



Attachment 4

Resolution Designating the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building
at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. as a Local Landmark

RESOLUTION NO. 14-R-

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS DESIGNATING THE AHMANSON BANK & TRUST BUILDING AT 9145 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD AS A LOCAL LANDMARK AND PLACING THE PROPERTY ON THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Section 1. On January 24, 2012, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 12-O-2617 establishing a historic preservation program and establishing a Local Register of Historic Properties in the City of Beverly Hills. The Ordinance enables the City Council to designate local landmarks and historic districts and to place those properties and geographical areas on the City's Register of Historic Properties.

Section 2. On October 9, 2013, the Cultural Heritage Commission conducted a preliminary consideration of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building (currently First Bank) by Millard Sheets at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard Beverly Hills, pursuant to section 10-3-3215 A. of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and concluded that the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills warranted formal consideration by the Commission for inclusion onto the Local Register of Historic Properties as Local Landmarks.

Section 3. On January 8, 2014, the Cultural Heritage Commission considered a *City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report* for the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills incorporated herein as Exhibit A, and other evidence provided during the proceedings and observations and moved to continue the landmark nomination considerations to allow City staff more time to continue discussions with the property owner.

Section 4. On July 9, 2014, the Cultural Heritage Commission considered a *City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report* for the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills incorporated herein as Exhibit A, and other evidence provided during the proceedings and observations and moved to nominate the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills as a local Landmark. The Commission based its action on the findings of fact and reasons listed in the *City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report* by Jan Ostashay of Ostashay and Associates Consulting and other evidence.

Section 5. On August 19, 2014, the City Council considered the recommendation of the Cultural Heritage Commission and adopted this resolution. The Council based its action on the findings of fact and reasons listed in the *Landmark Assessment and Evaluation Report* by Ostashay and Associates Consulting and other evidence provided during the proceedings.

Section 6. BACKGROUND. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust property (now occupied and owned by First Bank) is just east of Beverly Hills' commercial triangle district and abuts residential housing stock to the immediate north and commercial property to the east, west, and south. The improvement sits on two tied lots that each measure 50 feet by roughly 140 feet at the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and North Oakhurst Drive.

The former Ahmanson Bank & Trust building 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. A few years earlier, Sheets had designed Ahmanson's elegant Home Savings & Loan building (now Chase Bank) just a few blocks to the west at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard. Ahmanson appreciating good art and design commissioned Sheets again to design the permanent headquarters office of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard in 1959.

Located along the north side of Wilshire Boulevard amongst the larger commercial chain-banking institutions along this busy thoroughfare the independent Ahmanson Bank & Trust bank building was built in 1959 as their main office. The marble clad, neoclassical Greek inspired Modern style structure was designed by Millard Sheets in association with architect S. David Underwood who was a member of Sheets' design studio. Rectangular in plan with an extended flat roof porte-cochere off its east (side) elevation the modest two-story bank building initially featured a fountain, indoor-outdoor reflecting pool, round elevator, and interior and exterior artwork. The façade (front, south elevation) abuts the sidewalk and features large aluminum framed glazed entry doors while the side (east) and rear elevations are punctuated by fixed pane fenestration. The rear (north) elevation also has a set of double glazed aluminum framed entry doors that open out to a paved parking lot. The initial design, massing, shape and form, and materials of the two-story property reflected a simple yet refined elegance that Ahmanson wanted to evoke to his local banking patrons.

The structure is capped with a flat roof with minimal parapet and has a decorative cornice line. Using similar materials found on the property located 9145 Wilshire Boulevard the Ahmanson Bank & Trust building is sheathed in Italian Lasa Bianco (white) marble with a top cornice faced with ceramic fired gold tiles. A huge golden winged lion or 'griffin' was originally set at the upper left corner of the front façade as was the bank's logo, a large capital "A" with a smaller capital "B" stacked over a smaller capital "T" just off to the right of it. The 'griffin' symbol was the Ahmanson business emblem and was incorporated into most of his financial institutions as well as his foundation. Much of the white marble and all of the glazed cornice line have been painted over by subsequent occupants of the structure. Both the 'griffin' and the bank's logo on the facade have been removed as well by those succeeding tenants. Two "monumental" Millard Sheets designed mosaics adorn the recessed wall space over the main entry off Wilshire Boulevard. The mosaic on the left depicts an image of a man and boy fishing while the mosaic on the right illustrates a group of women and girls in a tree with birds. These two mosaics are still intact over an altered entry approach and fenestration. Along the east side of the building are two uniquely

