

AGFA ANSCO CORPORATION BUILDING

FINDINGS

(Adopted by the Cultural Heritage Commission on September 20, 2018)

FINDINGS

- The Agfa Ansco Corporation Building “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an excellent example of a 1930s industrial building in the entertainment industry support services area of Hollywood.
- The Agfa Ansco Corporation Building “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of Art Deco industrial architecture in Hollywood.

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

The Agfa Ansco Corporation Building is a one-story commercial building with a two-and-a-half story tower located at 6424 Santa Monica Boulevard at the southeast corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Cole Avenue in Hollywood. Built in 1937, the subject property was designed by architect T. H. Pettit in the Art Deco architectural style with Streamline Moderne influences. It was constructed for the Agfa Ansco Corporation, a producer of photographic film, paper, and cameras, which occupied the building from 1937 until 1959.

Rectangular in plan, the building is of brick and reinforced concrete construction with smooth stucco cladding. The roof is flat with a raised parapet wall. At the center of the tower on northwest corner of the building there is a stepped decorative feature accented by incised geometric patterns. The primary entrance is centered at the ground floor level of the tower and consists of a fully glazed metal door with a single-lite transom and a simple decorative stucco surround. Above the door are two dentilled bands and rounded metal signage. Above the signage, there are two pairs of multi-lite steel sash casement windows with fixed multi-lite transoms and two smooth circular medallions. Separating the first and second levels there are decorative bas relief spandrel panels with an Egyptian-inspired floral motif. In two of the three bays, there is a multi-light steel sash window at the second level. The elevations are further ornamented by zig-zag detailing, incised geometric ornament, and stylized bas relief medallions depicting scrolls, scales, and sheaves of wheat. Fenestration includes single-lite transom windows, multi-lite steel sash casement windows with fixed multi-lite transoms, single-lite metal display windows, and multi-lite steel sash windows.

Film production began in Hollywood in 1911, and quickly grew into a significant economic force. As the popularity of motion pictures grew, more physical facilities related to motion picture production were constructed in Hollywood. In 1919, the City established a series of industrial zones specifically designated for motion picture use. The largest and most significant of these, containing over 750 entertainment-related industrial and commercial properties, was oriented around the intersection of Santa Monica Boulevard and Highland Avenue near major studios including Paramount Pictures, Warner Brothers, RKO, Columbia, and United Artists. This industrial area was developed from multiple tracts and provided studio support services dating to the 1920s such as prop houses, costume houses, laundry plants, production offices, film laboratories and processing plants, film vaults, warehouses, and vendors for equipment. It remains a significant collection of these resources, many of which are still in operation.

The subject property has undergone limited alterations over the years that include the installation of security bars, and the infill of four window openings, all at unknown dates.

SurveyLA, the citywide historic resources survey, identified the subject property as individually eligible for listing under national, state, and local designation programs as an excellent example of Art Deco industrial architecture in Hollywood and as an excellent example of a 1930s industrial building in the entertainment industry support services area of Hollywood.

DISCUSSION

The Agfa Ansco Corporation Building meets two 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 an excellent example of a 1930s industrial building in the entertainment industry support services area of Hollywood, and it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of Art Deco industrial architecture in Hollywood.

The motion picture industry played, and continues to play, a significant role in the economic and cultural development of Los Angeles, and Hollywood movie studios and their accompanying support services that make up the entertainment industry are significant assets to the region. For as long as the entertainment industry has existed, so, too, has the necessity for supplies and services which support its activities and operations. By the late 1920s, motion picture support services, such as those provided by the Agfa Ansco Corporation, operated almost exclusively out of Hollywood, and operations continued to flourish throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. The Agfa Ansco Corporation, which occupied the subject property for over 20 years, specialized in manufacturing photographic equipment and goods—a vital service to the film industry. Although the company moved from the 6424 Santa Monica Boulevard location, the building continued to house motion picture-related businesses through the 1970s and stands to reflect the history of the entertainment industry in Hollywood.

The Agfa Ansco Corporation Building reflects the execution of the Art Deco architectural style at the height of its popularity. The building’s smooth stucco cladding, multi-lite steel casement windows, centered tower, and emphasis on verticality are all reflective of the style. Other distinguishing features include zig-zag geometric ornamentation, Egyptian-inspired floral motifs, and decorative metal stair railings. Despite interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

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 the Agfa AnSCO Corporation Building 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-2018-3622-CE was prepared on August 28, 2018.

BACKGROUND

On July 19, 2018, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. On August 23, 2018, Commissioner Kanner visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources.