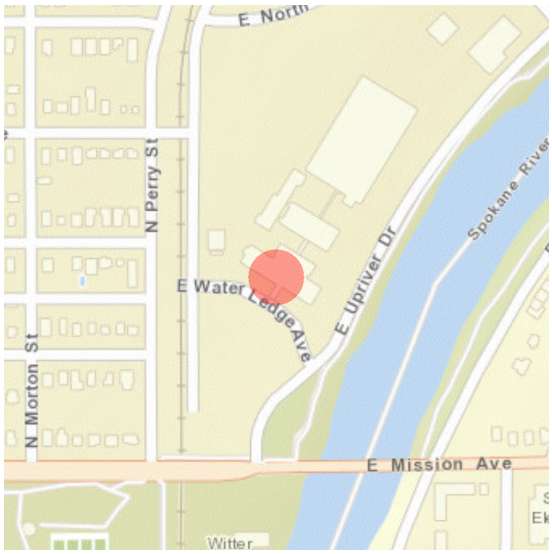
Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Location



Address: 1411 E Mission Ave, Spokane, WA

Geographic Areas: Spokane County, SPOKANE NW Quadrangle, Spokane Certified Local Government, Spokane County, T25R43E09, SPOKANE NW Quadrangle

Information

Number of stories: 5.00

Construction Dates:

Construction Type	Year	Circa
Built Date	1959	☐

Historic Use:

Category	Subcategory
Commerce/Trade	Commerce/Trade - Professional
Commerce/Trade	Commerce/Trade - Professional

Historic Context:

Category
Industry/Manufacturing
Architecture

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
Builder	Johnson-Busboom-Rauh
Architect	Brooks, Kenneth
Engineer	William Wilson & Jack Lyerla
Landscape Architect	Halprin, Lawrence
Architect	Walker, Bruce

Thematics:

Local Registers and Districts

Name	Date Listed	Notes

Project History

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2011-03-00043, , Nifty From the Last 50	10/1/2003	Not Determined	
2013-07-00112, , Centennial Trail Gap	6/7/2013	Not Determined	
2016-12-08751, , Spokane Mid-20th Century Modern Survey 2016	6/30/2017		

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

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Photos

Front, south, and east facades

Front, south facade with pond in foreground

Front facade with sign

Entry canopy, south facade

Main entry, south facade

Glazing detail on front facade, typical

Historic Property Report

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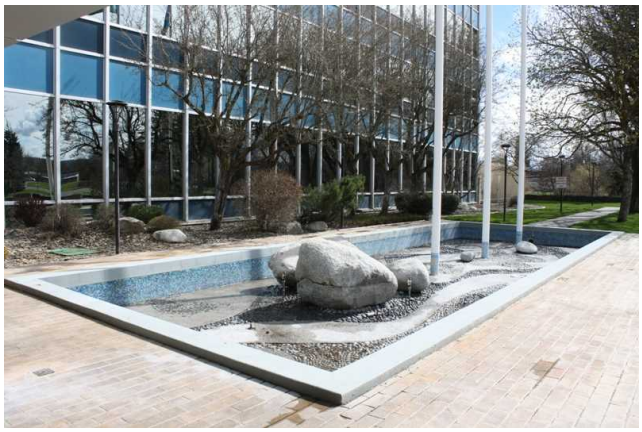

Water feature at entry

Water feature at entry

West facade

North facade (beyond 1 story building in foreground)

Breezeway north of building

Landscaping at building entry, west side

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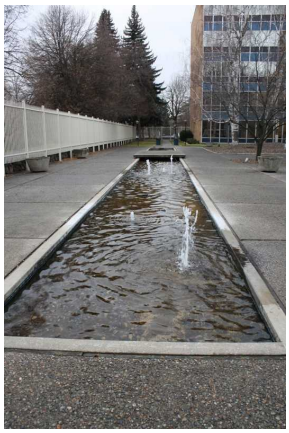


