Streamline Moderne
Style Guide

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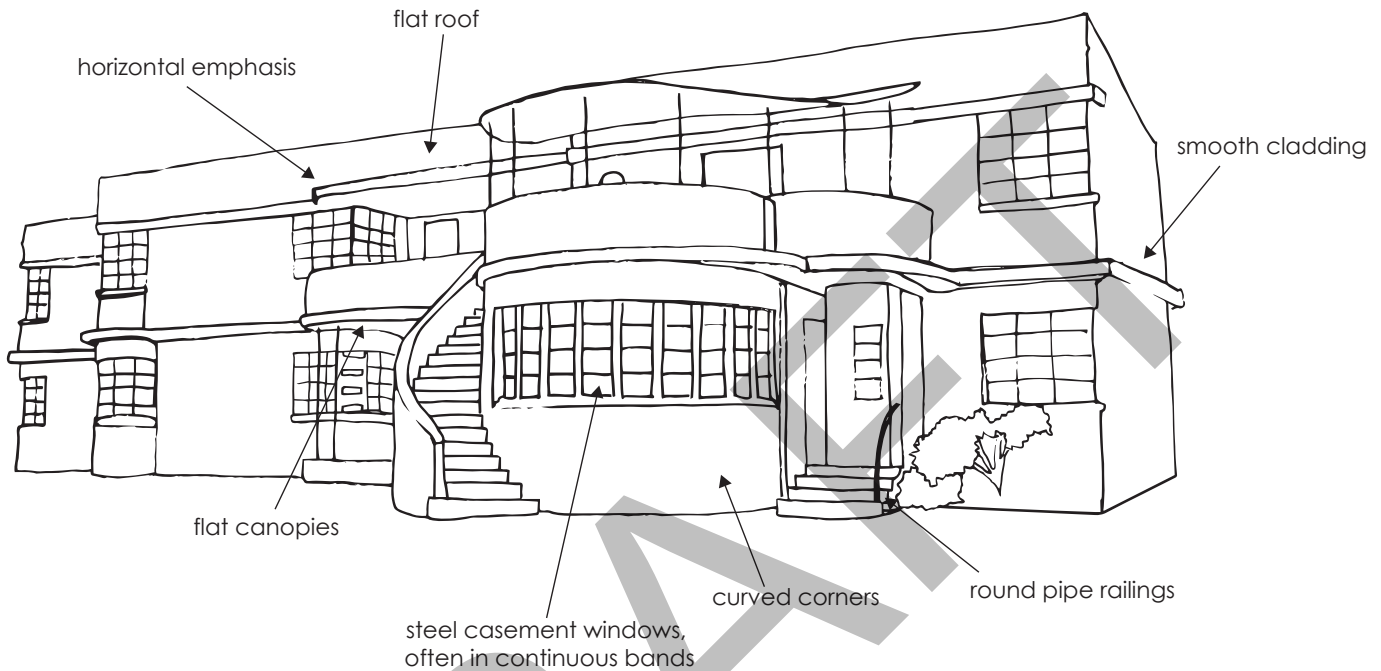# Style Guide

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STREAMLINE MODERNE

This section of the Long Beach Historic District Design Guidelines is part of a larger document created as a planning tool for the City's **historic districts**. The guidelines are intended to provide recommendations, inspiration, and advice as part of an instructive framework that will help guide sensitive changes to historic properties and encourage rehabilitation. By their nature, design guidelines are flexible. As such, outcomes may depend on the resource, the surrounding district, and the goals of the proposed project.

Any changes to the exterior of the property must be given prior approval by Historic Preservation staff through a **Certificate of Appropriateness**, and all projects may be subject to other City requirements not listed within these guidelines.

The first instance of certain terms throughout the Guidelines are highlighted in **bold** text. These terms are defined in a glossary in *Chapter 5: Additional Resources*.

For additional information, please refer to the other chapters of this document:

STREAMLINE MODERNE

horizontal emphasis

flat roof

smooth cladding

flat canopies

steel casement windows,
often in continuous bands

curved corners

round pipe railings

DRAFT

STREAMLINE MODERNE
(1934-1945)

Beginning in the mid-1920s, the colorful Art Deco style emerged as the first widely popular American foray into modern architecture. Drawing inspiration from both Pre-Columbian forms and new machinery while utilizing building materials such as polychrome terra cotta and sheet metal, pioneering modernists created a wholly new aesthetic that was fully embraced in Southern California. The style conveyed a sense of monumentality, technology, and movement.[1]

At the onset of the Great Depression, the richly ornamented Art Deco style was rejected for its excess; however, the same fascination with modern technology, movement, and efficiency that drove the Art Deco movement would still be expressed in the Streamline Moderne style's distinct modern aesthetic by the mid-1930s. Influenced in part by industrial designers who perfected "streamlined" designs for objects like trains and airplanes to minimize wind resistance, the style is characterized by sweeping lines, curved corners, smooth surfaces, and a strong horizontal emphasis. The style was well-suited for the economic hardship of the 1930s, as it was relatively inexpensive to build using simple materials that still gave it an eye-catching appearance.[2]

In Long Beach, the style was frequently applied to automobile-related commercial buildings such as service stations, especially along Atlantic Avenue; local architects Schilling & Schilling designed several examples.[3] The Long Beach Airport, designed by W. Horace Austin and Kenneth S. Wing Sr., is another notable example. Residential buildings in the style are often multi-family and are found throughout the city, notably in areas that developed in the years leading up to World War II.[4]

Additional Examples of the Style
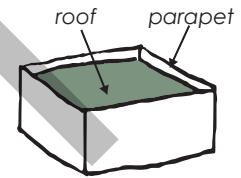
STREAMLINE MODERNE

Building Form and Massing

Streamline Moderne buildings will have a strong horizontal emphasis even if they are several stories in height. They typically have simple plans–rectangular or L-shaped–with rounded corners and flat roofs.

