



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2023

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, ACTING DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS A LANDMARK
489 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD (THE HARRY FITZGERALD BUILDING)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment such as designation of historic resources;
2. Find that the commercial building at 489 East Colorado 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. It is a locally significant example of a Georgian/Neoclassical style commercial building designed by locally significant architects Bennett & Haskell; and,
3. Recommend that the City Council approve the designation of the property at 489 East Colorado Boulevard as a landmark.

BACKGROUND:

On October 5, 2022, Michael Curry, property owner, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the building at 489 East Colorado Boulevard. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the building qualifies for designation as a landmark.

DESCRIPTION:

Property Data

- Address: 489 East Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena
- Location: North side of Colorado Boulevard, between Los Robles Ave. and Oakland Ave.
- Date of Construction Completion: 1926 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: John Cyril Bennett & Fitch Haskell (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Builder: John B. Simpson (Source: Original Building Permit)
- Original / Present Use: Commercial
- Property size: 9,902 sq. ft. (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 9,897 sq. f.t. (source: County Assessor)

Architectural Description:

The Site:

The property is located on a rectangular shaped lot on the north side of East Colorado Boulevard, between North Los Robles Avenue and North Oakland Avenue. The building is set closely to the street at the front property line. The rear portion of the lot is used for surface parking.

Exterior Features of the Building:

The Harry Fitzgerald building is a two-story symmetrical building with a stucco primary (south) exterior. Cast stone Tuscan columns form a portico, separating a deeply recessed entry from the sidewalk. The entry consists of cast bronze double doors within a decorative metal frame with narrow sidelights and a large divided-light transom above. Large floor-to-ceiling steel frame, multi-light windows flank the main entrance, separated from the entry by engaged stone pilasters with articulated bases and capitals. The recessed entry has a coffered ceiling with cast-plaster ornamentation and a single ornate hanging metal light fixture. Smaller rectangular fixed storefront windows flank the arcade, which provide display space fronting the street and within the portico. Cast stone panels with a wreath and garland designed relief, incorporating the carved letters "HF," decorate the space above the windows and additional square pilasters are distributed throughout the façade. The building has a flat roof with a shed roof finished with slate tiles at the front façade, giving it the appearance of a side-gabled roof when viewed from Colorado Boulevard. The shed roof has three projecting gabled dormers placed in a centered, equidistant organization, each with a pair of windows flanked by articulated pilasters. Decorative arched dentils are located along the roof eave. The building design reflects the Georgian Revival style with Neoclassical influences.

The east and west facades of the building are attached to the adjacent buildings and therefore are not visible from the exterior. The rear of the building is a simple façade with an asymmetrical composition. The rear is of brick construction and fenestration includes punched rectangular and square openings with fixed steel or metal frame windows and a ground floor secondary entrance.

Documented Changes to the Property:

The property has not undergone major exterior changes since it was originally built in 1926. Permit records indicate work completed to the property primarily consisted of upgrades and replacement of plumbing and electrical systems. A re-roofing was completed in 1956.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans:

The exterior of the building is in good condition, and it is currently occupied by an insurance agency. It originally housed Harry Fitzgerald's, a clothing store. No significant changes to the property are proposed at this time.

Historical Overview:

Pasadena Playhouse Historic District and Commercial Development¹:

The Pasadena Playhouse Historic District contains approximately 34 buildings which represent the eastward growth of the city's urban character and amenities during the 1920s and 1930s. The district is partially located along Colorado Boulevard, once the old Route 66 and a central ceremonial street since the City's beginning. A significant portion of the district runs along South El Molino Avenue, the home of the Pasadena Playhouse, a cultural and architectural focus of the district. Other buildings included in the district, which share common physical and historical characteristics, are located along nearby Green Street and Madison Avenue.