Water feature, northeast of building

Courtyard, north of building, east side

Courtyard, north of building, west side

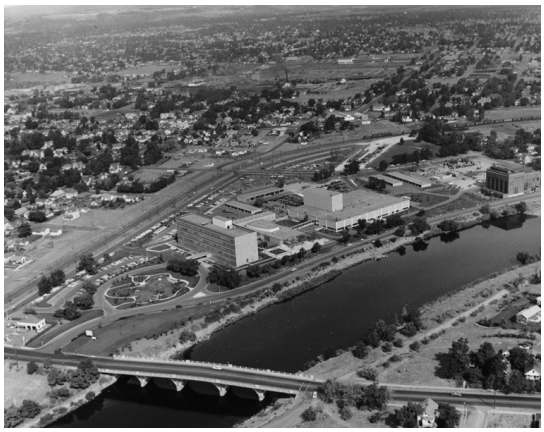
Basalt retaining wall

View over pond from building entry

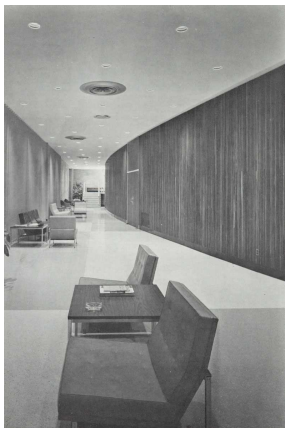
Parking lot landscaping

Interior view, auditorium

Interior view, auditorium on left



Aerial overview



original interior lobby

east façade

night image from postcard

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

entry detail

Halprin landscaping

main façade

Front (south) elevation

Rear (north) elevation

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Inventory Details - 10/1/2003

Common name: Avista Building

Date recorded: 10/1/2003

Field Recorder: M. Houser

Field Site number:

SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Form Type	Commercial - One-Part Vertical Block
Cladding	Glass - Spandrel Glass
Structural System	Metal - Steel
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Plan	Rectangle

Styles:

Period	Style Details
Modern Movement	Curtain Wall

Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): No

Significance narrative: Chosen by Spokane Chapter of the AIA for outstanding architecture. And National AIA honor award winner in 1959.

Physical description: The complex consists of a 5 story office building, auditorium and cafeteria, service building and shops. These are sited in a 28 acre park design by Lawrence Halprin.

Bibliography: Featured in Pacific Architect & Builder - August 1959

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Inventory Details - 6/7/2013

Common name: Avista Building

Date recorded: 6/7/2013

Field Recorder: S. Emerson

Field Site number: CTG-7

SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Form Type	Commercial - Enframed Window Wall
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Cladding	Brick
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Plan	Rectangle
Structural System	Metal - Steel

Styles:

Period	Style Details
Modern Movement	Curtain Wall

Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local): No

Significance narrative: The Washington Water Power building was designed by prominent modernist architect Kenneth Brooks, assisted by Bruce Walker. The building is a classic example of the Curtain Wall style, in which weight is borne by the interior steel frame, leaving exterior wall spaces free for the placement of window and other non-load bearing materials. It was built in 1959 and received the National American Institute of Architects (AIA) Award that year. The grounds were designed by nationally renowned landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The building is considered one of the primary examples of the modernist Curtain Wall style and, as such, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, at the national level. The surrounding landscape associated with the building is considered to be a contributing component of the property.

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Physical description: This building is a 5-story, steel frame structure with a rectangular plan, a built-up roof, with straight parapet, and a poured concrete foundation. It is long on the front (south) and rear (north) elevations, and narrow at the ends. While the narrow ends of the building are clad with brick, and display no fenestration, both the front and rear elevations are a classic example of Curtain Wall design, with glass and composite panels of different sizes and hues framed in stainless steel. A steel frame utility penthouse is centrally placed on the roof. On the ground floor front, steel frame glass entry doors are centrally placed beneath a flat canopy. The landscape around the building, especially in front, is an aesthetically pleasing example of the art, with curvilinear streets and walkways, spacious lawns, mature plantings of trees and shrubs, and polygonal pools that are ornamented with islands, fountains, and a wooden arched bridge. Also present are decorative light posts, strategically placed boulders, and benches.

Bibliography:

Emerson, Stephen. Preliminary Cultural Resources Investigations for the Centennial Trail Gap Construction Project, Spokane County, Washington. Short Report 1173. Archaeological and Historical Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney. 2013.

Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Washington Water Power Central Service Facility

Property ID: 16818

Inventory Details - 6/30/2017

Common name: Avista Headquarters

Date recorded: 6/30/2017

Field Recorder: Diana Painter

Field Site number:

SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Form Type	Commercial
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Cladding	Metal - Porcelain Enamel Panels
Structural System	Metal - Steel
Plan	T-Shape
Cladding	Brick - Common Bond
Structural System	Masonry - Poured Concrete

Styles:

Period	Style Details
Modern Movement	Curtain Wall

Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local): No

Significance narrative: History. The five-story Washington Water Power (WWP) Central Services Company headquarters building (Avista headquarters today) was designed as part of a suburban-style campus that provided for everything from the corporate offices to the construction yard for WWP, the largest public utility in the Pacific Northwest in its day. Its purpose was to provide a facility that would allow the company to consolidate 14 different sites in the Spokane area on one site. It still serves this purpose today.

