

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES

435-455 South Boyle Avenue

CHC-2020-899-HCM

ENV-2020-900-CE

FINDINGS

(As Amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on August 20, 2020)

- The International Institute of Los Angeles “reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” for its association with Progressive Era reform, women’s social movements, and patterns of immigration in Los Angeles, and for its association with the development of the Boyle Heights neighborhood.
- The International Institute of Los Angeles “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” and “represents a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an excellent and intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival institutional architecture, and as an exemplary work of the master architectural firm Webber and Spaulding.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The International Institute of Los Angeles meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria; however, the rear, auditorium building is of secondary importance. The auditorium was a later addition that served as a functional, assembly space and does not reflect the activities of the International Institute of Los Angeles, is not designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style to match the original 1931 building, and is not representative of the work of master architects Webber and Spaulding.

The subject property “reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” for its association with the pre-World War II development of the Boyle Heights neighborhood, patterns of immigration in Los Angeles, and women’s social movements. Multiculturalism played a pivotal role in defining Boyle Heights’ early history. Prior to World War II, Boyle Heights was one of the most ethnically heterogeneous communities in Los Angeles; as a neighborhood where restrictive covenants were never widely implemented, Boyle Heights remained one of the few places where ethnic and religious minorities and new immigrants could settle. Serving as a community center for immigrant women within the Boyle Heights community beginning in 1931 when the IILA opened their headquarters, the subject property is emblematic of the community’s ethno-racial diversity prior to World War II. Additionally, by supporting Southern California’s growing immigrant community throughout the twentieth century, the IILA, which operated out of the subject property for decades, played a significant role in the social history of the region. In contrast to the assimilationist practices of other resettlement organizations, the IILA emphasized cultural pluralism and the preservation of immigrant heritage. Their activist work on behalf of immigrants influenced local attitudes toward an increasingly diverse Los Angeles. Furthermore, a key characteristic of the International Institute organization was the practice of employing first- and second-generation women as caseworkers, as their knowledge of multiple languages and ethnic traditions made it easier for them to build relationships with newcomers. The women played a dual role in helping their community members adapt to American society while encouraging empathy and understanding of immigrant knowledge and folkways among native-born citizens. This concept set the women-led IILA apart from other settlement houses in the area. As the subject property was home to

the IILA for nearly 90 years, the two are inextricably linked and the strong association is clearly demonstrated.

In addition, the subject property “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent, intact, and rare example of an institutional building in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style in Boyle Heights. The central courtyard, arched doorways, wood casement windows, and low-pitched, clay tile roofs are all characteristic of the style. Other distinguishing features include wrought iron detailing, decorative tile, and perforated screens.

In addition, the subject property “represents a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an exemplary work of the master architectural firm Webber and Spaulding. With a number of notable commissions across Southern California, Webber and Spaulding became known for their polished and stylized Spanish Colonial Revival style designs. The subject property represents an excellent and intact example of their work in an institutional setting, and one of Webber and Spaulding’s final projects as a firm.

Despite some minor interior and exterior alterations, the International Institute of Los Angeles is greatly intact and retains a high level of 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 International Institute of Los Angeles 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. Given that the subject property is already listed in the California Register of Historical Resources, the pending designation will lead to a higher level of review and protection of the historic significance and integrity of the subject property that could otherwise be lost through incompatible alterations, new construction, or demolition, particularly to the interior. 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.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2020-900-CE was prepared on June 12, 2020.