Pasadena's commercial and cultural center was concentrated downtown in what is now known as the Old Pasadena Historic District until the 1920s. spurred primarily by the construction of the nearby Civic Center, a nationally significant example of civic art in the "City Beautiful" style of the 1920s, that decade saw the business and financial community begin to move eastward along Colorado Boulevard. Retail and specialty stores migrated for proximity to the popular Hotel Maryland on Colorado Boulevard between Los Robles Avenue and Euclid Avenue, also on the eastern side of downtown. New cultural, religious, and residential facilities soon followed. The Pasadena Playhouse Historic District includes the most intact and contiguous collection of buildings which are representative of this "second wave" of growth in the City of Pasadena. The boundaries selected for the district relate to distinct changes in the visual character of the area, including the appearance of non-contributing (altered or recent) buildings and parking or vacant lots.

Within the context of the development of the Pasadena Playhouse and commercial district east of the Old Pasadena central district, Harry Fitzgerald's store was one of Pasadena's most exclusive men's shops for over 25 years, located at the subject property from 1926 until the late 1950s. The property is a contributor to the Pasadena Playhouse National Register Historic District. For more information, refer to Attachment E.

¹ Information taken from National Register of Historic Places Nomination form for the Pasadena Playhouse Historic District (24 Nov. 1993).

Georgian Revival Style²:

Staff has evaluated the architectural significance of the property according to the registration requirements outlined in the Georgian Revival sub-theme of the Survey LA Architecture and Engineering Historic Context Statement.³ The sub-theme context statement describes how the style gained in popularity in the greater Los Angeles region:

The Georgian Revival style recalls architecture of the Georgian period, which derives its name from the reigns of the Hanoverian kings, George I, II, and III, whose sovereignties collectively ran from 1714 to 1820. Georgian architecture refers to a style that was popular from approximately 1700 to 1780. It was influenced by the architecture of the Italian Renaissance and the work of sixteenth century Italian architect Andrea Palladio. Palladio's work emphasized classical proportions, symmetry, and order over building function, and Georgian architecture followed in his footsteps.

Georgian Revival architecture became popular after the Centennial Exposition in 1876 and the Columbian Exposition in 1896, which both brought eighteenth century and Colonial Revival architecture to the larger public. The style was popular among Los Angeles residents, many of whom had come from the East Coast and Midwest, where Georgian architecture was common. The Georgian Revival style was very similar in appearance to Early American Colonial Revival, which was popular during the same period. In contrast to Early American Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival tended to more accurately reproduce earlier colonial prototypes and their design features. The style is found in communities in the western portion of the city, including West Adams, Hancock Park, and Bel Air, where larger residences lent themselves to emulations of the eighteenth-century houses of the upper classes.

Georgian Revival buildings are generally clad in brick, two stories in height, and have symmetrical façades that are often five bays in width. They are rectangular in form with a hipped or gabled roof. The main entrance may be dominated by a pedimented projecting pavilion supported by pilasters or columns. Decorative elements may include a central dormer with a pediment. Windows are typically divided-light double-hung sash windows, and Palladian windows are also frequently seen.

The character-defining features of the Georgian Revival architecture are:

- Typically, two stories in height, with rectangular form and a hipped or gabled roof

² Information taken from the SurveyLA “Architecture and Engineering Historic Context Statement,” pp 9-11, accessed 20 Dec 2022. https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/d26d7637-d6da-4466-aa74-992d63a284dc/American%20Colonial%20Revival%2012-2-15_0.pdf

³ Although the City of Pasadena has developed a number of historic context statements based on architectural or thematic themes, none discuss the Georgian Revival style applied specifically to commercial buildings. SurveyLA provides an in-depth overview of the style within the context of Los Angeles; describes the character-defining features of the style; and outlines criteria for evaluating examples of the style for historical designation.

- Symmetrical façade, often five bays in width
- Commonly features brick exterior cladding
- Entry may be dominated by a pedimented projecting pavilion supported by pilasters or columns
- Other decorative elements may include a central dormer crowned by a pediment, and Palladian or divided-light double-hung sash windows

Neoclassical Style⁴:

Staff has evaluated the architectural significance of the property according to the registration requirements outlined in the Neoclassical sub-theme of the Survey LA Architecture and Engineering Historic Context Statement. The sub-theme context statement describes how the style gained in popularity in the greater Los Angeles region⁵:

