



Agenda Report

November 18, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE AVON PRODUCTS COMPANY OFFICE BUILDING AT 2940 E. FOOTHILL BOULEVARD AS A LANDMARK

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines §15308: Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Find that the Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard meets Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040 because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period, and represents the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City. The building is a locally significant example of a Corporate Modern style office building designed by regionally significant architect Stiles O. Clements;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

At its regular meeting of September 17, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard is a distinctive example of an office building in the Corporate Modern style designed by the architect Stiles O. Clements and retains all of its significant character-defining features. Therefore, the office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion "C" because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period and represents the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City.

BACKGROUND:

On June 24, 2019, Pasadena Heritage submitted an application for Landmark designation of the Avon Products Company Building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard. Staff informed the owner, The Home Depot, in writing of the application on July 18, 2019. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that a portion of the property (the original office building) qualifies for designation as a landmark. The property owner's attorney attended the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on September 17, 2019 and verbally indicated to the Commission that the property owner consents to the designation, as described in the staff report that was presented to the Commission (which is the same as described in this agenda report).

Property Data

- Address: 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard, Pasadena
- Location: South side of E. Foothill Boulevard, between N. Daisy Avenue and Titley Avenue, immediately west of the 210 Freeway Foothill Boulevard overpass.
- Date of Construction Completion: 1947 (source: County Assessor; Building Description Blank)
- Original Architect: Stiles O. Clements (source: multiple articles including in Southwest Builder and Contractor and Pasadena Star-News – see Attachment C)
- Original Landscape Architect: Edward Huntsman-Trout (source: UCLA Special Collections Edward Huntsman-Trout papers)
- Original Builder: William Simpson Construction Company (Southwest Builder and Contractor)
- Original / Present Use: Office building & manufacturing facility/vacant
- Property size: 9 acres (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 367,051 square feet (source: County Assessor)

The Site

The property is located on an irregularly shaped lot on the south side of E. Foothill Boulevard between N. Daisy Avenue and S. Kinneloa Avenue, immediately west of the 210 Freeway Foothill Boulevard overpass. The original office building, built in 1947, sits at the extreme northeast corner of the site, set back from E. Foothill Boulevard approximately 45 feet. Later additions to this building are attached to its west side, with a small portion having a similar setback from Foothill Boulevard and the remaining building being set back approximately 10 feet. The larger setback areas are landscaped with trees, lawn, shrubs and a raised monument filled with white and pink stones, with the pink stones arranged to resemble a breast cancer awareness ribbon. At the extreme eastern and western ends of the site are paved vehicular driveways. The property extends south to, and is set back approximately 120 feet from, E. Walnut Street and the setback area is paved.

Exterior Features of the Building

Along East Foothill Boulevard, the overall building is divided into four separate volumes of different sizes and character. The easternmost volume is the original office building; west of that is a small, lower-height volume; west of that is a slightly taller, long building volume with tall ribbon windows; and the westernmost volume is slightly taller with a continuous, slightly projecting clerestory. Each of these volumes is described in further detail below.

The original office building appears to be two-stories and, according to a detailed description in Southwest Builder and Contractor (see Attachment C), is 29 feet high to the top of the coping. It is square in plan, measures 106 feet by 106 feet, and has a flat roof and concrete exterior walls. The north (front) façade facing E. Foothill Boulevard is divided into equally sized, deeply recessed rectangular panels of glass, four panels high and eight panels across. Most of the glass panels are corrugated spandrel glass while some at the lower portion of the building are flat vision glass. The entry, which is offset to the western end of the façade, consists of double frameless glass doors and sidelights surrounded by a projecting stone feature with rounded ends. The doors have a logo design etched into the glass and opaque glass cylindrical door pulls attached by metal clips. The glass panel above the entry is a flat, pale blue opaque panel (likely created with an interior-applied film) with applied signage lettering, all of which is non-original based on historical photographs. At the base of the front façade are a series of louvered vents, divided in the same horizontal dimension as the window patterning above.

The east elevation of the office building consists of a largely blank concrete wall with a consistent pattern of smaller, vertically oriented rectangular windows. The front two windows have slightly projecting concrete surrounds. Also evident on the side elevation is a stepping of the height down to a single story toward the rear of the original building.

The height then steps back up at the location of a 1957 addition to the original building, which obscures from view the original building's south façade.

