



## AGENDA REPORT

**Meeting Date:** August 19, 2014

**Item Number:** E-1

**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council

**From:** William R. Crouch, AIA, NCARB, AICP, LEED (AP), Urban Designer

**Subject:** THREE RESOLUTIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS DESIGNATING THREE PROPERTIES AS LOCAL LANDMARKS AND PLACING THESE PROPERTIES ON THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES.

**Attachments:**

1. Criteria for Designating Local Landmarks
2. Resolution Designating the Writers and Artists Building at 9507 S. Santa Monica Blvd. as a Local Landmark
3. Resolution Designating the Joe E. Brown Residence at 707 Walden Drive as a Local Landmark
4. Resolution Designating the Ahmanson Bank and Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. as a Local Landmark
5. Cultural Heritage Commission Reports and Resolutions of Recommendation for the Three Properties

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

The following three Local Landmark nominations are being forwarded to City Council on the recommendation of the Cultural Heritage Commission, and with the consent of the property owners: (1) Writers and Artists Building at 9507 S. Santa Monica Blvd.; (2) Joe E. Brown Residence at 707 Walden Drive; and (3) Ahmanson Bank and Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. as Local Landmarks.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Currently there are twenty-three properties in the City of Beverly Hills recognized as Landmarks listed on the Local Register of Historic Properties. The Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) recommended that the City Council designate three additional historic properties as Local Landmark properties in accordance with the City of Beverly Hills Historic Preservation Ordinance. Listing these properties on the City's Register of Historic Properties would recognize them as important to the history of the City and would enable the property owners to be eligible for current and future incentives offered to local landmarks, including application for a Mills Act contract for property tax relief. Designating these properties as Local Landmarks would also ensure protection of the resource by requiring City review of any significant future work done to any of the properties, including renovations, additions, and any potential demolition.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance enables the City Council to designate Local Landmarks. Three historic properties have undergone a review documentation process by the historic consultant retained by the City and have been deemed eligible under local landmark criteria. The Cultural Heritage Commission have the two private property owners' full support in bringing these properties to City Council for designation as Local Landmarks.

Resolutions attached to this report (Attachments 2 - 4) would designate the following properties as Landmarks listed on the Local Register of Historic Properties:

### **1. Writers and Artists Building (1924) – 9507 S. Santa Monica Blvd.**



Constructed in 1924, the three-story building with mezzanine level and basement was designed as a collaborative effort by architect Roy Seldon Price and the firm of Gable and Wyant for druggist A.C. Heegaard. When completed, the building (officially called the Heegaard Building at the time) housed a corner drug store,

offices for physician and dentists, real estate, insurance sales, attorneys, and architects; various retail shops on the first floor; a barber shop; and the local Masons Lodge on the third floor. While the Masons Lodge occupied the third floor, this space was often used by other local clubs and organizations and for several years it served as a major center of social activity in the community.

The highlight of the building is its ribbon of decorative Churrigueresque plaster panels and engaged spiral colonnettes with large cartouches that frame the third floor fenestration along both its south (front) and north elevations. Other original decorative features include wooden spindle balconettes with wood-frame, multi-pane French doors set intermittingly along the front (south elevation and rear of the building's second level. See the Landmark Assessment Report in Exhibit A of Attachment 2 for full historical background and description of the property.

The subject property was brought forward for consideration by the Landmark Nominations Advisory Committee of the Cultural Heritage Commission. The CHC initiated the property for landmark proceedings on July 10, 2013, and nominated the property for inclusion onto the Local Register on July 9, 2014, during which time staff worked with the property owner, Mr. Michael Pashaie, to agree upon the list of character-defining features of the building to be preserved. Mr. Pashaie has expressed his interest in continuing a dialogue with staff relating to historic preservation incentives that may become available relative to this property in the future, in addition to incentives already in place.

## **2. Joe E. Brown Residence (1930) – 707 Walden Drive**



Constructed in 1930, this Spanish Colonial Revival residence has a strong horizontal orientation and is set back from the street by a well-manicured open lawn, buffered plantings, mature trees, driveway, and original flagstone stepped walkway approach to the front door gate vestibule. Organized around a walled inner courtyard, the stuccoed structure has tiled hipped and gabled roofs atop one and two story wings.

