



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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October 10, 2016

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend the City Council designate the four properties located at 340-342, 344-346, 348-350 and 352-356 E. Third Street (Art Exchange), as a local Historical Landmark. (District 2)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach – Development Services Department
333 W. Ocean Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. HP16-454)

THE REQUEST

The City requests that the Cultural Heritage Commission review the background materials and recommend that the City Council designate the four buildings located at 340-342, 344-346, 348-350 and 352-356 E. Third Street, collectively known as the Art Exchange, as a local Historical Landmark.

BACKGROUND

The four subject properties, located on the south side of E. Third Street between Long Beach Boulevard and Elm Avenue (Exhibit A – Location Map) are developed with four contiguous structures that are independent properties, but commonly owned and operated as the Art Exchange. Collectively, these buildings make up this entire portion of Third Street. The corner building at 352-356 E. Third Street is the more prominent of the buildings, having the most extensive street frontage. The three westerly buildings are 25 foot wide, face Third Street, and are built lot line to lot line.

The four virtually contiguous structures are currently owned by the City's Successor Agency. In November 2015, the City Council designated the property as surplus and authorized its sale. In July, 2016, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute a purchase and sale agreement. As part of the agreement, the buyer will convey the four subject properties to the Art Exchange, a local non-profit organization that promotes the arts. The Art Exchange plans to restore the building and use the

space for gallery exhibitions, artist workspace, and art-focused programs (Exhibit B – Art Exchange Letter).

ANALYSIS

352-356 E. Third Street

The building located at 352-356 E. Third Street, is a commercial building constructed in 1924. Archival records and photographs from 1925 indicate the original building was designed by the architecture firm of Dodd and Richards who were well known for their Beaux-Arts and Romanesque Revival style buildings in Los Angeles including the Pacific Mutual Insurance Building, The Brock and Company Jewelry Store, the Boyle Heights Branch library and the Heron Building (Exhibit C – Historic Context Report). While the building exterior is altered considerably, building drawings from 1933 show the original building to be a Gothic Revival influenced style with steeply-pitched false decorative gables along both street facades; gothic window tracery; and exterior wall surfaces with decorative relief, and tile and art stone detailing (Exhibit D – Plans and Photographs). The angled corner entry with the centered blank wall over the entry for signage formed a very prominent building façade facing the intersection of the Third Street and Elm Avenue.

Currently, the building exterior has little remaining architectural features visible from public view. When compared to the 1925 photograph and 1933 plans, the visible building alterations include replacement of the storefront doors and windows, and plaster over all the exterior wall surfaces. Without further investigative work, it's unclear whether the decorative wall surface features, false gables, or other architectural features remain. While the building has been substantially altered, staff finds the structure could still be eligible for landmark designation since the structure is associated with significant events in history including the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. Building and Safety Bureau records for this property include plans to repair building damage from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake. The structure also has significance since the original building and the 1933 plans were designed by the notable architecture firm of Dodd and Richards.

340-342, 346-344 and 348-350 E. Third Street

The three westerly buildings were all constructed in 1924 in the Brick Commercial Vernacular style which is simple and mostly devoid of decorative ornamentation. Building heights for this style typically vary from one to three stories and are often attached to abutting buildings. The use of "face" brick is commonly utilized for the public facade and rougher brick for the sides and rear. Bricks, painted bricks and tiles are often arranged in patterns to provide some ornamentation over the windows.

The three buildings facing Third Street are relatively intact structures. These three contiguous buildings all share characteristic features including the recessed entries to the stores, display windows set atop tile or brick, "face" brick used for the front façade. The building at 348-350 is two stories and historically utilized as a mixed-use

commercial and residential building. This building has a brick inlaid pattern over the windows that provides modest ornamentation. The building at 344-346 features glass tile over the storefront and entry. The building at 340-342 E Third Street features the brick pattern over the storefronts and “face” brick.

As a Vernacular style, these buildings can be found throughout American downtowns of this 1920s period. These buildings represent a transition in commercial centers from simple wood-frame commercial buildings to more permanent brick modest construction.