Connected to the west side of the original office building is a small, one-story, flat-roofed building volume, the front façade of which is set back approximately 10 feet from the front façade of the original office building. This building appears to be concrete construction with long, flush-mounted ribbon windows that extend to the ground plane, with a solid wall area above. Adjacent to the west of that volume is slightly taller volume (but lower than the original office building) that is set substantially closer to the street with a similar character of concrete walls and flush-mounted ribbon windows with a solid wall area at the top. The far western volume is slightly taller than the adjacent volume and set slightly closer to the street. The façade is solid concrete at the base with a slightly projecting clerestory ribbon that aligns with the top edge of the building. Approximately 20 feet behind this façade, the building rises to a substantially taller height and this portion of the building is windowless and clad in two different types of corrugated metal in two horizontal bands with a metal joint between.

Behind the original office building is a separate three-story office building volume constructed of board-formed concrete. The east elevation of this volume has a central projecting vertically oriented component with two vertically oriented ribbons of narrow, flush-mounted windows flanked by lower-height volumes with small flush-mounted clerestory windows at the first floor and larger windows with projecting concrete surrounds at the upper floors. This character continues to the south façade, except that the base on this side is a large loading dock with a repeating rhythm of truck bays covered by a projecting metal canopy. With the exception of an angled façade with metal storefront windows and automatic sliding doors, the remainder of the south and west facades are blank concrete or corrugated-metal-clad walls.

Documented Changes to the Property

With the exception of the original office building, based on historical plans, images and articles, the remainder of the property was constructed in the 1970's. See Attachment C for documentation of the original appearance and footprint of the building.

Current Condition, Use, and Proposed Plans

The exterior of the office building is currently in excellent condition and the building is vacant. Although no formal applications have been submitted to the City for permits or other entitlements, representatives of the property owner have indicated to staff that the building is proposed to be used for research and development offices. The newer (1970's-era) buildings on the site are proposed to be converted to a Home Depot retail store, retaining their exterior appearance.

Historical Overview

Mid-Twentieth-Century Corporate/Institutional/Industrial Development in Pasadena

Because the Avon Products Company building was originally constructed in 1947, the appropriate historic context report to utilize to evaluate the historical significance of the building is “Cultural Resources of the Recent Past” (2007, Historic Resources Group & Pasadena Heritage), which establishes historic contexts and significant themes, property types, architectural styles and practitioners between the years 1935 and 1965. Although primarily focused on residential development, the report also identifies other development themes from this period, including the theme “Corporate/Institutional/Industrial Development,” which most closely applies to this property. In describing this theme, the report states:

Numerous new corporate headquarters and factories were built in the years immediately following World War II, which also reflect the shift to the suburbs occurring during this period. Businesses moved their jobs to suburban areas to follow the migrating worker population, leaving behind the traditional downtown financial and business centers. In Pasadena, this again meant moving away from the original downtown center, which saw little growth during this period, locating instead in areas considered the outskirts of the City. The South Lake shopping district, which first emerged with the construction of Bullock’s Pasadena in 1947, evolved in the 1950s and 1960s with the development of some of Pasadena’s first modern office towers. This pattern also occurred on the eastern edge of the city, particularly along Foothill Boulevard, where a number of corporate headquarters from the period are found.

Following an extended discussion of the Stuart Pharmaceutical Company building, built in 1958 in the New Formalism style and designed by Eduard Durell Stone, the report states, “The influence of Mies van der Rohe is also seen in the development of corporate architecture from the period, with its emphasis on the expression of a building’s structure and the exposed curtain wall.” The report goes on to describe the “Large Institutional/Industrial Building Subtype” of the “Commercial Building” property type, which apply to this property, as follows:

The large-scale civic, institutional and industrial building includes performing arts and convention centers, governmental buildings, college campus buildings, and industrial buildings. These structures are often occupied by a single entity, such as a public agency, private manufacturer, or university department. When these structures are situated within a larger campus setting, pedestrian engagement with the building is dictated by the campus plan, and associated parking may be segregated. The site may also incorporate designed landscaping. In Pasadena, this property subtype is

most often associated with the Corporate Modern, Vernacular Modern, New Formalist and Brutalist styles.