This well-executed Spanish Colonial Revival style residence was designed and built by Rene Rivierre, a local builder who designed, built and sold a number of residences in the community. Just after it was completed the property sold to entertainer and comedic actor Joe E. Brown, who lived at the Walden property with his family from 1931 to 1938, when Brown was at the height of his film career starring in over two dozen motion pictures during this time.

An application for landmark nomination status for the Joe E. Brown residence was submitted by the property owners; the application was considered by the Cultural Heritage Commission who initiated the property on April 9, 2014, and nominated the property for inclusion onto the Local Register on July 9, 2014. See the Landmark Assessment Report in Exhibit A of Attachment 3 for full historical background and description of the property.

### **3. Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building (1959) – 9145 Wilshire Boulevard**



The former Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building (now First Bank) was designed by noted artist/designer Millard Sheets for Howard F. Ahmanson, Sr., founder and president of the small independent bank established to serve the local Beverly Hills community. Ahmanson appreciated good art and design and commissioned Sheets to design the permanent headquarters office of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. in 1959.

The marble-clad, neoclassical Greek-inspired, Modern style structure was designed by Millard Sheets, who was one of the most prominent figures in the Southern California art and design community, in association with architect S. David Underwood. The design, massing, shape, form, and materials of the two-story property reflected a simple yet refined elegance that Ahmanson wished to evoke to his local banking patrons. Two monumental Millard Sheets-designed mosaics adorn the recessed wall space over the main entry off Wilshire Blvd. Other design features that integrate architecture and art include: white Italian marble cladding, top cornice faces with gold tiles, fired gold tiles, symmetry and proportion of design, and the

incorporation of large site-specific artwork into the design of the building and site. First Bank has recently completed interior restoration work of original gold leaf detailing and intends to restore exterior finishes in accordance with Secretary of the Interior Standards in the near future. See the Landmark Assessment Report in Exhibit A of Attachment 4 for full historical background and description of the property.

The subject property was brought forward for consideration by the Landmark Nominations Advisory Committee of the Cultural Heritage Commission. The CHC initiated the property for landmark proceedings on October 9, 2013, and nominated the property for inclusion onto the Local Register on July 9, 2014, with the expressed consent on behalf of the property owner (Mr. Benny Vargas, Vice President Corporate Real Estate for First Bank’s Southern California Region). Mr. Vargas has expressed his interest in continuing a dialogue with staff relating to historic preservation incentives that may become available relative to this property in the future, in addition to incentives already in place.

**DISCUSSION**

The Cultural Heritage Commission initiated nomination proceedings for the three properties and requested a Landmark Assessment Report be prepared in each case to determine if the properties met the City’s criteria for designation as Local Landmarks (see Attachments 2 – 4 for Landmark Assessment Reports). After considering the Landmark Assessment Reports and other evidence, the Cultural Heritage Commission adopted resolutions recommending that the City Council designate each of the properties as Local Landmarks to be included on the City’s Register of Historic Places (see Attachment 5 for CHC resolutions).

The City’s Landmark criteria are provided as Attachment 1 and summarized in the following table. Designation of a Landmark requires that three criteria be met: A (Significance), B (Integrity), and C (Historic Value). Criterion A has six possible qualifiers and at least two of those qualifiers must be met for each property.

*Summary of Local Landmark Criteria Eligibility*

| <b>Criterion</b>   | <b>Writers &amp; Artists Building</b>   | <b>Joe E. Brown Residence</b>   | <b>Ahmanson Bank &amp; Trust Building</b>  |
|--|---|---|--|
| A.1 Is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, | Yes<br><br>The three-story property was the first “high-rise” building in Beverly Hills and one of the first office buildings in the area. It is one of the last extant multi-level commercial buildings erected during the first quarter of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century within the business triangle and the city, and hence is considered a rare and | Yes<br><br>The residence is a well-executed and clearly planned intact example of the Spanish Colonial style as designed and constructed by master designer Rene Rivierre. The subject property visually and physically memorializes an important aspect of the | Yes<br><br>This particular property was designed and built to serve the financial needs of the local community of Beverly Hills. Howard F. Ahmanson gave Millard Sheets liberty to design a modest financial institution that not only conveyed stability, security, and trust but also an appreciation of |