The campus was constructed in 1959 on the west bank of the Spokane River, on the outskirts of Spokane. The building and other facilities are fully integrated with the landscape, designed by master landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The 28-acre campus, which cost $7.6 million to build in the 1950s, included the buildings, yards, a variety of open spaces, recreational facilities, and a small lake, to be used as a reservoir and cooling pond. A statement from the utility at the time reflects their design intention:

"...the design should be clean, simple and honest in that it reflects insofar as possible the intent of the structures and operations to be housed here." The building is a curtain wall structure, a style and construction type popular at mid-century for major commercial and public buildings.

The building was designed by Spokane architects Kenneth W. Brooks and Bruce M. Walker. When Brooks got word that WWP was about to build a new facility – consolidating its 14 individual places of business into a single location – he knew he had to act fast. The Electric Bond and Share Company (EBASCO), a large New York consulting firm hired by WWP, had already completed space planning, programming, and site selection; all that was needed was an architecture firm to take it on and begin design work. Brooks invited Bruce Walker to form a joint venture to respond, and together they were successful in their bid to – in Walker's own words – "pick off one of the most significant architectural plums ever offered in Spokane."

Washington Water Power's decision, which was based on EBASCO's recommendation, was fortuitous. The sheer scale of the project not only drew architect Bill Trogdon to Spokane (at Walker's invitation), but also attracted the attention of nationally known landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Nearly every architect in the city added his initials to the title blocks of the working drawings by the time it was completed (Bragg, SPOMa, 2012).

The building was profiled in Architectural Record in July 1959 and won a national American Institute of Architects (AIA) First Honor Award in 1959 for Brooks' office, the first national AIA award presented to a Washington state firm. The design of the building and subsequent national recognition represented a pivotal moment in Spokane's rising Modern architecture movement.

A complete history of WWP can be found in Steve Blewet's "A History of The Washington Water Power Company, 1889 to 1989, Building on a Century of Service," produced by WWP in 1989.

Architectural Context. The WWP building is constructed in the curtain wall style, a term that actually refers to the material itself and a method of construction. It refers to a building in which glass and thin spandrel panels are attached to a prefabricated, typically aluminum, frame. Curtain wall construction was combined with masonry and with steel-frame construction at mid-century to create what has been called the "quintessential symbol of post-World War II modern architecture." It is easily recognizable and readily associated with commercial and institutional building types at mid-century. In addition to being identified with its typical stylistic treatment, curtain wall construction refers to the material itself, its manufacture, installation, and the construction methods with which it is associated (Prudon, 2008:107).

Separating the structural system of a building from its window wall was attractive to building designers and owners because it created more light on building interiors and allowed for more flexibility in the use of interior spaces. The larger glazed areas in curtain wall construction, which allowed for natural light in interior work spaces, was made possible by new methods of manufacturing glass and made practical by widespread use of air conditioning after World War II. Improvements in sealants and insulation materials also made this form of design and construction practical.

The metal most commonly associated with mid-century curtain wall construction is

aluminum, which replaced steel in the post-war era as the material of choice for this application. Aluminum framing for curtain wall construction was extruded and could, as a result, take on any cross sectional shape (Kaskel, 1995:24). Aluminum was readily available and inexpensive after World War II, as the output of the nation's aluminum plants was adapted to civilian purposes.

The use of exterior curtain walls also rationalized the construction process, leading to greater efficiencies in building production. Whether the curtain wall was fabricated primarily on site or prefabricated in large panels, the metal components were produced at the factory, leading to labor savings on site. The material was also lighter than traditional masonry, allowing for easier handling and reduced shipping costs.

A number of materials were used for the spandrel panels under the windows, but the most popular were metal or glass. Glass panels were manufactured under the names Spandrelite and Vitrolux, and came in eight and sixteen colors respectively. Porcelain enamel on steel, which could also be manufactured in numerous colors, was a popular material and finish for spandrel panels. Aluminum and stainless steel were also used. As the post-war decades progressed, additional materials such as thin stone veneer, precast concrete, prefabricated brick masonry panels, and new generations of glazed products became popular, in addition to the glass, aluminum and brick veneer of the immediate post-war era (Kelley in Slaton and Shiffer, 1995:15).