Corporate Modern Style

The “Cultural Resources of the Recent Past” Historic Context Report describes the Corporate Modern architectural style, which applies to this property, as follows:

Corporate Modern was the predominant style of large-scale commercial designs of the late 1950s and 1960s. Like the Modernist domestic architecture of the same period, this corporate version was “primarily concerned with expressing the structure of a building in its outward appearance.” The Corporate Modern-style office building typically takes one of two forms. The first features a single or central windowless shaft, flanked by one or more radiating wings banded with windows. Structural supports may be accentuated with protruding steel piers. Exterior decoration is often limited to the use of vertical or horizontal sunscreens. Local practitioners include Pereira & Luckman, Wurdeman & Becket, Smith & Williams, and Ladd & Kelsey.

An alternate form is characterized by soaring rectangular volumes and the generous use of glass. This version of the style borrows heavily from the minimalist designs of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, whose highly-modular steel and glass structures first appeared in the early 1950s. Buildings that adhere most closely to this aesthetic are often referred to as *Miesian*, and include the work of Philip Johnson, and Skidmore Owings & Merrill. In Southern California, the Miesian aesthetic was most fully realized in the designs of Craig Elwood, especially his 1976 “Bridge Building” at the Hillside Campus of the Art Center College of Design. Other local examples include Ladd & Kelsey’s First City Bank building at 123-127 S. Lake Avenue (1961); the O.K. Earl Office Building at 199 S. Hudson Avenue (1967); and Neptune & Thomas’ Avon Products Inc. at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard (1947). The Bankamericard Center at 101 S. Marengo Avenue (1975) is a later example by Edward Durell Stone.

The character-defining features of the Corporate Modern style are:

- Rectangular volumes
- Materials of concrete, steel, and glass
- Horizontal bands of windows or glass curtain walls
- Steel frame accentuated with protruding steel piers or I-beam mullions
- Projecting aluminum sunscreens, vertical fins or louvers
- Tower over a parking podium, often screened
- Articulated ground story, often set back behind slender columns or *pilotis*
- Exterior staircases with no risers

- Building set back on a plaza or formal garden

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements constructed during the property's period of significance that give the building its character. In general, a property that retains its character-defining features continues to convey its significance and therefore retains integrity as an historic resource. Removal or alteration of just one character-defining feature does not necessarily alter the integrity of an historic resource. Impacts to historic integrity can result from a single major change or from many incremental changes over time.

Stiles O. Clements (1883-1966)

The "Cultural Resources of the Recent Past" Historic Context Report describes the work of Stiles O. Clements, the original architect of the Avon Products Company office building, as follows:

Stiles Oliver Clements was a Los Angeles architect and a key figure in the local Art Deco movement of the 1920s. A partner with Octavius Morgan and John Walls in the firm of Morgan, Walls & Clements, he was known for his exuberant theater designs, including the El Capitán Theater in Hollywood (1926), and the Mayan Theater in Los Angeles (1927). He was also responsible for two of Los Angeles' best examples of the Art Deco style, the Richfield Tower (1929) and the Wiltern Theater (1931).

According to the Pacific Coast Architectural Database, Clements was born in Centerville, MD in 1883 and moved to Los Angeles in 1911. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia, a Master's Degree in Architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and also studied at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Upon moving to Los Angeles, he joined the firm of Morgan, Walls & Morgan where he later became a partner, resulting in the firm's name changing to Morgan, Walls & Clements. In 1937, he created his own firm, which later became Clements and Clements in 1955 when his son Robert became a partner. In addition to his famous Streamline Moderne and Art Deco designs described in the context report, he also designed modernist buildings including the Arthur Murray Office & Studio and multiple Mullen & Bluett department stores. In Pasadena, in addition to the Avon Products Company building, he designed the Allstate Insurance Building at 600 N. Sierra Madre Boulevard in 1956 and, earlier in his career, an English Arts & Crafts style house at 1201 S. Grand Avenue in 1915, located within the South Grand-Covington Place Landmark District.

Avon Products Company (information summarized from www.encyclopedia.com)

Avon Products Company (now Avon International) was incorporated in 1886 in New York under the name California Perfume Company. The company was created by a book salesman named David H. McConnell who offered perfume samples to book

customers and found that interest in the perfume was greater than in books. The company quickly grew and within 20 years its product line had expanded and a new office was built in Montreal, Canada. In 1920, the company began using the name "Avon" for some of its product lines and by the end of the 1920's, the company was doing business in 48 states and Canada. In 1939, the company officially changed its name to Avon. Expansion of the company into the 1950's resulted in the construction of multiple facilities throughout the country, including the facility in Pasadena that was constructed in 1947. Staff was unable to locate specific information about the company's original expansion to Pasadena, nor about the substantial expansion of the facility that occurred in the 1970's, other than the fact that the recession in the 1970's resulted in significant restructuring of the company.

