

May 26, 2020

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council designate a two-story apartment building located at 735-741 Locust Avenue as a Historic Landmark.
(District 1)

APPLICANT: Gail Cooper
1500 E. 1st Street
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. HLM1908-01)

THE REQUEST

The City requests that the Cultural Heritage Commission review the background materials and recommend that the City Council designate a two-story apartment building located at 735-741 Locust Avenue as a Historic Landmark.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located on the west side of Locust Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets (Exhibit A – Location Map). The site is located within the PD-30 (Downtown Plan) zoning district. The rectangular shaped property (50'-0" x 150'-0") is developed with a two-story apartment building. The property is not located in a designated historic district.

ANALYSIS

735-741 Locust Avenue

The two-story apartment building was constructed in 1919. The building consists of four apartment units or "flats", with two units located on the ground floor and two on the second level. The building was designed in the Classical Revival - Neoclassical architecture style. The Classical Revival - Neoclassical architecture period of significance is from 1900-1930.



DECORATIVE FEATURES

The Classical Revival architectural style historically was favored for monuments and public buildings such as museums, temples of fraternal orders and banks. Neo-classical homes were designed in the Colonial Revival architectural style, which displayed similar design elements such as a large porch or portico and a triangular pediment supported by tall columns. However, apartment buildings in this architectural style are rare in Long Beach, with only one other similar apartment building found downtown at 25 Cherry Avenue.

The building features many decorative elements of the Classical Revival architectural style such as symmetrical design, decorative pediments and a prominent porch featuring a roof structure that is supported by large columns. The front elevation is highly decorative in comparison to the side and rear elevations. The building's front elevation features a large, centered porch structure which features a front-facing gable roof structure supported by two thick, Doric columns. Two single, French doors are centered between the two columns and two sets of French doors flank the porch structure, providing balance and symmetry to the ground floor elevation. Each set of French doors features an arched stucco wall inset, four in total. Five decorative pediments designed in a shield-and-floral design, are mounted above each set of French doors and on the gable face of the porch structure.

The second story features a large bay window with four double hung wood sash windows, centered above the porch structure. Two sets of side-by-side double hung wood windows flank the bay window. A decorative parapet wall in varying heights frame the building roof. A wide flat eave, with decorative brackets, frame the second story windows.

The side elevations feature smooth stucco walls lined with double hung wood windows. The building's rear elevation is finished with horizontal wood planks. An exterior staircase is centered on the rear elevation, providing access to the units above. Four sets of side-by-side double hung wood windows provide balance and symmetry (Exhibit B – Photos).

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY & ALTERATIONS

The building retains the shape and mass from its original 1919 design. The building is intact and in good condition.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The apartment building was constructed by local Long Beach contactor, Josiah Wellington (J.W.) Davidson (aka Davison). (Davidson immigrated to the United States in 1880 from Nova Scotia settling in New York. He moved to Long Beach in 1910. A contractor by trade, his construction projects varied from residential cottages to commercial and industrial buildings. A few of his more notable works in Long Beach included a residential cottage located at 776 Walnut Avenue, the Long Beach Daily Telegram building located at 345 Locust Avenue, Long Beach High School, and the Zion Lutheran Church school located at 320 E. 10th Street.

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The construction of the subject apartment building was commissioned by Adam G. Kading, a local pharmacist, who lived in the apartment unit bearing the address of 735 Locust Avenue. Kading operated the Kading Pharmacy located at 7th Street and Pine Avenue.

In 1921, Reverend George M. Rourke (1869-1942), the new pastor of the First Presbyterian Church (located at the corner of 6th and Locust Ave), purchased the property. Reverend Rourke and his family resided in the building as well as used the building as income property for the next 50 years.

In addition to serving as pastor to the First Presbyterian Church (1920-1940), Dr. (Reverend) Rourke was a prominent Long Beach figure. He took interest in civic and state issues where he used his church sermons to bring attention to and influence changes in City laws pertaining to gambling and drinking, specifically on the offshore ships and in local gambling houses. He was successful in a 1926 campaign decrying the lack of police/city enforcement of gambling houses, which ultimately launched a public investigation by the City Council. (Exhibit C – DPR Form-735-741 Locust Avenue).

LANDMARK DESIGNATION CRITERION

The Cultural Heritage ordinance includes four criteria that have to be met in order for a cultural resource to obtain landmark designation: Criterion A, it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the City's history; Criterion B, it is associated with the lives of persons important to the City's past; Criterion C, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values; or Criterion D, it has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history. In order to be eligible for landmark designation, the building must meet at least one of the aforementioned Criteria.

The building at located 735-741 Locust Avenue, is eligible for Long Beach Historic Landmark designation under Criterion B and C. The historic building is associated with the life of a prominent figure in Long Beach history, Reverend George M. Rourke, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church (Criterion B). Additionally, the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or it represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic value (Criterion C). The apartment building features many decorative elements of the Classical Revival architectural style such as symmetrical design elements, a centered porch structure which features Doric columns, wood framed doors and windows and decorative pediments. This apartment building was constructed during the period of significance for the architectural style. Multifamily residential buildings in Long Beach are rarely found in the Classical Revival architectural style; only one other similar apartment building located in the downtown 25 Cherry Avenue is found in this style.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the landmark nomination for 735-741 Locust Avenue and has determined that the apartment building meets the requirements set forth in Section 2.63.050 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code, which states that a cultural resource qualifies for designation as a Landmark if it retains integrity and meets one or more of the four required findings. As previously noted, the subject building is eligible for Long Beach Historic Landmark designation under Criterion B and C due to its association with a prominent figure in Long Beach history, Reverend George M. Rourke, pastor the First Presbyterian Church (Criterion B) and embodiment of the distinctive characteristics as an intact example of the Classical Revival-Neoclassical architectural style. (Exhibit D -Landmark Findings).

The nomination for Landmark status for the building is consistent with the General Plan Urban Design Element Strategy 9 which encourages identifying and preserving historic buildings. Nomination of the building also specifically advances Policy 2.7 of the Historic Preservation Element through the landmarking of private buildings. The proposed nomination is complementary to the surrounding neighborhood. The building is located within a multifamily residential neighborhood, with nearby commercial in the surrounding area. The designation of the subject building as a historic landmark raises awareness of Downtown Long Beach's history and preserves significant historic resources.

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Commission make a recommendation to the City Council to approve the landmark nomination for the residential building located at 735-741 Locust Avenue. If the designation were approved, it is recommended that the building be recognized as the Rourke Flats after long time owner Reverend George M. Rourke.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with Section 15301(e), Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project was found to be exempt from further environmental review.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

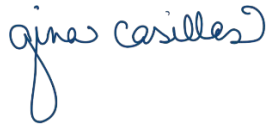
Public notices were distributed on May 12, 2020. As of this date, no letters were received in response to this project.

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Respectfully submitted,



GINA CASILLAS
PROJECT PLANNER



PATRICIA A. DIEFENDERFER, AICP
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER



ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

CK:PD:AP:gc;

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
 Exhibit B – Photographs
 Exhibit C - DPR Property Inventory Forms – 735-741 Locust Ave
 Exhibit D - Landmark Findings – 735-741 Locust Avenue