



Planning & Community Development Department

Application for Landmark Designation

315 North Pasadena Avenue

Roosevelt School

City Council
June 2, 2025





Background

Planning & Community Development Department

- Two applications submitted by Rene H. Gonzalez, a Pasadena resident, for landmark designation of Roosevelt School.
- Property is owned by the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), which does not support the application.
- Property is 5 acres in size.
- Property contains multiple buildings constructed between 1953 and 2014.
- The building under consideration for landmark designation is the main original building constructed in 1953 with additions constructed in 1971-1972.



Aerial View

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1972

2003

2014

1953

1972

Research Center

Rosemont Ave

N Pasadena Ave

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Criteria for Landmark Designation

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- A landmark shall meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - A. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the city.
 - B. It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the city.
 - C. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period of method of construction, or represents the work of a(n) architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or possesses artistic values of significance to the City.
 - D. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important locally in prehistory or history.
- These criteria are required to be applied in accordance with National Register of Historic Places bulletins for evaluating historic properties, including retaining required aspects of integrity.



Original Application Background

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- **January 31, 2024** – Application for landmark designation submitted.
- The application included a report from architectural historian Debi Howell-Ardila:
 - Found it to be eligible for landmark designation under Criterion A for its contributions to the broad patterns of educational/institutional development in Pasadena.
- **April 1, 2024** – Staff issued a letter determining the property to be ineligible for landmark designation.
- **April 3, 2024** – Historic Preservation Commissioner Carol Potter initiated a request for a call for review of the decision.
- **July 16, 2024** – Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted 5 to 2 to deny the request to call the item for review and upheld the staff determination.



Current Application Background

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- **September 10, 2024** – New application for landmark designation submitted by Rene H. Gonzalez, a Pasadena resident.
- The application included an updated report from architectural historian Debi Howell-Ardila:
 - > Per the PMC, 12-months must lapse or new information must be submitted to accept a new application.
 - > No new information was provided regarding Criterion A, B, or D. Therefore the previous decision from April 1, 2024 still stands.
 - > New information was provided under Criterion C - as an example of a Mid-Century Modern educational facility in a finger/cluster plan.
- **November 8, 2024** – Staff issued a letter determining the property to be ineligible for landmark designation under Criterion C.
- **November 12, 2024** – Historic Preservation Commissioner Juan de la Cruz initiated a request for a call for review of the decision.
- **February 18, 2025** – HPC voted to call the staff decision for review.



Historic Preservation Decision

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- **April 15, 2025** – HPC heard the Call for Review.
- Voted 5 to 4 to overturn Staff's determination and recommend that City Council designate the Roosevelt School as a landmark under Criterion C.
- The HPC found the building to have distinctive characteristics of a Mid-Century Modern style educational facility.



Evaluation Framework

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- Criterion C: “It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period of method of construction, or represents the work of a(n) architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or possesses artistic values of significance to the City.”
- Evaluated as example of Mid-Century Modern style educational facility with a finger/cluster plan.
- Based on LAUSD Historic Context Statement.



Character-Defining Features

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- **Mid-Century Modern style**
 - > Horizontal orientation
 - > One or two stories
 - > Flat or shed roof
 - > Stucco, brick or concrete exteriors
 - > Lack of ornament
 - > Generous expanses of fenestration (windows)
 - > Extensive sheltered exterior corridors supported by posts, piers or pipe columns



Character-Defining Features

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- **Finger/Cluster Plan**
 - > Finger-like wings arranged on axis
 - > Indoor-outdoor connections to classrooms through the incorporation of patios, courtyards, and outdoor canopied corridors
- **Integrity consideration**
 - > New additions should not interfere with or serve as a visual impairment to the designed connections between buildings, in particular classroom wings, and adjacent outdoor patios and spaces.