Neoclassicism was a second revival of ancient Greek and Roman architectural forms at the end of the 19th century. Greek and Roman architectural forms in European and American architecture had been previously popular in the late 18th century and first half of the 19th century. This earlier revival arose from a renewed interest in classical antiquity following the discovery, exploration, and archaeological investigation of classical sites. It was particularly popular in the United States; however, the Greek Revival style had largely run its course by the 1860s. The return to classical architecture in the late 19th century arose from the École des Beaux-Arts and its instruction in ancient Greek and Roman architecture. At the time, the classical world was believed to represent the Golden Age of the Western world and was idolized in Europe and the United States. During this second revival, classical architectural forms were more accurately recreated due to improvements in printing technology and increasing travel abroad to see Greek and Roman architecture firsthand.

Because the Neoclassical style arose from the curriculum taught at the École des Beaux-Arts, it shares many of the same characteristics as the Beaux Art style. This is especially evident in the design of midrise office buildings from the period, which like Beaux Arts-style buildings, are often organized in three horizontal sections: base, shaft, and capital. The Neoclassical style is primarily distinguished by its simpler treatment of classical forms, features, and ornament. It applied Gilded Age opulence to the decorative elements of ancient Greek and Roman architecture admired by earlier American Colonial and Greek Revival designs. Hallmarks of the style are a rectangular building form, marked by double height front portico with Ionic or Corinthian columns (sometimes called a temple front), and a symmetrically balanced facade. Plain wall surfaces are not unusual, and they are not broken by projections, recessions, or sculpture. Dignified, severe, and unornamented, these buildings tended to favor the

⁴ Information taken from the SurveyLA “Architecture and Engineering Historic Context Statement,” pp 22-27, accessed 20 Dec 2022 https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/a5151e47-83da-41b7-ae95-dda56667848b/Beaux_Arts_Classicism_Neoclassicism_and_Italian_Renaissance_Revival_1895-1940.pdf

⁵ Although the City of Pasadena has developed a number of historic context statements based on architectural or thematic themes, none discuss the Neoclassical style applied specifically to commercial buildings. SurveyLA provides an in-depth overview of the style within the context of Los Angeles; describes the character-defining features of the style; and outlines criteria for evaluating examples of the style for historical designation.

Greek orders, Doric and Ionic, over the Roman. Colossal columns and colonnades and flat-headed windows also characterize the style...

Because the style originated from the École des Beaux-Arts, many of the architects and architectural firms most commonly associated with Beaux Arts Classicism are also associated with Neoclassicism, such as Richard Morris Hunt, Daniel H. Burnham, and McKim, Mead & White. John Russell Pope was an early 20th century architect who is also commonly associated with Neoclassicism in the United States. Pope is most famous for the National Archives Building completed in 1935, Jefferson Memorial completed in 1943, and National Gallery of Art completed in 1941, all in Washington, D.C.

Through architects trained at the École des Beaux-Arts or in the École curriculum, such as Julia Morgan, James W. Reid and Merritt J. Reid (Reid Brothers), as well as Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville (Bliss & Faville), Neoclassicism came to California. In Los Angeles, its popularity coincided with the construction booms between the 1890s and World War I and the 1920s and Great Depression. The style was applied to a variety of commercial and institution property types, symbolizing the developing urban and American identity of Los Angeles...

The character-defining features of the Neoclassical architecture are:

- Formal arrangement of architectural elements
- May range from two to fourteen stories in height
- Monumental in scale, often with pedimented porticos
- Parapets incorporating balustrades
- Represents an early or rare example of the style in the community in which it is located
- Smooth stone or masonry exteriors; stucco and clapboard in residential buildings
- Windows and doors typically linteled

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 a 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.