| Criterion   | Writers & Artists Building  | Joe E. Brown Residence  | Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community</p>               | <p>disappearing property type. For these reasons, the property exemplifies significant contributions to the architectural history and commercial development of the city. The building is also important as it manifests key contributions to the social and cultural history of the community and has intangible historic value to the city.</p> | <p>community's residential development history, architectural heritage, and direct association with notable designer.</p>   | <p>the arts.<br/>The significant contributions to the broad economic, cultural, and architectural history of the local community are physically manifested and exemplified in the subject property's architectural style, use of materials, composition and execution of design, artistic and aesthetic value, and general function and use of the site as a specialty banking facility.</p>                           |
| <p>A.2 The property is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, or local history</p> | <p>No</p>   | <p>Yes<br/><br/>Entertainer/comedic actor Joe E. Brown purchased the property directly from designer/building Rivierre in 1931, just after it was finished. When Brown purchased and resided in the house with his wife and two sons during much of the 1930s, he was at the height of his film career starring in over two dozen motion pictures at that time. In 1934, Brown even installed a private projection room, den area on the second floor of his Walden house so that he could preview his own movies, discuss roles and scripts with writers and producers, and entertain other movie moguls and industry clientele.</p> | <p>Yes<br/><br/>The collaborative effort between the client/owner (Howard F. Ahmanson) and designer (Millard Sheets) created a unique financial institution that conveyed stability, strength, security and trust, as well as a sense of community and family. Because of this type of initiative to invest in local architecture and art, Ahmanson is considered a significant person important to the community.</p> |

| Criterion   | Writers & Artists Building  | Joe E. Brown Residence  | Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building  |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | As a result of Joe E. Brown's direct association with the subject the property satisfies this criterion.  |   |
| <p>A.3 Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type and period. The restrained Spanish Colonial Revival style adeptly incorporated into this early 1920s multi-story commercial building is unusual and rare in the city. The Churrigueresque embellishments were oriented towards automobile, pedestrian, and rail traffic (Southern Pacific right-of-way to the north).</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The design, composition, and materials of this residence with its courtyard plan and fountain, extensive use of decorative glazed ceramic tiles (inside and out), unusual stained glass windows, plain smooth stucco walls, arched opening in the wall planes, wrought iron grilles, terra cotta mission barrel roof tiles, multi-plane roof heights and forms, have been well-orchestrated into a richly embellished, authentic form of the romanticized Spanish Colonia Revival idiom that was so popular in the 1930s.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Executed with restraint, the subject property embodies the distinctive characteristics and ideals of a Modern style financial institution with neoclassical Greek influences as interpreted by Millard Sheets into a modest freestanding bank building. The Ahmanson Bank &amp; Trust property demonstrates some of the key characteristic elements of the style and the unique collaborative effort of integrating architecture and art. The meticulous method of construction of the integrated site-specific artwork exemplifies outstanding craftsmanship and consummate skill that should be recognized as a distinct and unique method of construction.</p> |
| <p>A.4 Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The property is associated with noted local architect Roy S. Price, and the architectural firm Gable and Wyant, both of whom are listed on the City's List of Master Architects.</p>  | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Master designer Rene Rivierre was an accomplished and well-respected designer in the area, and is included on the List of Master Architects. He designed 17 dwellings in Beverly Hills in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; the</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Millard Sheets was a highly acclaimed painter, designer, illustrator, and artist who is credited for the architectural design of the subject property and its associated site-specific artwork. Though not a licensed architect, Sheets is recognized on the Beverly Hills List of</p>  |

| Criterion  | Writers & Artists Building | Joe E. Brown Residence  | Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building |
|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|  |                            | subject property is a fine example that represents one of his most notable works. | Master Architects.             |
| A.5 The property has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City or community   | No                         | No  | No                             |
| A.6 The property is listed or has been formally determined to be eligible by the National Parks Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources | No                         | No  | No                             |

