

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received AUG 30 1984
date entered SEP 27 1984

1. Name

historic Kent Columbus Circle Garage

and/or common Sofia Warehouse *see letter*

2. Location

street & number 43 West 61st Street -- A.K.A. 45 Columbus Avenue — not for publication

city, town New York — vicinity of

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☒ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	N/A in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	N/A being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☒ other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

undergoing rehabilitation

name Sofia Associates c/o Aaron Green Companies

street & number 10 Columbus Circle

city, town New York — vicinity of state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Hall of Records

street & number 31 Chamber Street

city, town New York state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission LP-1239 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date April 12, 1983 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records LPC, 20 Vesey Street

city, town New York state NY 10007

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sofia Warehouse (former Kent Columbus Circle Garage) occupies a prominent site on the northeast corner of Columbus Avenue and 61st Street on Manhattan's West Side. The building fills most of its lot and three of its four elevations are visible from the street. This area of Columbus Avenue is largely residential and is dominated by modern apartment houses. A thirty-story apartment building is located to the north of the warehouse and conceals most of its northern elevation.

Constructed of rust colored iron-spot brick with glazed terra cotta trim, this Art Deco style skyscraper rises to a height of twenty-seven stories. The Columbus Avenue elevation sets back at the fifteenth, twenty-second and twenty-fifth floors. The Columbus Avenue facade is the main elevation of the building and includes the entrance through which cars were originally driven. This elevation features an elaborate two-story entrance embellishment of ornamental polychromatic terra cotta modeled into chevrons and medallions based on Aztec motifs. This two-story composition is flanked by black brick bands and topped at the third story by black brick bands and a frieze of terra cotta chevrons.

The third through fifteenth floors are articulated by horizontal black brick bands which run directly over the lintels and under the sills of the rectangular window openings. The central trio of windows is defined by projecting vertical brick piers and decorative brick spandrels. These vertical piers culminate in an elaborate flourish of cream-colored and cobalt-blue terra cotta which echoes the motifs around the main entrance. The parapet wall around the fifteenth floor setback is capped with a cobalt-blue terra cotta coping.

Above the fifteenth floor, all the window spandrels are decorated with paired horizontal or vertical bands of black brick. Projecting brick piers again define the central bay of windows and each setback is capped with decorative terra cotta and cobalt-blue coping.

The 61st Street (south elevation) facade is a sheer twenty seven story wall nearly devoid of windows with a central brick stair tower which projects one bay from the plane of the building. Running up the east wall of the stair tower is a row of steel and concrete fire balconies. The stepped-back profile of the upper stories was originally meant to be symmetrical. However, a portion of the south elevation at the twenty-fifty and twenty-sixth stories was never built, even though it appears on the original plans.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1929 – 1930 **Builder/Architect** Jardine, Hill and Murdock

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sofia Warehouse (former Kent Columbus Circle Garage), is significant as a distinguished example of Art Deco style commercial architecture in New York City. Completed in 1930, this structure is the only known Art Deco style design by Jardine, Hill and Murdock, the successor to the prominent nineteenth-century architectural firm of D. and J. Jardine. The twenty-seven story structure on Manhattan's Upper West Side was originally built as a vertical parking garage and featured a novel patented automatic parking system. The design employs a wealth of geometric Art Deco ornament, including a two-story polychromatic treatment at the entrance. The building is among the finest Art Deco commercial buildings of the period and is the only known large scale Art Deco style parking garage in New York City.

Situated at the southern edge of Manhattan's Upper West Side, the property is located in a neighborhood that has undergone numerous changes through its brief history. The area north of 59th Street on the West Side remained undeveloped until the 1870's. Although the rectangular street grid had been superimposed over the entire island as early as 1811, it wasn't until the construction of the Ninth Avenue El in 1879 that the Upper West Side experienced large-scale urban expansion. While older village centers existed at Harsenville near 72nd Street and Bloomingdale at 86th Street, rowhouses for affluent residents were built near public improvements such as Riverside Park and Drive. Other houses and tenements were constructed near the elevated railway stops at 72nd, 81st, and 93rd Streets.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the West Side south of Sixty Street was the home of Manhattan's black population. By 1900, the black community had spread as far north as 64th Street, west of Broadway. The area between 60th and 64th Streets, consisting mostly of dilapidated tenement housing, small industrial buildings, and groups of stables, was known as Columbus Hill because of its proximity to Columbus Circle until it became the scene of bloody racial riots involving veterans of the Spanish-American War and was renamed "San Juan Hill." This area served as a transitional zone to the more exclusive rowhouse blocks to the north. The continued presence of the Ninth Avenue El did not enhance the desirability of the San Juan Hill neighborhood as a place to live. An attempt was made to change the neighborhood's image by changing the names of Ninth and Tenth Avenues to Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues.

