

# Staff Report and Findings of Fact Nomination to the Spokane Register of Historic Places Libby Junior High School – 2900-2912 East First 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 1928; Libby Junior High School 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).**
  - Libby Junior High School meets Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places **Category A**, for its association with the theme of Education, specifically the spread of junior high schools across the United States and the construction of the first junior high schools in Spokane.
    - Libby Junior High School and its companion on the Northside, Havermale Junior High School (also 1928) were the first junior high schools to be built in Spokane school district. The typical school system at that time had consisted of elementary/grade schools and high schools. The junior high school --grades 7 through 9 – was an innovation and reorganization of the pattern of secondary education in the United States.
  - Libby Junior High School meets Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places **Category C**, as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction, specifically Spokane education buildings in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The property is also significant under Category C for its association with a father and son pair of Spokane architects who both designed portions of the school during their respective careers.
    - The 1928 building is typical of the classically-inspired grade school buildings (such as the original buildings at Roosevelt and Stevens Elementary Schools), that were popular in Spokane between 1900 and 1920: raised basement podium with a short run of steps to the first floor, two story brick façade dominated by banks of windows, classical proportions and design elements, with a cornice and parapet wall fronting a flat roof.
    - The building was designed by two generations of Vantynes, Roland Vantyne for the original classically-inspired 1928 building, and his son Carl for the Mid-Century Modern 1961 addition. Both architects had notable careers and at least four of Roland's buildings are listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places including one elementary school, Hutton Elementary. This building would be Carl's first attribution on the SRHP.
  - The property's period of significance is identified as 1928-1971, starting when the 1928 building was constructed and ending when the 1971 addition was constructed. The 1971 final addition used lower quality materials and is lacking the distinct design elements of the earlier buildings, however the repeated additions to Libby show the nature of school development as the district worked to provide services to a growing city.
3. **SMC 17D.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."**
  - Although the integrity of the original classroom building as well as the 1961 addition have been

diminished by the energy upgrades of the 1980s and the replacement of the original window sash in the 1928 building, the 1928 and 1961 buildings retain much of their original form, materials, detailing, and high level of craftsmanship. Libby Junior High School is recognizable for both its function as a public school and its original architectural style.

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

Special Valuation (property tax abatement), Spokane Register historical marker, and special code considerations.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

---

**Libby Junior High School** is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register under **Category A – Broad patterns of Spokane history, and Category C – Architectural significance**

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

Report: 7/13/21  
Site Visit: 7/8/21  
Hearing: 7/21/21