| Criterion   | Writers & Artists Building  | Joe E. Brown Residence   | Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building  |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>B</b> Retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The period of significance spans from 1924, when the building was constructed, through 2008, encompassing the years when it was occupied by a variety of artists, writers, producers, actors, etc. The property retains important features of design from this period which are still evident and help to render it historically significant.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The property retains important features from its period of significance (1930-1938), when the property was built and occupied by vaudeville entertainer/commercial actor Joe E. Brown and his family.</p>      | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The period of significance is from 1959-1976, when Ahmanson Bank &amp; Trust was in operation there. The important characteristics and features of the building including location, setting, overall design, materials, spatial relationships, and site-specific artwork are still sufficiently evident to convey its historic, architectural, and artistic significance.</p> |
| <p><b>C</b> Is of significant architectural value to the community, beyond its simple market value, and its designation as a Landmark is reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purpose of the Ordinance</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Because of its architecture, rare and unusual property type, unique historical past, and contribution to the City's social, cultural, and architectural heritage, the property is considered to have historic value.</p>  | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The property is considered to have historic value based on its historic architectural character, association with Joe E. Brown, and its contribution to the city's rich and unique architectural heritage.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Because of the property's architectural merit, high artistic and aesthetic qualities, and association with master artist Millard Sheets, the site is considered to have significant historic value to the local community.</p>  |

All three properties meet the necessary requirements for local landmark designation. With City Council designation, these three properties would be placed on the Local Register of Historic Properties in the order in which they were originally constructed:

| Property Name, Year                  | Proposed Local Landmark Designation |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Writers & Artists Building, 1924     | No. 24                              |
| Joe E. Brown Residence, 1930         | No. 25                              |
| Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building, 1959 | No. 26                              |

*General Guidelines and Standards for Proposed Changes to Historic Buildings Listed on the Local Register*

Given the ongoing necessity of property owners to adapt to changing needs, it is important to consider the effect of any historic registry listings on the functional activities of properties.

The Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards for Rehabilitation have purposefully been crafted to allow maximum flexibility for historic buildings to be adapted over time to meet changing needs in a way that allows ongoing functionality of historic buildings without unnecessarily destroying historic fabric. There are ten guiding Standards to be applied in the rehabilitation of historic properties.

The SOI Standards for "rehabilitation" assume that at least some repair or alteration of a historic building will be needed over time in order to provide for efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy original materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the building's historic character. The Standards allow for modernization to landmarks and are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

As local historic landmarks, the properties would be subject to additional historic review and the two private properties would be subject to approval and issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness<sup>1</sup> (pursuant to BHMC §10-3-3219) to ensure that the SOI Standards are followed and to ensure that future alterations are appropriate for the historic structure. The effect of any listing onto the City's Historic Register of Historic Properties is not intended to freeze a building in time without any opportunity for future adaptations, but rather to provide reasonable guidelines to inform any future alterations, additions and/or adaptations in a way that allows for change without destroying historic integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> A Certificate of Appropriateness is a certificate issued to approve alteration, restoration, construction, removal, relocation in whole or in part, or demolition of a designated landmark or property within a historic district (BHMC §10-3-3202).

## **GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**

Designation of these three properties as local historic landmarks is consistent with the objectives, principles, and standards of the General Plan, including General Plan Policy “HP 1.3 – Promote National, State, and Local Designation of Historic Resources,” which encourages designation of local Landmarks.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

Designation of the Writers and Artists Building, the Joe E. Brown Residence, and the Ahmanson Bank and Trust Building as local historic landmarks was assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. It has been determined that the landmark designations and the inclusion of these three properties would not have a significant environmental impact and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3), 15308, and 15331 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that designation will have a significant effect on the environment, as no specific development is authorized by the resolutions, and any future development would require separate environmental analysis when the details of such proposals are known. Further, the landmark designation of the properties is an action of the City to protect and preserve historic resources.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

As required by the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, notice of the public hearing for consideration of landmark designation by City Council was provided to the property owners of the three properties. As of the completion of this agenda report, no public comments have been received.

Notice of the Cultural Heritage Commission’s public hearings to consider the properties for landmark nomination was also provided to the property owners of the three private properties. All of the respective property owners have expressed their consent with the recommended actions.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Designating a property as a Local Landmark deems it eligible for historic preservation incentives at the local level. This includes general eligibility to apply for a Mills Act contract<sup>2</sup>, which might result in a fiscal impact by way of reduced property tax revenue to the City and the Beverly Hills Unified School District, if such a contract is approved by the City Council in the future. The cumulative fiscal impact of the Mills Act program was considered by the City Council when they reviewed and approved a three-year extension of the Pilot Mills Act Program through the end of 2016. Any awarding of contracts to the subject properties would need to fall within the approved limits of the current Mills Act program.

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<sup>2</sup> Subject to minimum program requirements, such as a \$10.0 M cap on the tax assessed value of participating properties

Susan Healy Keene, AICP  
Director of Community Development



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Approved By