1

Much of the information in this nomination was adopted from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report entitled "Sofia Brothers Warehouse," written by Gina Santucci, dated April 12, 1983, LP-1239.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park, NY-NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 18 585780 4513540
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the property coincides with Manhattan Block 1114, Lot 1, known as 43 West 61st Street A.K.A. 45 Columbus Avenue.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code	NA
-------	------	--------	------	----

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Merrill Hesch (see continuation sheet)

organization Division for Historic Preservation date Aug. 1984

street & number Agency Building # 1, Empire State Plaza telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany state New York

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

date 8/28/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Entered in the
National Register

date 9-27-84

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Sofia Warehouse
Continuation sheet New York, New York Co. Item number 7

Page 2

The stair tower on the south is strikingly defined by linear, geometric ornament executed in black brick rising nearly the full height of the building. This wall ornament provides an instantly recognizable identification for the building from the south.

The east and north elevations of the Sofia Warehouse are also ornamented with black brick bands, but of more modest proportion. On the east they enclose a center bay of three windows, and on the north they have been largely obscured by a tall modern apartment tower. The north wall is nearly devoid of fenestration.

A one-story extension was added to the south side of the building when it was converted to a warehouse in 1943. This addition was recently demolished as part of the current renovation plan. The current storefront on Columbus Avenue dates from 1943. Many of the original twelve-pane metal sash, which operated with a transom at the top and a hopper at the bottom, have been replaced.

On the interior, the original garage apparatus was removed in 1943. With the exception of the original elevator shafts, there are no notable historic features on the interior.

The Sofia Warehouse was purchased by Sofia Associates in 1983. The property is currently undergoing a renovation into condominium apartments and office space. The rehabilitation is being done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" and under the supervision of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Sofia Warehouse

Continuation sheet New York, New York Co.

Item number 8

Page 2

As the twentieth century progressed, the neighborhood changed to light industrial uses. The 1936 tax map shows gas stations, garages, auto dealerships, and factory service centers lining the streets from West 59th to West 70th Streets, especially between Amsterdam and West End Avenues. The area retained its mixed-use character until the erection of Lincoln Center in the 1960s, just to the north, and related redevelopment of the Upper West Side during the past two decades.

As the use of automobiles increased after World War I, the creation of parking facilities became a necessity in urban areas and the design of garages a new field for architects.² The Kent Columbus Circle Garage was erected in 1929-30 adjacent to the Packard Motor Car Company warehouse and showrooms. The garage used a patented automatic parking system in which an electrical "parking machine" engaged cars by their rear axles and towed them from the elevator platform to parking spots. The garage was designed in the Art Deco style, a style which was then at its peak of popularity.³ It seems likely that the client chose an Art Deco design for the implications of modernism and progress reflected by the innovative nature of the new parking system housed within the building. Though Art Deco ornament was commonly applied to a variety of commercial buildings, the Kent Garage is a notable example of its application to a utilitarian, commonly unadorned structure.

The Art Deco movement on the Upper West Side first manifested itself in residential apartment buildings such as No. 336 Central Park West at 94th Street (1928, Schwartz & Gross, located in the Central Park West Historic District, NR listed), the Master Apartments on Riverside Drive at 103rd Street (1928, Helmle, Corbett & Harrison and Sugarman & Berger) and the Eldorado on Central Park West at 90th Street (1929, Margon & Holder, Central Park West Historic District). Other large-scale Art Deco Buildings erected at the time of the Kent Columbus Circle Garage are the Daily News Building on 42nd Street (Howells & Hood, 1930 (NR listed) and the Salvation Army Building on 14th Street (Voorhes, Gmelin & Walker, 1930).