Roof Shape and Materials

The roof on a Streamline Moderne building is invariably flat and will be concealed by a raised **parapet**. The surface of the roof will likely be rolled asphalt (or similar) and banked towards scuppers for drainage.
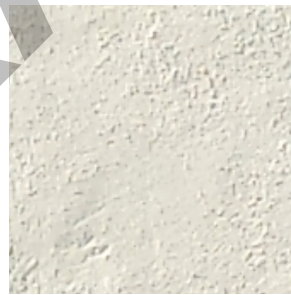
Flat canopies supported by slender posts may extend over entries.

roof   *parapet*

Flat with parapet wall

Cladding

Streamline Moderne buildings are clad in a coat of float or dash finish stucco; there is no intentional texture, such as trowel marks left for decorative effect. The overall appearance from a distance should be as smooth as possible. Occasionally, the stucco will be embellished with horizontal detailing such as grooves, stringcourses, or score marks.

Float or dash finish stucco   *Horizontal detailing*

Foundation

The foundation on a Streamline Moderne building is not a prominent feature. It is most likely to clad in stucco.

Chimneys

A chimney is generally not a prominent feature for the Streamline Moderne style. Where they exist, chimneys will likely be located on the interior or on a side elevation and clad in stucco.

Porches and Entryways

Entry doors may be flush with or slightly recessed into the wall of the building. They are often sheltered underneath a flat canopy that is either cantilevered or supported by a slender vertical post/posts, usually made of metal (A). Others may be sheltered within a recessed entryway with rounded corners (B).

(A)

(B)

Railings and Balustrades

Rounded, metal pipe railings are the most typical railing found on the Streamline Moderne style. It is a simple material with clean lines that contributes to the horizontal emphasis. Occasionally, low stucco walls will be used in place of railings to enclose outdoor spaces, such as **balconies**.
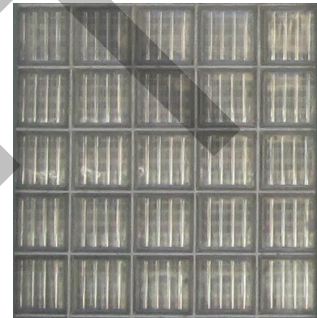
Windows

Windows on a Streamline Moderne building are often multi-light metal **casement** windows arranged in groups or continuous horizontal bands. Other types of windows may include glass block, or two-over-two **double-hung** wood windows.

Two-over-two double-hung (paired)

Two-over-two double-hung

Glass block

Multi-light metal casement

Horizontal band of multi-light metal casement windows.

Awnings

Awnings are not recommended for the Streamline Moderne style. The style has very few "projections" from the surface of the building; an awning would disrupt the clean lines of the design. Property owners are encouraged to consider other methods of creating shade, such as interior shutters or window treatments.

Doors

Streamline Moderne doors are simple. They may consist of a smooth wood slab door, or a partially **glazed** wood door. Some examples may have a rounded "port hole" feature in the upper half of the door. Doors should not have traditional detailing such as paneling.

Garage Doors

Many of the examples of Streamline Moderne architecture in Long Beach are multi-family residential examples that have their parking oriented towards the rear of the property. As such, most garages are not highly visible from the public right-of-way. In general, garage doors for a Streamline Moderne property should be simple in design with discreet hardware.

Porte-Cochères

Porte-cochères are not a typical feature for residential examples of the Streamline Moderne style.

STREAMLINE MODERNE

Decorative Features

The Streamline Moderne style is characterized by its lack of ornamentation. Decorative features are generally limited to stylized functional features, like flat canopies or rounded railings, and linear elements, such as applied trim or grooves in the smooth stucco cladding. The latter will often be added for decorative effect and horizontal emphasis.

Lighting

Compatible light fixtures for a Streamline Moderne property may be fairly modern and made of bright, brushed, or galvanized metals. They are often rounded or cylindrical, and may feature industrial or nautical design influences.

Fencing

The most compatible enclosure for a Streamline Moderne property would likely be a low stucco wall; however, stucco walls are unlikely to be permitted in most historic districts unless it existed historically. A painted or stained horizontal wood fence with voids, like the examples below, would be a compatible option.

Paint Colors

Streamline Moderne buildings do not have complex color schemes. Typically, they are painted white (or a light neutral color). There may be a contrasting color chosen for trim. The most appropriate trim colors are typically those in the blue/green family--powder blue, navy, aquamarine, bottle green, etc. Other appropriate colors that were popular during the late 1920s and early 1930s include black, peach, and gold. Below are some color scheme ideas.