

# Agenda Report

March 13, 2023

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department

**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HARRY FITZGERALD BUILDING AT 489 E. COLORADO BLVD. AVENUE 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) pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances;
2. Find that the Harry Fitzgerald Building at 489 E. Colorado Boulevard meets Criterion C as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2.c because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Georgian Revival and Neoclassical architectural styles and represents the work of local notable architectural firm Bennett & Haskell, whose work is of significance to the City;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 489 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 489 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On January 17, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the Harry Fitzgerald Building at 489 E. Colorado Boulevard as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### 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 exterior that faces south onto Colorado Boulevard. Cast stone Tuscan columns form a portico, separating a deeply recessed entry from the sidewalk. 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. 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, 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.

### Georgian Revival Style<sup>1</sup>:

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

For further information regarding the Georgian Revival architectural style, please refer to Attachment B.

### Neoclassical Style<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/d26d7637-d6da-4466-aa74-992d63a284dc/American%20Colonial%20Revival%2012-2-15_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/a5151e47-83da-41b7-ae95-dda56667848b/Beaux_Arts_Classicism_Neoclassicism_and_Italian_Renaissance_Revival_1895-1940.pdf)

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 region<sup>4</sup> and identifies primary character defining features of the style that include rectangular building form, marked by a 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 Greek orders, Doric and Ionic, over the Roman. Colossal columns and colonnades and flat-headed windows also characterize the style. For further information regarding the Neoclassical architectural style, please refer to Attachment B.

John Cyril Bennett and 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.

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 to 1934.

The partnership between Bennett and Haskell spanned from approximately 1923 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. For further information regarding John Cyril Bennett and Fitch H. Haskell, please refer to Attachment B

**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:

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<sup>4</sup> 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.



[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 Blvd. is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Georgian Revival/Neoclassical style commercial building and the work of 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 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the Harry Fitzgerald Building retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The period of significance for the building would be 1926, the year of construction. The commercial 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

The commercial building itself is the only contributing feature to this 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:**

The proposed designation qualifies for a categorical exemption pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines. Class 8 exemptions consist 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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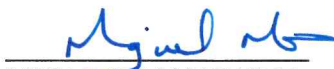
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Attachments (5):

- A. Application & Supplemental Research
- B. Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report (dated January 17, 2023), without attachments
- C. Vicinity Map
- D. Current Photographs
- E. Effects of Historic Designation