The firm of Jardine, Hill and Murdock, which designed the Kent garage, was the successor firm to D & J Jardine, later Jardine, Kent and Jardine, and Jardine, Kent and Hill. The Jardine firm was especially active in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the design of rowhouses, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings, including the cast-iron B. Altman & Company store at Sixth Avenue and 19th Street (1876). The successor firm continued in the commercial tradition, designing a number of Manhattan office buildings including No. 50 East 42nd Street (1915), No. 465 Fifth Avenue (1917), No. 335 Broadway (1925), No. 341 Madison Avenue (1926),

2

See "Garages," Architectural Record, 65 (February 1929), 178-191, for a discussion of the problems of garage design.

3

Gervin Robinson, Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 24.

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Continuation sheet Sofia Warehouse
New York, New York Co. Item number 8
New York Co.

Page 3

and 40 Worth Street (1927). These buildings, which are faced with brick and terra cotta, are articulated by a variety of Renaissance-inspired detail. An unusual mixed-use structure of 1929-1930, at 123 West 57th Street houses both the Calvary Baptist Church and the Salisbury Hotel. Here the firm chose to use Gothic detail to enhance the facade. For the Kent firm, Jardine, Hill and Murdock also designed a parking garage built in 1928 at 209 East 43rd Street (still extant but refaced in 1961), which displayed modest Renaissance-inspired detail in keeping with the dignified character of Midtown Manhattan. The Kent garage on Columbus Avenue of the following year is the only known design by the firm in the Art Deco style. ch.

Shortly after its completion, in September of 1931, the Kent garage enterprise failed, and the company was reorganized without the Kent Brothers. The building was operated as a garage until 1943 when the Central Savings Bank, holder of the mortgage, sold it to the Sofia Brothers, who removed the garage apparatus, blocked up the original vehicular entrance on Columbus Avenue, and converted the building to a storage warehouse, advertised as the "World's Tallest Storage Warehouse." The architect for the conversion was George S. Kingsley.

The Sofia Warehouse (Kent Columbus Circle Garage) is a distinguished example of the Art Deco style applied to a commercial structure. One of the few commercial buildings still extant in its neighborhood, once a bustling light industrial area, the structure is an outstanding example of a uniquely twentieth-century building type, the urban parking garage, which exhibits a wealth of Art Deco design and ornament. It remains the only known example of a large-scale Art Deco style parking garage in New York City.

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date entered

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Page 1

Bibliography

Bletter, Rosemarie Haag, and Cervin Robinson. Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

"Garages." Architectural Record 65 (February 1929): 178-191.

Gray, Christopher. "Sofia Brothers Warehouse." Statement to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. New York: Office for Metropolitan History, August 1981.

"Kent Automatic Parking Garage, New York." American Architect 133 (June 20, 1982): 835-837.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. Sofia Brothers Warehouse Designation Report (LP-1239), by Gina Santucci. New York: City of New York, 1983.

Lockwood, Charles. Manhattan Moves Uptown. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

Parker W. Chase. New York The Wonder City. New York: Wonder City Publishing.