Architects. Young architect Kenneth W. Brooks formed a team to undertake this challenging commission, bringing in colleagues Bruce Walker and Lawrence Halprin. Brooks was born in Kansas and received his architectural engineering degree from the University of Illinois in 1940. After serving in WWII he worked for the firm of Skidmore Owings & Merrill in New York, traveled in Europe, and studied town planning in Sweden. Thereafter he returned to the University of Illinois, receiving his Master of Architecture degree in 1949.

Brooks established his own firm in Spokane in 1951, working on a wide variety of project types. In addition to his diverse architectural practice, he became active in civic affairs, particularly in urban design, regularly delivering papers to a wide range of audiences on such topics as urban design, city planning, transportation, and Modern architecture. He also served on numerous committees and architectural juries. Brooks designed several structures for Spokane's Expo '74 and was one of the primary planners for the event. In the 1970s he joined with Joseph Hensley and Fred Creager to form Brooks-Hensley-Creager. The firm received numerous architectural awards over their 30 years in partnership. Brooks' two most distinguished projects are the 1959 WWP building and his 1978 Art-Drama-Music Complex at Columbia Basin Community College, both of which received national AIA honor awards. His Intermountain Gas Company Headquarters in Boise, Idaho garnered a National Award of Merit from the AIA in 1966. Brooks retired in 1991 and died in 1996 (Houser, docomomo wewa, 2003).

Architect Bruce Morris Walker was born in Spokane in 1923. Walker was a 1947 graduate of the University of Washington bachelor of architecture program, following service in the Navy during World War II. In 1951 he earned a master of architecture degree from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, where he studied under Walter Gropius. While there, Walker won several national design competitions, including first prize in a joint NAHB and Architectural Forum small house competition. Walker returned to Spokane in 1952 where, a year later, he formed a partnership with John W. McGough. The firm received national awards for design excellence from the AIA in 1959 and 1969.

Its work was included twice in Progressive Architecture's annual review of American architecture (in 1967 and 1969) and its 1969 Farm Credit Banks project was profiled in the German journal Baumeister. Walker & McGough's residential work was also featured extensively in a number of design textbooks, including Inside Today's Home by Ray and Sarah Faulkner and The Art of Interior Design: A Text in the Aesthetics of Interior Design by Victoria Kloss Ball. Walker was named a fellow of the AIA in 1979. He died in Spokane in 2005.The firm he started in 1953 continues today, with offices in Spokane and Seattle, as Integrus Architecture.

The general contractor for the WWP project was Johnson-Busboom-Rauh.

Lawrence Halprin, a nationally renowned landscape architect based in the San Francisco Bay Area, was the landscape architect for the WWP headquarters campus. Halprin was born in New York City July 1, 1916 and raised in Brooklyn. He earned degrees from Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin, then entered the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he studied under Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer on his way to earning a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree. Following service in the U.S. Navy, where he was assigned to the destroyer USS Morris during World War II, Halprin apprenticed at the San Francisco firm of Thomas Church before opening his own practice in 1949. Halprin is perhaps best known for the Sea Ranch residential community on the Sonoma coast, California (1964); San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square (1965); Lovejoy Fountain Park in Portland, Oregon (1971, listed in the National Register of Historic Places); Freeway Park in Seattle (1976); and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C. (1997). In 2005, nearing 89 years of age, he completed a new design for the Lower Yosemite Falls area in Yosemite National Park and a new concert facility for San Francisco's Stern Grove. Among Halprin's numerous awards are the AIA's Thomas Jefferson Medal in Architecture and the Gold Medal for Distinguished Achievement; the National Medal of Arts; and presidential appointments to the first National Council on the Arts and to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Halprin died on October 25, 2009.

Spokane sculptor and artist Harold Balazs designed the mosaic for the formal fountain that is south of the WWP main entry. Balazs was born on September 15, 1928 in Westlake, Ohio. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington State College (now University) in 1951, and has worked as a self-employed artist ever since. Balazs is best known for his public art – sculptures in wood, metal, concrete, stone, and enamel – in communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, including an undulating pattern in concrete on the walls of Spokane's Unitarian Church (1960) and the carved brick reliefs on an exterior wall at the Richland Public Library (1969). He was named Craftsman of the Year by the Seattle chapter of the AIA in 1960. In 1966, at just 38 years of age, Balazs was awarded the highest honor the AIA can bestow: a Gold Medal. In their nomination, the Spokane chapter wrote that "Harold Balazs is a free spirit architect's artist. His genius flowers in the ability to contribute positively to the total architectural concept. Balazs is a dynamic, searching personality who lives a creative life. His work shows great range in subject, media, scale, and purpose. We predict his fame, we cherish his friendship, we nominate him for the 1966 AIA Craftsmanship Medal." In addition to serving three terms on the Washington State Arts Commission, Balazs received a Washington State Governor's Award in the Arts in 1988 and a Creative Arts award from the Enamelist Society in 2001.

