

FRED C. THOMSON BUILDING
6528-6540 West Sunset Boulevard
CHC-2019-3115-HCM
ENV-2019-3116-CE

FINDINGS

(As Amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on August 15, 2019)

- The Fred C. Thomson Building “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; [and] represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an excellent and intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival commercial architecture in Hollywood, and a noteworthy work of master architects Henry L. Gogerty and Carl Jules Weyl.
- The Fred C. Thomson Building “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” for its connection to film actor Fred C. Thomson and ventriloquist Edgar Bergen.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Fred C. Thomson Building meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent and intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival commercial architecture in Hollywood. The building’s smooth stucco wall cladding, multi-lite wood casement windows, and hipped red-tiled roof are all reflective of the style. Other distinguishing features include the interior courtyard, ornamental cutouts on the exterior walls, arched window openings, and decorative wrought iron features. Despite interior and minor exterior alterations, the subject property retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

The Fred C. Thomson Building also “represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as a noteworthy work of master architects Henry L. Gogerty and Carl Jules Weyl. Although Weyl only briefly practiced architecture professionally, he designed a number of buildings in Los Angeles, including the Gaylord Apartments and the York Boulevard State Bank Building (HCM #581). Individually, Gogerty had a successful architectural career, during which he designed more than 350 schools and industrial buildings throughout Southern California, and he developed a system of gliding acoustical walls widely utilized in classrooms. Weyl and Gogerty’s two-year partnership produced a number of well-known Hollywood-area commercial buildings, including the Hollywood Playhouse (aka El Capitan Theatre), Palace Theater, the Baine Studio Building, and the Shane Building, all of which are listed as contributors to the National Register Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment District. The subject property is representative of the duo’s artistically complementary partnership.

Furthermore, the subject property “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” for its connection to film actor Fred C. Thomson and ventriloquist Edgar Bergen. While Thomson passed away just a year after the property was commissioned, this is the only known extant building that is associated with Thomson; his home, “Enchanted Hill” designed by Wallace Neff, was demolished in 2004. In addition, Bergen’s variety shows featuring a dummy named Charlie McCarthy spanned nearly six decades, beginning around 1920. Bergen and Charlie starred in radio shows from May 1937 until July 1956, starting with an 11-year run on “The Chase and Sanborn Hour.” In 1949, soon

after Bergen purchased the subject property, he began a new show entitled “The Charlie McCarthy Show” that was broadcasted from a studio in the building intermittently over a 7-year period. Bergen was a pivotal figure within the art of ventriloquy, and during the time he recorded at the subject property, he was honored with three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in recognition of his important contributions to radio, film, and television.

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 Fred C. Thomson 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-2019-3116-CE was prepared on July 12, 2019.