



January 3, 2024

Erin Minnigan, Director of Preservation & Planning
Preservation Society of Charleston
147 King Street
Charleston, SC 29401
SENT VIA EMAIL
eminnigan@preservationsociety.org

Re: Downtowner Motor Inn (aka College Lodge), 159 Calhoun Street, Charleston, Charleston County

Dear Ms. Minnigan:

Thank you for submitting a Preliminary Information Form (PIF) for the Downtowner Motor Inn (also known as College Lodge) at 159 Calhoun Street in Charleston, Charleston County. Based upon the information submitted in the PIF, it is our opinion that the property meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: Entertainment/Recreation and Criterion C: Architecture at the local level of significance. Please note that this is only the opinion of State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff and does not guarantee successful listing. The National Park Service (NPS), not the SHPO, ultimately determines whether or not to list properties in the National Register.

Under Criterion A, the property is significant for associations with the growth of tourism in postwar Charleston. The Downtowner Motor Inn appears to be a rare surviving example in downtown Charleston of the type of automobile-oriented motel that became common across the country in the mid-20th century. Likewise, the property is also an unusual example of Modernism in downtown Charleston. Modernism is not common in Charleston, and the Downtowner Motor Inn appears to be one of the few (if not the only) examples of mid-century modern motel design remaining downtown. Alterations to the building over time have negatively impacted its historic integrity, particularly the painting over of the colored panels on the façade, but it is our opinion that overall the property retains historic integrity and is still able to convey its important local historical and architectural associations as a postwar Modern motel in Charleston. We do not recommend pursuing listing for this property at the state level of significance, as this would require comparison not only with other examples from the Downtowner Motor Inn franchise, but with all similar mid-century motels in South Carolina. It is unlikely that this property would be considered significant within that broader, statewide context.

We recommend the preparation of a formal National Register nomination for the Downtowner Motor Inn. We recommend referencing the National Register nominations for the [Host of America Motel](#) in North Charleston and the [Waikiki Motel](#) in Myrtle Beach as examples. It may also be helpful to reference the nomination for the [Engineering-Management Building](#) in North Charleston to support the development of a local context for Modernism. Please note that these nominations slightly predate the most recent National Register guidance and may not perfectly meet all current technical requirements, but they still serve as good examples overall. Attached (by email only) are forms, instructions, and example nominations. We appreciate your work on the PIF and your interest in the preservation and recognition of this important piece of South Carolina history. If you have any questions about our decision, please contact me at (803) 896-6179, or by email at vharness@scdah.sc.gov.

Sincerely,

Virginia E. Harness
Architectural Historian
State Historic Preservation Office

Cc: John Morris, Vice President, Facilities Management, College of Charleston, morrisjp2@cofc.edu
Cristi Schultz, Director, Architecture and Engineering, College of Charleston, schultzca@cofc.edu
Laura Lee Worrell, Program Manager, College of Charleston, worrelllll@cofc.edu