designed concrete screens that help to diffuse visibility into the lobby area of the bank and also provides decorative interest to this elevation. The screens depict a modernistic interpretation of a tall tree with branches, leaves, and flying birds. This thematic design of the “tree of life” is also complemented on the interior of the building by the use of stained glass panels and inlaid wood elements. The multi-color inlaid marble scene on the east wall of the central banking area conveys the tree of life with various types of birds. From within the building this artistic element is visually framed by the outside concrete window screens that are evident through the flanking fenestration. Set as part of the glazing system along the rear (north) wall and exit door are two floor-to-ceiling stained glass pieces that depict the tree of life with various animals. When looking from within the building, the multi-color stained glass piece west (left) of the rear exit door illustrates a modernistic interpretation of a tree with ducks, rabbits, deer, peacocks, sheep, fish, chickens, etc. during the day (hence the word “DAY” at the bottom and the full sun at the top). The multi-color stained glass piece east (right) of the rear exit door shows the tree of life at night with stars sparkling and numerous animals, including a leopard, fish, bald eagle, horses, birds, lion, owls, dove, etc. within and or near the it (hence the word “NIGHT” at the bottom and the crescent moon at the top). Acting as an upper transom is a row of smaller stained glass panels depicting various animals set above the two elongated stained glass “DAY” and “NIGHT” panels. All of these pieces were the design of Millard Sheets many in association with Susan Hertel. They were executed with the aid of various artists and craftspeople from his design studio. The stained-glass windows were fabricated by the Wallis-Wiley Studio of Pasadena. Master mosaicist Denis O’Conner participated in the production of the mosaics for the Sheet’s studio.

The building has undergone a number of alterations over the years. Some of the early work such as the partial replacement of cornice stone was done as in-kind repair work under the supervision of Millard Sheets. Most of the more significant exterior alterations occurred when the bank changed hands in the mid-1970s. These recent modifications included painting over and/or physically removing some of the exterior features on the building’s front (south) and side (east) elevations, as well as some changes to the

interior space. Currently, the building is being restored by its owner with in-kind materials using photographic and physical evidence. Many of the missing or broken features both on the exterior and within the interior are being repaired, replaced, and/or reconstructed in-kind. Because the overall composition and design of the existing building and its prominent site-specific artwork are still substantially intact the previous changes have not severely compromised its general historic character, unique architectural qualities, or important character-defining features.

Section 7. FINDINGS. Pursuant to the City of Beverly Hills Historic Preservation Ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 3, Article 32; BHMC 10-3-32), the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills individually satisfies the necessary requirements for local landmark designation.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building is individually eligible under "significance" criterion A.1. *The property 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, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community.* This particular property was designed and built to serve the financial needs of the local community of Beverly Hills. Howard F. Ahmanson was intent on creating an independent private bank that provided exceptional customer service to the residents of the city and that was also aesthetically pleasing and appreciated by the community and others. Ahmanson believed that many of the commercial buildings of the day lacked the presence of integrated art. Thus, he gave Millard Sheets liberty to design a modest financial institution that not only conveyed stability, security, and trust but also an appreciation of the arts. The bank building maintained its local presence until it closed in the mid-1970s. 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, artistry and aesthetic value, and general function and use of the site as a specialty banking facility. Upon review and consideration, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard Beverly Hills is individually eligible under "significance" criterion A.2. *The property is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history.* The design and development of the subject property and its site-specific artwork is due in part to Howard F. Ahmanson, the bank's first president and owner. Because of his appreciation of the arts and financial investment in aesthetics he had the wherewithal to allow Millard Sheets to realize his vision in the form of the subject property. This collaborative effort between the client/owner and designer created a unique financial institution that conveyed stability, strengthen, security, and trust, as well as a sense of community and family. Because of this type of incentive to invest in local architecture and art Ahmanson is considered a significant person important to the community. Thus, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard Beverly Hills is individually eligible under "significance" criterion A.3. *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction.* 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 independent type bank building. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust property demonstrates some of the key characteristic elements of the style and the unique collaborative effort of integrating architecture and art. Such design features include the building's Italian white marble cladding, top cornice faced with fired gold tiles, fired gold tiles on the porte cochere and elsewhere on the building, symmetry and proportion of design, and the incorporation of large site-specific artwork into the design of the building and site. The skillful design, composition, materials, and artistry of these elements collective make the property a valuable example important for its style, type and method of construction. The type and method of construction for the site-specific Millard Sheets designed artwork installations