John Cyril Bennett & Fitch H. Haskell (1924-1934):

John Cyril Bennett was born in Hereford, Herefordshire, England in 1891 and moved to the U.S. in 1891 at 3 months old. His family resided in Chicago before relocating to California. Bennett attended the University of California, Berkeley, graduating with a degree in 1910. He worked as a draftsman for Sylvanus B. Marston Architects in Pasadena until 1914 and in 1914, he became principal of his own J. Cyril Bennett firm, which operated out of Pasadena until 1923. His partnership with Fitch Haskell spanned from approximately 1923/1924 through 1934. During this time, they collaborated with a number of local Los Angeles architects, including architect George E. Bergstrom, on the design of the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, completed in 1932. Post-

partnership with Haskell, Bennett re-opened his own firm once again out of Pasadena, which operated from 1935 until 1941. Separate from his professional life, Bennett held a number of other positions such as president of the 1st Trust and Savings Bank of Pasadena (1941-1956), member of the American Institute of Architects, Pasadena Chapter (c. 1955), and President of the Pasadena Tournament of Rose Association (1936). He was a member of a number of local organizations including the Pasadena Historical Society, Pioneer Club, Elk's Lodge, Pasadena Kiwanis Club, and a 32nd-degree Mason of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.

Fitch Harrison Haskell was born in Ashtabula, Ohio on October 30, 1883. He received a degree from Harvard University in 1905 and went on to graduate from the Ecole National des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France in 1911. Professionally, he began his career as a draftsman for McKim, Mead and White from 1912-1916. He later worked as a draftsman for Guy Lowell in 1916; became a partner with Godley and Haskell from 1916 to 1920; and later a partner and founder of the firm Bennett and Haskell, which operated in and around Pasadena from approximately 1923/1924 to 1934. After the dissolution of his partnership with Cyril Bennett, Haskell designed for several architectural offices in Southern California, including, Hunt and Chambers, Architects, Los Angeles, CA, William Templeton Johnson, Architect, San Diego, CA, Heitschmidt and Matcham, Architects, Los Angeles, CA, and Frederick Kennedy, Jr., Los Angeles, CA. He eventually became principal and founder of his own firm, Fitch H. Haskell, AIA, in Pasadena from around 1934 until 1956. Haskell was a member of the Pasadena Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1955 and served as Treasurer of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for one year. He served as Chair of the Preservation of Historic Buildings Committee, Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

During their partnership, Bennett & Haskell designed a number of local commissions including the Dr. R.E. Campbell Store (1924), the Central National Bank (1926), Date Corporation of America Offices and Warehouse (1925), All Saints' Episcopal Church #2 Parish House and Rectory (1929-1930), and the William Leithed House (1924).

ANALYSIS:

The Harry Fitzgerald building at 489 E. Colorado 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 building at 489 E. Colorado Boulevard is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Georgian style commercial building with Neoclassical influences, designed by significant architects Bennett & Haskell. The building has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building is in its original location.
- Design: The building retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its symmetrical massing, exterior stucco cladding, original fenestration and exterior materials, roof form and dormers, recessed entry and display windows, and Tuscan columns.
- Setting: The surrounding commercial developments remain intact.
- Materials: The building retains its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of the Georgian and Neoclassical styles applied to a commercial structure, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Georgian and Neoclassical architectural styles and evokes the feeling of commercial and retail history of Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 489 E. Colorado Boulevard retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with early 20th century commercial development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the property 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
- Symmetrical massing
- Flat roof form with shed-roofed front, evoking a gabled roof design
- Three equidistant dormers with front gable roof forms, pilasters and casement windows
- Decorative arched dentils below roof eave
- Stucco cladding
- Centralized, deeply recessed portico with cast stone Tuscan columns
- Square pilasters
- Cast bronze double doors and surround
- Steel, fixed, floor to ceiling multi-light street-facing windows within the portico
- Coffered entry ceiling with relief plaster ornament and light fixture
- Rectangular, steel, fixed display windows facing the street and within the portico
- Cast stone panels with wreath and garland designed relief and large stylized “HF” above display windows

CONCLUSION:

The building at 489 E. Colorado Boulevard qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion C as an intact, locally significant example of a Georgian style commercial building with Neoclassical influences, designed by local notable architects Bennett & Haskell.

Respectfully Submitted,



for Jennifer Paige, AICP
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Attachments:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Application & Historical Documentation (Building Description Blank; Research)
- C. Current Photographs
- D. Effects of Historic Designation
- E. Pasadena Playhouse National Register Historic District Nomination