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National Park Service**

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Sofia Warehouse

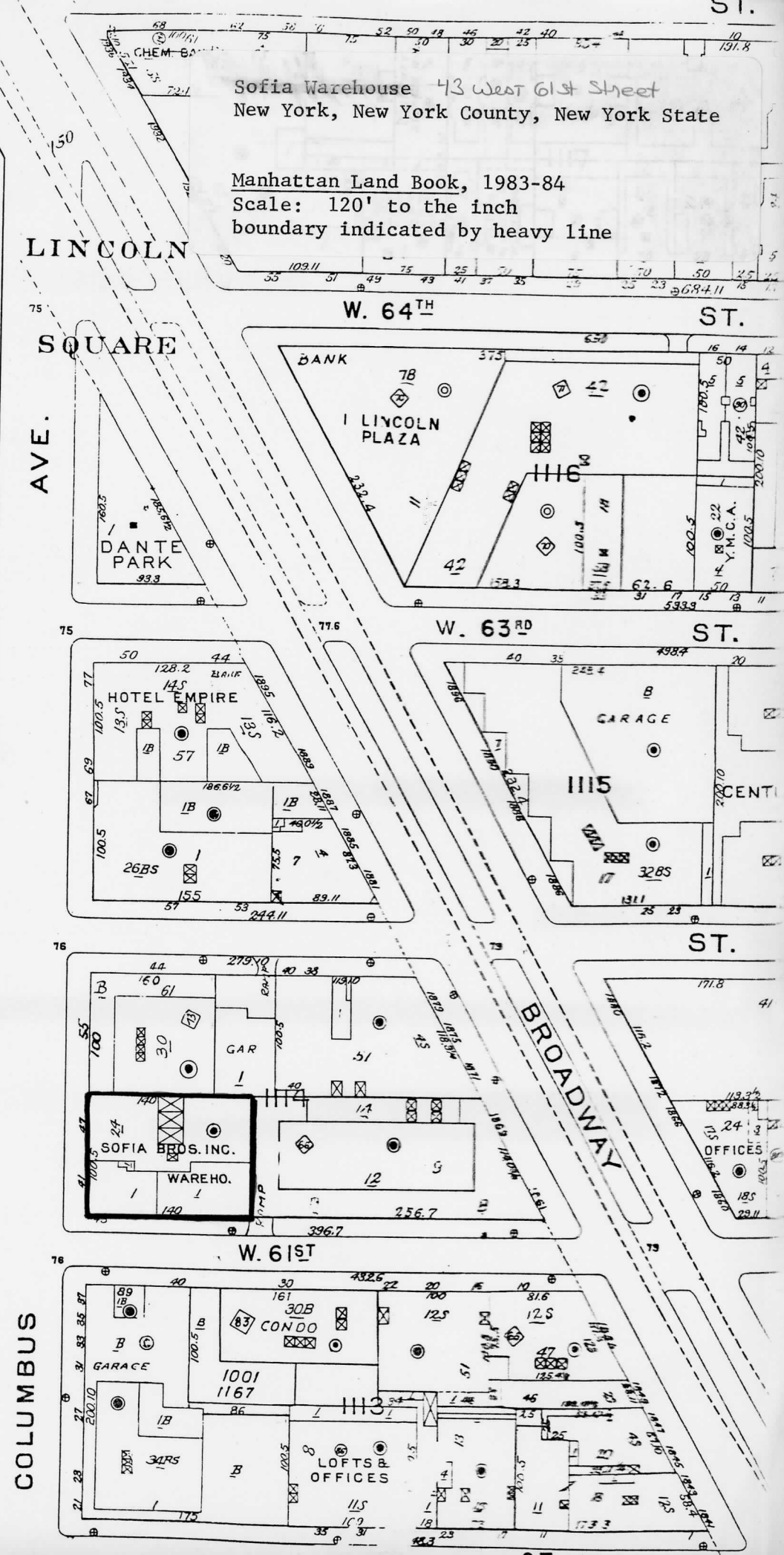
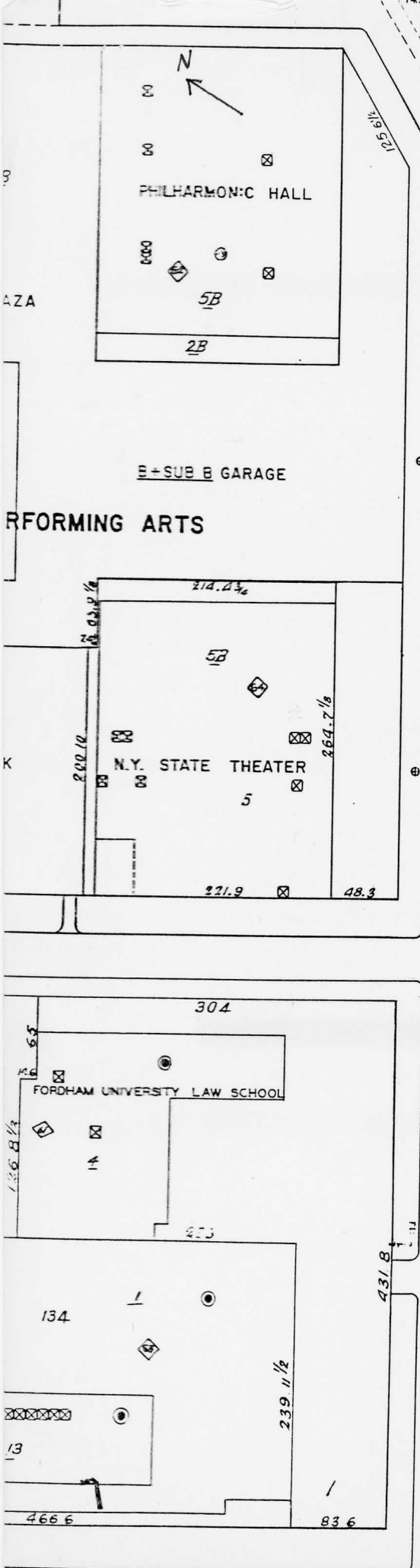
Continuation sheet New York, New York Co. Item number 11