entails expertise that only masters in their field could have attained. With his design team Sheets created initial sketches of the artwork, then created full-color gouaches, made full-size projections of the approved designs, and selected the correct tile colors. The small, textured glass tiles were hand cut into the perfect shapes, mixing shades to give the illusion depth, movement, and shadows. They were then pasted onto numbered sections of paper, and then delivered to the site for installation. The tiles were then installed onto the facing of the bank's exterior wall. Set with a base layer of cement the tiles were carefully inlaid and finished with a grout sealer.¹ 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. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard Beverly Hills is individually eligible under "significance" criterion A.4. *The property represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value.* Millard Sheets (1907-1989) was a highly acclaimed painter, designer, illustrator, and artist who worked in various mediums of the craft. He was also a strong proponent for the integration of art and architecture and as such incorporated all forms of art, including murals, mosaics, sculpture, stained glass, and ceramic into his architectural designs. He worked primary throughout much of southern California, including Beverly Hills. He is most recognized for his work in designing many of the Home Savings & Loan financial institutions throughout the State and elsewhere in the country. He also was the architect for the subject property, the Ahmanson Bank & Trust building. Though not a licensed architect, Sheets is credited for the architectural design of the subject property and its associated site-specific interior and exterior artwork. This property along with the bank building at 9245 Wilshire Boulevard (Chase Bank) and the large mosaic recently installed on the west wall of the Civic Center parking structure (number 5) at 450 North Rexford Drive represents Sheets' extant portfolio of work within the City of Beverly Hills. In consideration of the subject property's

¹ Arenson, Adam. "Paying Dividends," *Huntington Frontiers*, March 16, 2012, in *Fall/Winter 2011*.

association with a noted master architect and an individual listed on the City's List of Master Architects this significance criterion is satisfied.

Besides architectural merit, the site-specific artwork integrated into the subject property also possesses high artistic and aesthetic value. The interwoven artwork inside and outside of the building is an artistic object of noteworthy interest and value in that they convey various forms of family values and the tree of life in their design and meaning. Because of their site-specific thematic content and mastery of design and execution the various pieces of artwork on the property are highly valued as an aspect of community sentiment and pride. In applying the artistic and aesthetic portion of this criterion to the subject property it is warranted and satisfied.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard is individually eligible under "significance" criterion B because the building retains integrity from its period of significance. The period of significance for the subject property is from 1959, when the building was completed and opened for business, to 1976 when it ceased operating and merged with another financial institution. Those important characteristics and features of the building, including its location, setting, overall design, materials, spatial relationships, and site-specific artwork from the property's period of significance are still sufficiently evident to convey its historical, architectural, and artistic significance. Therefore, they satisfy this criterion.

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard is individually eligible under "significance" criterion C 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. Therefore, the property satisfies this criterion.

Section 8. PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS JUSTIFYING LANDMARK

DESIGNATION THAT SHOULD BE PRESERVED. Use and development of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills shall be governed by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (1995) by Weeks and Grimmer (herein referred to as the SOI Standards). These standards and guidelines have been formulated to ensure that any significant adverse changes to the historic resource do not compromise those qualities that justify the landmark listing.

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* defines historic character by the form and detailing of materials, such as masonry, wood, stucco, plaster, terra cotta, metal, etc.; specific features, such as roofs, porches, windows and window elements, moldings, staircases, chimneys, driveways, garages, landscape and hardscape elements, etc.; as well as spatial relationships between buildings, structures, and features; room configurations; and archaic structural and mechanical systems.

Identifying those features or elements that give a historic property visual character and which should be taken into account and preserved to the maximum extent possible is important in order for the property to maintain its historical significance. The key features associated with the subject property that are visible and evident from the public right-of-way include, but are not limited to, its prominent location at the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and North Oakhurst Drive; its current form, massing, scale, proportion, orientation, height, materials, and general design scheme; and those physical attributes that define the property's type and style (Modern with neoclassical Greek influences). Additional exterior character-defining features include the building's Italian Lasa Bianco (white) marble cladding, ceramic-fired gold tiles (some currently painted over), the decorative cornice, glass tesserae mosaics, the porte cochere with decorative features and driveway, plaster "tree of life" window wall screen adjacent the side

(east) elevation, landscaped planter boxes and associated landscape features, and orientation and location of entry doors on the front (south) and rear (north) of the building. Character-defining features of the Sheets designed site-specific artwork includes, but is not limited to its materials (glazed tiles, marble, glass, lead, wood, plaster/concrete, etc.), size and shape, content of design and theme, form, volume, setting, location, texture, finish, color, transparency in some instances (stained glass), installation method and materials, and public visibility.

