

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: December 8, 2008

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 1347 N. LAKE AVENUE AS A LANDMARK

Recommendation

It is recommended that, following a public hearing, the City Council:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment (CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, §15308);
2. Find that the commercial building at 1347 N. Lake Avenue is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is a prominently sited commercial building that embodies characteristics of the Renaissance Revival architectural style of the early twentieth century and retains a high level of integrity;
3. Approve the designation of the property at 1347 N. Lake Avenue as a landmark;
4. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1347 N. Lake Avenue, Pasadena, California;
5. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1347 N. Lake Avenue, Pasadena, California; and
6. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

Recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission

On September 15, 2008, at a noticed public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the designation of 1347 N. Lake Avenue as a landmark under criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.C.

Background

On June 4, 2008, Mr. Dale Trader, who is not the property owner, submitted an application for designation of 1347 N. Lake Avenue as a landmark. The Historic

Preservation Commission has determined that the property should be designated as a landmark because of its integrity and because it is a prominently sited commercial building that embodies characteristics of the Renaissance Revival architectural style of the early twentieth century. The owner has indicated to staff that he is in favor of the landmark designation.

Description

Built in 1925, this two-story, approximately 6,403 square-foot commercial building, designed by Glenn Elwood Smith, is located on the northwest corner of N. Lake Avenue and E. Washington Boulevard. The building is rectangular in plan, designed to house retail shops on the ground floor and offices on the second floor. It is constructed of unreinforced masonry (brick—seismically retrofitted in 1992—and faced with stucco piers and precast elements. The southeast corner of the building facing the intersection is curved, and features a principal entrance and an inset balcony behind a pair of arches set within a larger (partially blind) arch. A recessed entrance from Washington Boulevard provides access to the second floor via a marble interior stairway. There is an adjacent two-story building located to the north side of the subject property (1353-1359 N. Lake Avenue), but is not part of the proposed designation.

The building exhibits distinguishing features associated with Renaissance Revival architecture. These features include a mostly rectangular plan, two story height, flat parapeted roof with cornice (a shallow hip roof with wide eaves is more indicative of the style), projecting piers—deeply scored to resemble ashlar masonry—with vermiculated capitals, entry bays with classical detailing (in this case, quoins and a cartouche capping the Washington Boulevard entrance), and an inset balcony behind an arched opening at the corner of the building. This arched opening features a pair of arches supported by a single Salamanca column in the Renaissance style, set within a larger (partially blind) arch that is inlaid with blue tiles. Original fenestration consists of wood-framed three-light casement windows on the second floor, and storefronts with transom windows on the first floor. The original storefronts consist of three-to-five-light transom windows, centered and recessed entries with approximate right-angle return windows, and a raised bulkhead.

This building is the more prominent of two largely intact retail/office buildings designed by Glenn Elwood Smith in the city. The other intact building is the Burns E. Eastman building, a landmark, at 1275 E. Green Street. Other remaining retail/office buildings designed by Smith include a two-story building at 1240 E. Colorado Boulevard, which is heavily altered, and a small retail building on Orange Grove Boulevard near the northwest corner of N. Lake Avenue and E. Orange Grove Boulevard, which was once part of a larger (now largely demolished) set of one-story retail buildings.

There have been some alterations to the building at 1347 N. Lake. They include the replacement of the original doors at the entries, and the installation of aluminum storefront-window assemblies in many of the openings on the first floor. However, the original window systems remain in three of the openings; these can be used along with

photographs on file from 1989 to guide future restoration of the storefronts. Thus far, the staff has been unable to find any historical photographs to document the possibility of other changes to the building (e.g., paint on red brick walls and cast stone) or missing features.

Glenn Elwood Smith (1894-1976)

Glenn Elwood Smith was born in Illinois and moved to Pasadena in 1911. After working for the Foss Designing and Building Company, the Herbert A. Ham Structural Engineering company, and Myron Hunt, he began his own practice in Pasadena in 1928. A member of the American Institute of Architects, he wrote several articles for publications including California Book Of Homes, the Pictorial Review of the New York Home Bureau Service, and the Pasadena Star-News, the latter of which published a number of his house plans during the early 1920s. Smith was noted for being “adept in designing homes in Spanish, English, Italian, and Moderne styles.”¹ He is credited with over thirty notable individual designs for buildings in Pasadena and elsewhere in southern California, including the Spanish Colonial Revival style Fire Station #6 at 1435 N. Raymond Avenue (1938), the Art Deco style Lamanda Park Masonic Lodge at 25 S. Sierra Madre Boulevard (1926), and the Burns E. Eastman building at 1275 E. Green Street (1926).

Analysis

The property at 1347 N. Lake Avenue is eligible for landmark designation under Criterion “C” (§17.62.040 PMC):

(The property) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is significant to the City or to the region, or that possesses high artistic values that are significant to the City or to the region.

Under this criterion, 1347 N. Lake Avenue is significant as a prominently sited building, executed in the Renaissance Revival style, designed by a local architect, Glenn Elwood Smith. The building exhibits a high degree of integrity. As the most prominent building in the neighborhood by virtue of its location, size, and architecture, it was intended to anchor the developing N. Lake/ E. Washington commercial intersection. As an example of the Renaissance Revival style, it is the most architecturally significant commercial building in the neighborhood. Because the building has not been altered, with the exception of some storefronts, entry doors, and painting, it exhibits integrity in terms of design (Renaissance Revival), materials (brick, scored stucco, precast quoins, etc.), and workmanship (arch with inlaid tiles, scored stucco, vermiculated capitals, transom windows custom made to fit around the capitals, cartouche). The alterations to the storefront windows can be reversed because of the existence of original fabric and

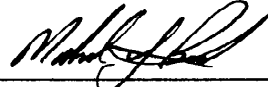
¹ Tim Gregory, *Glenn Elwood Smith, Architect*, 2005 [unpublished report on file with Planning and Development Department]

photo documentation. This building evokes the feeling of being an important commercial anchor with some architectural distinction.

Fiscal Impact

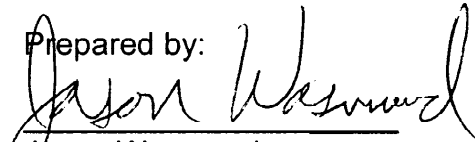
Designation of this property does not affect revenues to the City. In some instances, though, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,



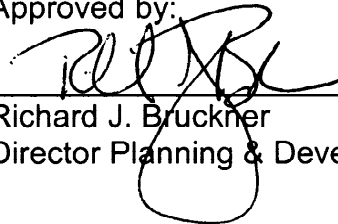
Michael J. Beck
City Manager

Prepared by:



Jason Wasmund
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Approved by:



Richard J. Bruckner
Director Planning & Development

ATTACHMENTS

- A: Resolution and Declaration
- B: Application Materials
- C: Current Photographs
- D: Effects of Landmark Designation