Property Details

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- Date of Construction:
 - > 1953
- Architects:
 - > Keith Marston & Eugene Weston, Jr.
- Original Owner:
 - > PUSD
- Original Use:
 - > Educational facility (closed school in 2019/2020)
- Architectural Style:
 - > Mid-Century Modern
 - Finger/Cluster Plan

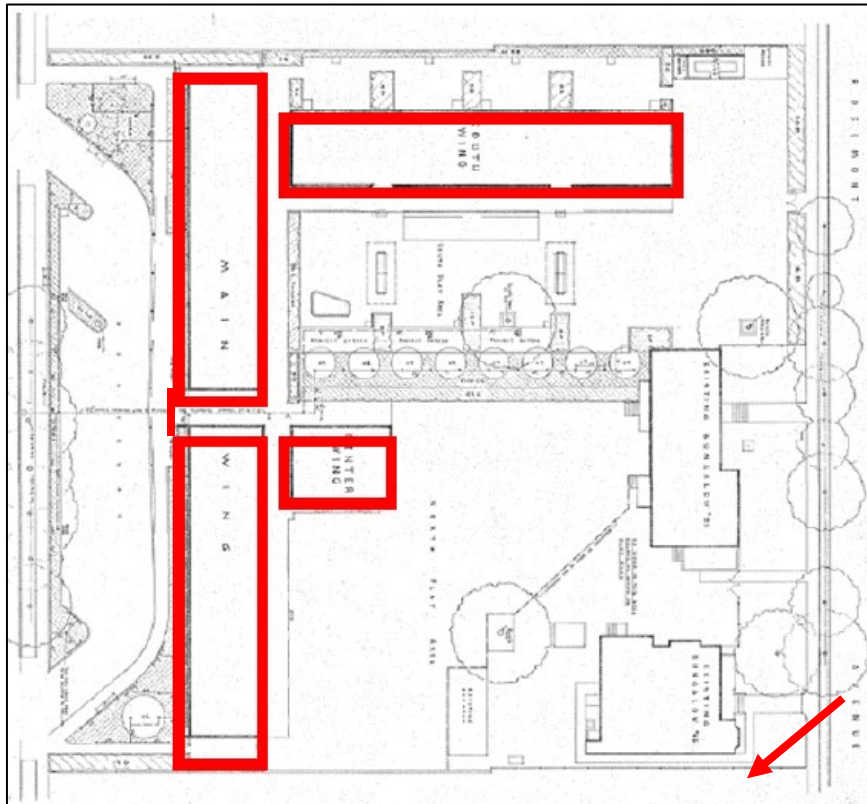




Building Alterations

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1953 Original Footprint



Altered Footprint with 1971-1972 Additions





Alterations: Additions

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1972 Additions
and Enclosures

Back of
original
main wing



1972 Additions
and Enclosures

Back of
original
main wing

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Alterations: Additions

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Back of original
Main Wing
Exterior Wall (now
enclosed)

1972
Addition/Infill

Original Central
Wing Exterior Wall &
Door (now
enclosed)

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Alterations: Main Entry

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Rendering of the
Original Entrance

Current Entrance





Alterations: Removal of Features

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Original Elevation
Showing Louvers



Current Elevation
with Louvers
Removed

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Alterations: Replacement of Features

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Elevation Showing
Replaced Doors

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Staff's Analysis

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- Staff finds the property is not eligible for designation under Criterion C:
 - > The property does not embody distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or possess artistic values of significance to the City.
 - Original buildings have undergone substantial alterations since the 1950s that have disrupted the original finger/cluster-plan of the facility.
 - Significant features and spatial relationships that define the property type have been eliminated or modified.
 - Alterations to original facility are in conflict with integrity considerations noted in LAUSD Historic Context Statement.



Staff Recommendation

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- Per CEQA Article 18, Section 15270, CEQA does not apply to projects which a public agency rejects or disapproves;
- Find that the Roosevelt School at 315 N. Pasadena Avenue does not meet any of the four Criteria for landmark designation pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2; and
- Disapprove the application for landmark designation.



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Application for Landmark Designation
315 North Pasadena Avenue
Roosevelt School

City Council
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City Council Approval

Planning & Community Development Department

The City Council:

- Finds 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 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
- Finds that the Roosevelt School at 315 N. Pasadena Avenue meets Criteria C for landmark designation;
- Adopts a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation;
- Authorizes the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation; and
- Directs the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.