ANALYSIS:

The Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.C.2, which states:

[The property] embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or, to the region or possesses artistic values of significance to the City or to the region.

Generally, in order to qualify under Criterion C, a property type would display most of the character-defining features of its style. It must retain high integrity of design, materials and workmanship that convey its period of construction. While most buildings undergo alteration over time, these alterations should not significantly change the historic appearance of the building.

Under Criterion C, the Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Corporate Modern style office building from the Recent Past designed by regionally significant architect Stiles O. Clements. The building retains integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- **Location:** The office building is in its original location.
- **Design:** The office building retains its original form, plan, space, structure, and style.
- **Setting:** The site and neighborhood surrounding the office building has significantly changed since the original construction of the building and the production and warehouse components of the original building were demolished and replaced with newer buildings in the 1970's. Due to the size, scale, and

differing architectural character of the office and warehouse/production buildings, it is appropriate to evaluate them separately. While the immediately adjacent westerly building volume is of newer construction and not architecturally significant, the deep setback from the street of this volume is consistent with the original manufacturing building that was connected to the office building and, therefore, contributes to the retention of the immediately adjacent setting of the office building. While integrity of the larger surrounding setting has largely been lost, this aspect of integrity is not required to be retained for historic resources eligible for designation under Criterion c.

- Materials: The office building retains all of its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The office building retains its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of mid-20th century office building design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Corporate Modern architectural style and evokes the feeling of the mid-twentieth-century industrial history of Pasadena.
- Association: The Avon Products Company office building at 2940 E. Foothill Boulevard retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with mid-20th century office development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the office building retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The building retains all of its original character-defining features, including two-story configuration, square plan, flat roof, concrete walls, recessed corrugated and vision glass windows, and entry detailing. The changes that have been made to the surrounding setting, including newer buildings, construction of the 210 Freeway, vacation of Sunnyslope Avenue, and later developments along Foothill Boulevard have not substantially affected the architectural character of the original office building.

Contributing features to this designation include the 106' x 106' original facades of the office building and the deep setback from the street of the building and adjacent connecting building volume.

The property includes a portion of a landscape designed by nationally significant landscape architect Edward Huntsman-Trout. Staff has obtained copies of Huntsman-Trout's design from the UCLA Special Collections (see Attachment C) and has determined that although the design appears to have been executed on the site, it does not exhibit the character-defining features of the "Modern Garden, 1945-1975" identified in the City's incomplete Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Designed Gardens in Pasadena 1873-1975." In addition, there have been changes made to the original design including planting of several trees, installation of a raised monument and demolition of the portions west of the original building and along the former building frontage at Sunnyslope Avenue. Based on the above, staff recommends that the

specific landscape design within the setback area not be considered a contributing feature to the landmark designation.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The General Plan Land Use Element – Guiding Principle 2: “Pasadena’s historic resources will be preserved. Citywide, new development will be in harmony with and enhance Pasadena’s unique character and sense of place. New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will be compatible with, and differentiated from, the existing resource;” and Goal 8: “Preservation and enhancement of Pasadena’s cultural and historic buildings, landscapes, streets and districts as valued assets and important representations of its past and a source of community identity, and social, ecological, and economic vitality.”

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

Class 8 exemptions consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

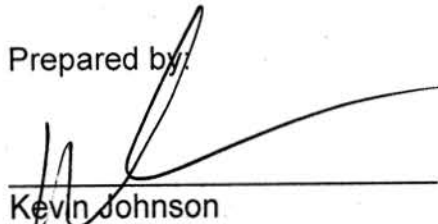
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted the local Mills Act ordinance. As a result of this program, the reduced property tax amount which comes out of the City's local share amount from the State, is a small fraction of the City's overall property tax revenue.

Respectfully submitted,



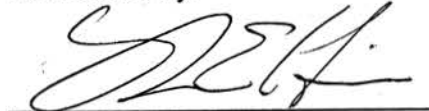
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STEVE MERMELL
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Attachments: (5)

- A. Vicinity map
- B. Application & applicant description
- C. Historical documentation & photographs
- D. Current photographs
- E. Effects of historic designation