroom and service facility for the sale of Stephens and Oakland automobiles during the formative stages of Spokane's auto row. The building included both the showroom and garage for new and used cars.
 - First and Second avenues were Spokane's auto row and eight dealerships were constructed between Wall and Cedar in the 1920s. Automobile-related businesses filled in the storefronts of the other commercial buildings along the First and Second avenue corridors. As the number of automobile manufacturers dropped between 1920 and 1929, demand for automobile showrooms declined, and many transitioned to servicing automobiles and eventually to retail and office uses.
 - The building designed by Cowley and Wells was one of several automobile dealerships and garages designed by the firm between 1919 and 1923. The building is a simply detailed brick commercial building that was built for the sales and service of automobiles. Occupying a prominent corner lot location, the showroom and sales gallery in the front part of the building was accessed through the north pedestrian entrance, and the garage in the rear with shop doors on the west elevation to accommodate the passage of vehicles. Although altered over the years, the building continues to retain its essential character and place in the continuum of the automobile commerce of downtown Spokane.
 - The period of significance spans from the building's construction to 1973. *For a property with continued significance, 50 years from the present date is commonly used as the closing date for the Period of Significance. It continued to have importance as an automobile related building and no more specific date can be defined to end the historic period.*
 - The Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership contains good integrity of location and association. Although the form of the facade has been altered – by removal of the pediments over the entries from original construction in 1919, the removal of the original storefronts and the rebuilding of contemporary storefronts - the building maintains enough integrity to convey the character of the original building.

3. **SMC17D.100.090: "The property must also possess integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association." From NPS Bulletin 15: "Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance...it is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features...the property must retain, however, the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity."**
 - The Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership is able to convey its significance as a building related to the early period of Spokane's downtown autorow. It possesses the essential physical features to convey that significance as well as good integrity of location and association.

4. Once listed, this property will be eligible to apply for incentives, including:

Special Valuation (property tax abatement), Façade Improvement Grants, Spokane Register historical plaque, and special code considerations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The **Ahrens & Ahrens Automobile Dealership** is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register under **Category A** for its association with the automobile industry in Spokane, especially along 1st and 2nd Avenues.

Preservation Officer Review: Megan Duvall
Nominations Committee: Rast, Dickey, Noll
Landmarks Commission Review: Pending

Report: 3/3/2023
Site Visit: 3/1/2023
Hearing: 3/15/2023