Physical description: Location and Setting. The WWP headquarters building and campus (Avista today), is located in the northeast quadrant of Spokane, in the Logan neighborhood. It is sited directly west of the Spokane River where it travels in a southwest direction before

reaching downtown Spokane. It is also bounded on the east side by Upriver Drive and the Spokane River Centennial Trail. The site is bound on the west side by North Crescent Avenue and the railroad tracks. The 28-acre facility is directly north of Mission Avenue, a main east-west arterial in Spokane. Directly southwest of the site is the 13-acre Mission Park, which is heavily used for recreational purposes. It is about six blocks northeast of Gonzaga, a private Catholic university that is one of Spokane's major universities. Hamilton Street, a north-south arterial west of the site, contains commercial uses – particularly restaurants – serving the Gonzaga community. The neighborhoods to the west, north and east are primarily residential.

Materials. The WWP building is a curtain wall structure with a steel frame and brick-clad, concrete masonry endwalls, with a curtain wall addition to the rear. The curtain wall is composed of torquoise and dark blue solid panels and green-tinted glass, which was a popular color scheme at mid-century (note that the 2012 renovation and reglazing appears to have replaced the earlier tinted glass with glass with a more reflective surface). The brick displays variegated shades of blond. The roof is built-up and the foundation is concrete.

Massing and design. The WWP campus (Avista today) was developed to centralize WWP's facilities, and it still encompasses the company's major uses. Although the headquarters building is connected to other structures by breezeways, only the main office building is recorded here. The five-story WWP building has a flat roof with a parapet, both on the main building and the addition to the rear. The footprint of the building is T-shaped, with the main building, constructed in 1959, being broader than the five-story addition to the rear. The main building has a small penthouse on the roof, whereas the addition has a large penthouse structure that approaches the size of its footprint. An open stair is located on the west, side façade of the main building and a permanent canopy extends from the centered front entry on the south facade. The building as a whole sits on a plinth that is retained on the east side by a battered retaining wall of basalt stone, surmounted by a metal fence. To the east of the main building entry is a formal pool and fountain, with a mosaic designed by artist Harold Balasz. The landscape was designed by San Francisco Bay Area landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The curtain wall structure was designed by Spokane architects Kenneth Brooks and Bruce Walker and constructed in 1959.

Changes over time. A 20,000-square-foot expansion and remodel of the service center was undertaken in 1974 by Brooks, Hensley & Creager. The WWP headquarters building underwent an extensive rehabilitation of its mechanical systems in 2012, including the demolition of existing systems, installation of new fire sprinklers, insulation and ceilings, building control upgrades, and asbestos removal. The entire building's glazing was also replaced with energy-efficient materials, although the existing aluminum frame of the curtain wall was retained. Interior alterations occurred in 2013-15. The project was undertaken by McKinstry of Spokane.

Landscape and site design. The WWP campus is largely linear, beginning with the headquarters building facing south, overlooking Mission Avenue and Upriver Drive. It is composed of 17 buildings that stretch out in back of the main headquarters building, interspersed with working yards and additional landscaped courts. The large forecourt in the front of the building extends to the street, contributing to the drama of the main building as it rises across the pond in the park-like setting. The WWP building as a whole sits on a plinth that is retained on the east side by a battered retaining wall clad in basalt stone, surmounted by a metal fence. To the east of the main building entry is a formal

pool and fountain, with a mosaic designed by artist Harold Balasz. The landscaping for the site was designed by San Francisco Bay Area landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Although somewhat modified, it conveys its significant features, including the large biomorphic water feature in front of the structure, which originally functioned as a reservoir and cooling pond. A formal courtyard is located in back of the headquarters building, separating the building from the one to the north. A second formal fountain and water feature parallels the east fence of the property here, bounding the site on this side. A formal drive approaches the building from Upriver Drive to the southeast. Parking for the site occurs to the west and southwest of the complex, as well as elsewhere on the site. The parking area is heavily screened with mature vegetation, particularly on the west side, separating the parking area and facility from the railroad tracks here.

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