

FINDINGS

- Desmond's "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" for its association with Desmond's Department Store and the development of the Broadway commercial district in the first half of the 20th century.
- Desmond's "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 Baroque architecture in downtown Los Angeles, and as an excellent example of the work of architect Albert C. Martin.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Desmond's meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" for its association with Desmond's Department Store and the development of the Broadway commercial district in the first half of the 20th century. In operation at the subject property for nearly 50 years, Desmond's is a legacy department store chain that expanded and continuously adapted to meet the needs of a growing population and economic and cultural trends in Los Angeles for 119 years. As Desmond's eighth store location, the subject property represents the reach and influence of the Desmond's chain, as well as downtown Los Angeles' broader expansion as the City's primary commercial and retail thoroughfare in the early 20th century. During the 1910s and '20s, Broadway became the city's premiere retail and entertainment district, and was lined with department stores, variety stores, and more than a dozen palatial and architecturally diverse movie theaters.

The subject property also "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" as an excellent and intact example of the Spanish Baroque architectural style in downtown Los Angeles. The Spanish Baroque style is a variation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style that made its first Southern California appearance at the 1915 Panama California Exposition through the work of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. The rich ornamentation, extensive use of relief sculpture, elaborately curved arches and pediments, and vertically oriented composition are all characteristic of the style. Other distinguishing features include the ornate terracotta cladding, spiral columns, and decorative mullions. The subject property is one of few representative and extant examples of early 20th century Spanish Baroque-styled commercial buildings in Los Angeles.

In addition, the property "represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as an excellent example of the work of Albert C. Martin. Martin's design of Desmond's in downtown Los Angeles, the commercial city center at the time, exemplifies his skill and influence. As evidenced by the subject property, Martin's combination of opulent design and innovative construction earned him a number of high-profile commercial and institutional commissions, many of which remain prominent parts of the city's landscape. Martin worked in a number of architectural styles, including Spanish Baroque; other works in the style by Martin include St. Vincent de Paul Church (1925, HCM #90) and the Million Dollar Theater Building (1918, HCM #1184).

Despite substantial alteration of the ground floor storefronts, the exterior of Desmond's is otherwise largely intact and retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

While the preparer argues that the property is also an excellent example of Streamline Moderne architecture, staff do not find that it retains sufficient integrity under this context. The 1933 Streamline Moderne storefront has been replaced and its characteristic curved glass display windows are no longer extant.

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 Desmond'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 City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

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.