Section 9. REASONS FOR DESIGNATING THE AHMANSON BANK & TRUST BUILDING AT 9145 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, AS A LANDMARK. The City Council finds that the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building by Millard Sheets at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, meets the criteria for designation as a landmark, and that this building warrants designation because it meets the City of Beverly Hills' criteria for designation as a local Landmark, as required in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (BHMC Section 10-3-3212). The property satisfies the requirement of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(1), in that it "exemplifies important elements of the City's cultural, economic, and architectural history." The property also satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(2), in that it "is directly associated with the lives of significant persons important to national, state, City or local history." The general idea and financial incentive to incorporate art and architecture into the design of the subject property is credited to Howard F. Ahmanson, the initial president and namesake of the bank. In addition, the subject property satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(3), in that it "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction." The building and site-specific artwork embodies the distinguishing features of a particular property type (bank) and the architectural style of Modern design with neoclassical Greek influences. Because of its method of design, execution, and assembly the site-specific artwork also embody and physically reflect unique and distinctive methods of construction. And finally, under the

requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(4), the building and site-specific artwork satisfy this criterion in that they “represent a notable work of a person included on the City’s List of Master Architects.” Both the Ahmanson Bank & Trust headquarters office/bank and its associated site-specific artwork were designed by noted artist and designer Millard Sheets, who is was one of the most recognized and well-respected individuals in his field, and who is also included in the City’s List of Master Architects. Both the building and artwork installations at this site also satisfy this criterion for having “high aesthetic value” as they are masterful works of art with high aesthetic value. The subject property satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(B) in that it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical, architectural, and artistic significance. Further, the property satisfies BHMC 10-3-3212 subsection 10-3-3212(C) as it possesses high design merit and exceptional artistic and aesthetic value, and is also the representative work of a master designer who is listed on the City’s List of Master Architects.

Section 10. GENERAL GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR FUTURE PROPOSED CHANGES PURSUANT TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE (Section 10-3-3224). The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (1995) by Weeks and Grimmer (herein referred to as the SOI Standards and Guidelines) are incorporated as reference. These standards and guidelines have been formulated to ensure that any significant adverse changes to the property do not compromise those qualities that justify its listing as a landmark. The guidelines and standards are an aid to public and private property owners, and others, formulating plans for new construction, for rehabilitation or alteration of existing structures, and for site development. The guidelines pertain to buildings of all occupancy and construction types, sizes and materials, and pertain to construction on exterior of existing buildings as well as new, attached, or adjacent construction. The SOI Standards and Guidelines are also designed to be standards which City Staff and the Cultural Heritage Commission shall apply when making decisions about Certificates of Appropriateness as required by the

City of Beverly Hills Historic Preservation Ordinance. The location and boundaries of the delineated resource or resources are the property boundaries.

Section 11. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS. Designation of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building by Millard Sheets at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills as a local historic landmark 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 designation of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building would not have a significant environmental impact and is 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 the designation of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building may have a significant effect on the environment, as no specific development is authorized by this resolution, and any future development proposed pursuant this resolution will require separate environmental analysis when the details of those proposals are known. Further, designating the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building is an action of the City to protect and preserve an historic resource.

Section 12. GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY. Designation of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard as a local historic landmark is consistent with the objectives, principles, and standards of the General Plan. General Plan Policy "HP 1.3 - Promote National, State, and Local Designation of Historic Resources" encourages the establishment of programs encouraging the nomination of landmarks.

Section 13. The City Council hereby designates the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building by Millard Sheets at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard as a local landmark in the City of Beverly Hills and places this

property on the City of Beverly Hills Local Register of Historic Properties as Landmark No. 26, for the reasons set forth in this resolution.

Section 14. The record of proceedings for designation of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Building at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard as a local landmark included on the City's Register of Historic Properties is maintained by the City as part of the official records of the Community Development Department at 455 North Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, California, 90210.

