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March 11, 2019

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

TOM BERGIN'S; 840 SOUTH FAIRFAX AVENUE; CHC-2018-5803-HCM; ENV-2018-5804-CE

At its meeting of **March 7, 2019**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the Tom Bergin's in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council:

1. **Determined** that the proposed designation is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
2. **Determined** that the property conforms with the definition of a Monument pursuant to Section 22.171.7 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code;
3. **Recommended** that the City Council consider the Tom Bergin's for inclusion in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments; and
4. **Adopted** the attached findings as the findings of the Commission.

The Commission vote was as follows:

Moved: Milofsky
Seconded: Kanner
Ayes: Barron, Buelna, Kennard

Vote: 5 – 0

Etta Armstrong, Commission Executive Assistant I
Cultural Heritage Commission

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject property to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Time for Council to Act: The Commission action is hereby transmitted to the City Council for consideration. Pursuant to Section 22.171.10(f) of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Council may approve or disapprove in whole or in part an application or initiation for a proposed designation of a Monument. The Council shall act in 90-days of the public hearing held before the Commission on the proposed designation. The City Council may unilaterally extend the 90-day time limit to act for a maximum of 15 days for good cause. With written consent of the owner, the time for the City Council to act may be extended by up to an additional 60 days. If the Council does not act on the application or initiation within this specified time limit, the application or initiation to designate a Monument shall be deemed to have been denied.

Enclosures: Findings

FINDINGS

- Tom Bergin's "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the long-time location of Tom Bergin's, a business that bears a significant association with the commercial identity of Los Angeles.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon), building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community;
2. Is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age.

SUMMARY

Tom Bergin's is a 1949 two-story commercial building located at 840 South Fairfax Avenue between 8th Street and San Vicente Boulevard, situated on the cusp of the Miracle Mile and Carthay neighborhoods of central Los Angeles. Designed in the Tudor Revival architectural style, the subject property was commissioned by attorney-turned-restaurantier Tom Bergin. Originally named Tom Bergin's Old Horseshoe Tavern and Thoroughbred Club, Tom Bergin's opened its doors in 1936 at 6110 Wilshire Boulevard and moved to its present-day location on South Fairfax Avenue in 1949. It remained in near continuous operation as a restaurant and tavern until its closure in 2018. In business for over 80 years, Tom Bergin's is entitled with the second-oldest liquor license in Los Angeles and is one of Los Angeles' oldest bars and restaurants.

Rectangular in plan, the subject property is of wood frame construction and clad in various materials including clinker bricks, textured stucco, wood lap siding, and wood board-and-batten siding. The roof consists of multiple volumes, but most of the building is capped by a steeply pitched, cross-gabled roof that is clad with composition shingles and features shallow eaves, bargeboards, and glazed dormers. The west elevation is capped by a steeply-pitched shed roof clad with composition shingles. The south elevation is capped by a flat roof. The primary, north-facing elevation fronts the adjacent parking lot and is asymmetrically composed. Near the center of this elevation is a jettied projection that features a prominent front gable and is framed by decorative wood brackets. Within the gable are three tall, narrow multi-lite wood hopper windows that are surmounted by transoms. Other fenestration on this elevation consists of multi-lite wood hopper windows, all of which feature stained glass and metal grilles. Windows located to the east of the center gable are arranged singularly; those to the west are arranged in pairs and are framed by a continuous sill course. The main entrance is located beneath the center gable and consists of a single, paneled wood door. The west, street-facing elevation

features a large, jettied gable and another entrance consisting of a single wood door. Fenestration consists of paired wood casement windows glazed with stained rondel glass. Adjacent to the parking lot is a freestanding pole sign, and a second freestanding pole sign styled in the shape of a shamrock is located to the south of the building. Interior features include brick floors, exposed wood ceiling beams, burnished wood wall panels, wood doors, built-in wood casework, a brick fireplace, and a large horseshoe-shaped cocktail bar.

The subject property has undergone several alterations over the years that include repair due to fire damage in 1983; the construction of a 335-square foot addition at the rear (east) of the building, and the relocation of the primary entrance in 2012; and the replacement of some doors, the addition of two glazed dormers to the south elevation, the replacement of diamond-paned glazing with stained rondel glass on the west-facing windows, and multiple interior modifications in 2013.

SurveyLA, the citywide historic resources survey, identified the subject property as individually eligible for listing under the local designation program as the long-term location of Tom Bergin's restaurant.

DISCUSSION

Tom Bergin's meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the long-time location of Tom Bergin's, a business that bears a significant association with the commercial identity of Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles and elsewhere, well-established and long-lived businesses, such as Tom Bergin's, take on important social qualities and over time, they often organically mature into iconic and revered cultural institutions. Their endurance becomes ingrained into a community's collective memory and plays an integral role in defining a community's sense of cultural and commercial identity, and fosters a sense of pride for the area or community in which one lives. From 1936 to 2018, Tom Bergin's remained in near-continuous operation as a restaurant and tavern. Over the course of its eight decades in business, Tom Bergin's became known for signature traditions that include Irish coffee and Saint Patrick's Day celebrations. The business's loyal following through the years is evinced by the thousands of decorative cardboard shamrocks that cover the restaurant's ceiling and bear names of regular patrons, including many Hollywood celebrities such as Cary Grant and Ronald Reagan. Tom Bergin's is considered a legacy business and a beloved community institution, earning it a reputation as one of Los Angeles's most iconic bar establishments.

While the applicant argues that the subject property also "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" as an excellent example of a commercial building designed in the Tudor Revival architectural style, staff finds that the property does not meet this criterion. Although the building retains original elements such as the steeply-pitched, cross-gabled roof, stucco and brick cladding, and multi-lite casement windows typical of the style, the subject property is not a unique or outstanding example of the Tudor Revival style. The Tudor Revival style is applied to the subject property in a simplified manner. Other more exemplary properties in the Tudor Revival style that are already locally designated include the Raphael Residence (1903, HCM #87), the Furlong House (1910, HCM #678), the Aberdeen House (1926, HCM #1171), Oliver Flats (1927, HCM #929), and the Sherwood House (1929, HCM #1026).

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists 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 protection of the environment.*”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.*”

The designation of Tom Bergin’s as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2018-5804-CE was prepared on January 22, 2019.

BACKGROUND

On November 1, 2018, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. In accordance with LAAC 22.171.10, on December 7, 2018, the owner’s representative requested a 30-day extension to the time for the Commission to act. On December 13, 2018, a subcommittee of the Commission consisting of Commissioners Kanner and Barron visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources. On January 2, 2019, the owner’s representative requested an additional 30-day extension to the time for the Commission to act.