If the Commission were to designate the properties as a historic landmark, the designation would ensure that any future alterations meet the Secretary of Interior’s Standards. Further, the designation facilitates potential financial incentives to support rehabilitation of the building. In the case of a substantially altered structure with missing architectural features, Standard No. 6 would apply which states “...*Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence*”. In the event that the original historic building features no longer remain under the exterior plaster, or cannot be salvaged, the building plans and pictorial evidence provide substantial information about the original building style and architectural details in order to replace missing features.

PERMIT HISTORY

A records search of building permits is standard research for historic landmark designation. These records are valuable for purposes of identifying architects, contractors, craftsmen or other historically significant persons affiliated with the construction of a resource.

For the property at 352-356 E. Third Street original building permits were available, but not the original building plans. However, the 1933 building plans for the property are on file with the Building and Safety Bureau. Building permits for the Brick Vernacular buildings were on file for each of the three buildings, but not the original or early plans for the building.

NAVY MEMORIAL HERITAGE GRANT FOR BUILDING RESTORATION

The future owners plan to file a grant application with the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association to secure funding for restoration of the buildings. While the grant application is not a consideration for the Commission, landmark designation of the property would make the property eligible to apply by the October 2016 grant deadline. Landmark designation of the property is an eligibility requirement in order to apply for a Navy Memorial Heritage Association grant.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance contains four criteria, any one of which may be used as a basis for designation, associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A), associated with the lives of

persons important to the City's past (Criterion B), embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values (Criterion C), or has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history (Criterion D).

The subject property is eligible for Long Beach Historic Landmark designation under Criteria A and C. The building is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the City's history. The building at 352-356 E. Third Street was damaged during the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. Evidence of the damage is documented in building plans from the same year of the earthquake. While plans or other evidence of damage to the other three buildings was not found, records indicate the structures were built in 1924 and survived the earthquake. These buildings represent the City's history that was both tied to a significant event that resulted made a lasting contribution to the City's broad patterns of history. The Period of Significance (1933) is important as a citywide effort of building reconstruction in the City followed the earthquake.

The building is also eligible for designation under Criteria C of the Cultural Heritage ordinance. The buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of a Gothic Revival and Brick Vernacular Commercial styles. The building is also associated with the notable architecture firm of Dodd and Richards. The structure at 352-356 has evidence in plan drawings of unique architectural features and the Brick Commercial buildings are Vernacular style buildings associated with this period of development. The buildings collectively convey a period of 1920s commercial development in the City's downtown area.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the landmark nomination and has determined that it meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code, Section 2.63.050 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code which state that a cultural resource qualifies for designation as a Landmark if it retains integrity and meets one or more of the four findings. Staff supports the nomination, and finds that the nomination meets Criteria A and C of the Cultural Heritage ordinance for landmark designation.

This application includes four legally independent properties that will have a collective designation as a landmark. Recommendation to approve a landmark designation for these buildings is based on their collective use as an arts complex for programming, exhibitions and other activities related to the Art Exchange organization's mission. The basis of the recommendation to consider all the properties collectively is also due to the fact that the four buildings are virtually contiguous, make-up the entire block face and convey the same period of early 1920s commercial development.

The proposed nomination is complimentary to the commercial district and surrounding neighborhood. The buildings are currently located within the PD-30 Downtown Area, an urban area with a mixture of commercial, offices and residential uses. The buildings are historically significant because of their association with the Long Beach Earthquake that

resulted in the reconstruction of several damaged buildings. The structure at 340-342 3rd Street is also significant as an architectural example designed by Dodd and Richards. The three Brick Vernacular buildings are significant because they reflect a simple commercial period building style that is representative of 1920s commercial development. The buildings also convey the historic character and period in which they were constructed. The designation of the building as a historic landmark protects it from inappropriate alterations and raises awareness of the City's history. The nomination for Landmark status is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Historic Preservation Goal of protecting historic resources from inappropriate alterations.

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Commission make a recommendation to the City Council to approve the nomination.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on September 21, 2016. As of this date no letters have been received.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the 15331 Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), environmental review is not required for actions taken for the preservation or restoration of historic structures.

Respectfully submitted,



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER



LINDA F. TATUM, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

LFT:CK:AP

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
Exhibit B – Letter from Art Exchange, September 29, 2016
Exhibit C – Historic Context Report –House Stories, July 2016
Exhibit D – Photographs & Plans
Exhibit E – Findings