Landmark Designation Process

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- Landmark application may be submitted by the property owner, a member of the Council or HPC, or anyone who lives in the City.
- Staff reviews and makes a determination of eligibility or ineligibility.
- If eligible, HPC reviews and may disapprove or recommend Council approve the application.
- Staff or HPC determination may be appealed or called for review to next higher authority, which shall conduct a public hearing to review the application.



Current Photographs

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- Location: The building remains on its original site and therefore retains integrity of location.
- Design: The building has been substantially altered by the 1972-1973 addition that interrupted the finger/cluster-plan arrangement of buildings, eliminated features of the building facades that were enclosed within the addition and removed an original outdoor courtyard between the two original wings and to which the wings were originally oriented with direct outdoor access to them from the classrooms in the wings. As a result, the building no longer retains integrity of design.
- Setting: The site has been altered with the addition of multiple buildings and reconfiguration of outdoor spaces. In addition, the surrounding neighborhood has been disconnected from the school by the construction of the 210 and 134 freeways that eliminated much of the original neighborhood surrounding the school. As a result, the building no longer retains integrity of setting.



Integrity

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- Materials: The building retains its original exterior brick wall, roof and window materials, but has been altered by the removal of shading louvers, replacement of doors, replacement of glass entry doors with solid walls, and additions that have converted previously exterior walls to interior walls, including removal of windows.
- Workmanship: The building has lost much of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of Mid-Century Modern school design and construction, and therefore no longer retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: As a result of the additions and alterations made to the building, it no longer expresses the characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern architectural style and finger/cluster plan that is characteristic of school buildings from this period.
- Association: This aspect of integrity does not apply to Criterion C.

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Staff's Analysis: Criterion A

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- Staff determined that the property is not eligible for designation under **Criterion A**:
 - > The original report submitted by the applicant argued that the property is eligible under Criterion A for its specific construction as a school for children with disabilities and incorporated physical features that specifically addressed the needs of students with disabilities that it served before local, state and federal policies were developed to ensure equal access of educational facilities for students with disabilities.
 - > To be eligible under Criterion A, the property must have an important association with the event or “historic trends.”
 - > The submitted report lacked evidence to demonstrate that the property had direct influence on or was associated with events that impacted the educational system's construction methodologies for accommodating students with disabilities on a local, state or federal level.



Staff's Analysis: Criterion B

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- Staff determined that the property is not eligible for designation under **Criterion B:**
 - > The applicant's report stated it did not appear eligible under criterion B and did not assess the property for eligibility under Criterion B. Based on staff's research and assessment, the school does not appear to be eligible under Criterion B. The original and current owner of Roosevelt Elementary School is the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD). Research has not indicated that the school is directly associated with works of individuals within PUSD that have made significant contributions to local history.
 - > In addition, there is not enough documentation that has been recorded to-date to demonstrate if any of the school's attendees, faculty or staff were directly affected or influenced by their attendance at or employment by the school such that their contributions influenced local, state or federal history or that the school facilities would be the best representation of their contributions.



Staff's Analysis: Criterion C

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- Staff determined that the property is not eligible for designation under **Criterion C**:
 - > The school was originally comprised of 3 buildings separated by covered, open-air walkways. The school originally incorporated features indicative of the Mid-Century Modern style, including one-story massing, brick veneer exterior, long axial classroom wings with a roughly L-shaped footprint, little applied ornament, generous expanses of glazing, low pitched or flat roof forms, and wide eaves and cantilevered canopies supported by pipe columns. It also originally exhibited character-defining features of the modern, functionalist school plant property type, including single-loaded classrooms arranged in finger-like wings arranged along a central axis, classrooms opening directly onto patios/play areas, a unified and nonhierarchical site plan, unified campus design of buildings and landscaped courtyards, patios and terraces adjacent to classroom wings, and outdoor corridors.
 - > However, numerous alterations have occurred since the school's initial construction which have compromised its overall integrity. Most significantly by 1972, an addition was constructed that expanded the Center Wing to the west and to the south, joining it to the South Wing. This addition interrupted the original finger/cluster-plan arrangement of buildings and removed an original outdoor courtyard between the two original wings.



Staff's Analysis: Criterion D

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- Staff determined that the property is not eligible for designation under **Criterion D**:
 - > There are no known or likely archeological resources on the site. It is not at the location of likely early pre-historic habitation.