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Draft research and nomination completed by:

David J. Framberger
Aaron Green Companies
10 Columbus Circle
Suite 2300
New York, NY 10019

Telephone: (212) 247-0152



Sofia Warehouse 43 West 61st Street
New York, New York County, New York State

Manhattan Land Book, 1983-84
Scale: 120' to the inch
boundary indicated by heavy line

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Sofia Warehouse
New York County
NEW YORK

Entered in the
National Register

Working No. AUG 30 1984

Fed. Reg. Date: 2.5.85

Date Due: 9/27/84 - 10/14/84

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 9-27-84

☐ RETURN

☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
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4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- ☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

- ☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____

Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*) _____

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ applicable criteria
☐ justification of areas checked
☐ relating significance to the resource
☐ context
☐ relationship of integrity to significance
☐ justification of exception
☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____

date _____

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
☐ Photographs
☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Sofia Warehouse

43 West 61st St., New York, New York Co. N.Y.

Photog: Alan Lapidus Architect

Neg: Alan Lapidus Arch., 2112 Broadway, N.Y.
N.Y.

Date: June 1983

View: West facade

Negative at Alan Lapidus Architect, NYC

photo 1 of 4



Sofia Warehouse

43 West 61st St., N.Y., N.Y. Co., N.Y.

Photog: Alan Lapidus Architect

Neg: Alan Lapidus, 2112 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y.

Date: June 1983

View: South facade

photo 2 of 4



Sofia Warehouse

43 West 61st St., N.Y., N.Y. Co., N.Y.

Photog: Alan Lapidus Architect

Neg: Alan Lapidus, 2112 Broadway, N.Y., NY

Date: June 1983

View: East and north facade

photo 3 of 4

Negative at Alan Lapidus, Architect, NYC

Photo 3 of 4



Sofia Warehouse

43 West 61st St., N.Y., N.Y. Co., NY

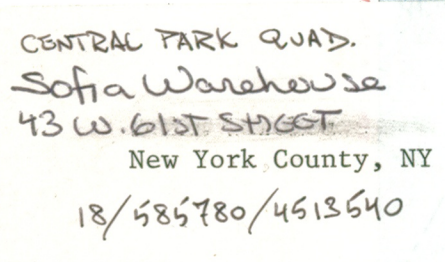
Photog: Alan Lapidus Architect

Neg: Alan Lapidus, 2112 Broadway, N.Y., NY

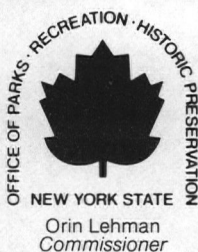
Date: June 1983

View: Detail of Columbus Ave. entrance

photo 4 of 4



1966
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6265 IV SW—SERIES V821



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 1 Albany, New York 12238

518-474-0456

August 30, 1984

National Register Historic Preservation
Interagency Resources Division
National Park Service
1100 L Street, NW
Room 6209
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Carol:

Enclosed is the nomination for the former Kent Columbus Circle Garage. This structure has been known as the Sofia Warehouse since 1943. Because it is widely known locally by that name, we would prefer that it be entered on the National Register under its common name.

Sincerely,

Larry Gobrecht
National Register and Survey
Coordinator