Section 15. The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of the Resolution and shall cause the Resolution and his certification to be entered in the Book of Resolutions of the Council of the City of Beverly Hills. The City Clerk shall also cause the Resolution to be recorded in the office of the county recorder of the county of Los Angeles as authorized by Section 3215 K of Chapter 3 of Title 10 of the City of Beverly Hills Municipal Code..

Adopted:

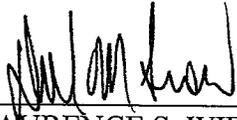
Lili Bosse
Mayor of the City of Beverly Hills,
California

ATTEST:

(SEAL)

BYRON POPE
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM



LAURENCE S. WIENER
City Attorney

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT

JEFFREY C. KOLIN
City Manager



SUSAN HEALY KEENE
Director of Community Development

Exhibit A – City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report and Attachments for Ahmanson Bank and Trust at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, CA Prepared by Ostashay & Associates Consulting

1740178.3

EXHIBIT A

CITY LANDMARK ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION REPORT



JANUARY 2014

AHMANSON BANK & TRUST [currently First Bank]
9145 Wilshire Boulevard, City of Beverly Hills, CA

Prepared for:

City of Beverly Hills
Community Development Department
Planning Division
455 Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Prepared by:

Jan Ostashay Principal
Ostashay & Associates Consulting
PO BOX 542, Long Beach, CA 90801

CITY LANDMARK ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION REPORT

Ahmanson Bank & Trust (1959)

[currently First Bank]
9145 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, CA 90201
APN: 4328-002-001

INTRODUCTION

This landmark assessment and evaluation report, completed by Ostashay & Associates Consulting for the City of Beverly Hills, documents and evaluates the local significance and landmark eligibility of the Millard Sheets designed bank building and associated artwork located at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard within the City of Beverly Hills. Included in the report is a discussion of the survey methodology used, a summarized description of the subject property and site-specific artwork, a brief contextual history of the site, the local landmark criteria considered in the evaluation process, a formal evaluation property for local significance, photographs, and applicable supporting materials.

METHODOLOGY

The landmark assessment was conducted by Jan Ostashay, Principal with Ostashay & Associates Consulting. In order to identify and evaluate the subject property as a potential local landmark, an intensive-level survey was conducted. The assessment included a review of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and its annual updates, the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and the California Historic Resources Inventory list maintained by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in order to determine if any previous evaluations or survey assessments of the property had been performed. The results of the records search indicates that the subject property has not been previously surveyed or documented.

For this current landmark assessment site inspections and a review of building permits and tax assessor records were conducted to document the property's existing condition and assist in evaluating the property for historical significance. The City of Beverly Hills landmark criteria were employed to evaluate the local significance of the site and its eligibility for landmark designation. In addition, the following tasks were performed for the study:

- Searched records of the National Register, California Register, and OHP Historic Resources Inventory.
- Conducted a field inspection of the subject property.

- Conducted site-specific research on the subject property utilizing Sanborn fire insurance maps, city directories, newspaper articles, historical photographs, and building permits.
- Reviewed and analyzed ordinances, statutes, regulations, bulletins, and technical materials relating to federal, state, and local historic preservation, designation assessment procedures, and related programs.
- Evaluated the potential historic resource based upon criteria established by the City of Beverly Hills and utilized the OHP survey methodology for conducting survey assessments.

FINDINGS

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust building located at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard appears to satisfy the City's criteria for designation as a local Landmark as required in Section 10-3-3212 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (BHMC 10-3-3212 (A)(B)(C)). This property satisfies the mandates of subsection A., which requires that at least two of the six "significance" criteria be met. Upon conclusion of the assessment, the subject property appears to meet four of the "significance" criteria: criterion A.1, A.2, A.3, and A.4. It also meets the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(B), which requires that: "a property retains integrity from its period of significance," and subsection 10-3-3212(C), which requires that: "a property has historic value."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Ahmanson Bank & Trust property (now occupied and owned by First Bank) is just east of Beverly Hills' commercial triangle district and abuts residential housing stock to the immediate north and commercial property to the east, west, and south. The improvement sits on two tied lots that each measure 50 feet by roughly 140 feet at the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and North Oakhurst Drive.

The former Ahmanson Bank & Trust building 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. A few years earlier, Sheets had designed Ahmanson's elegant Home Savings & Loan building (now Chase Bank) just a few blocks to the west at 9245 Wilshire Boulevard. Ahmanson appreciating good art and design commissioned Sheets again to design the permanent headquarters office of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard in 1959.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Description. Located along the north side of Wilshire Boulevard amongst the larger commercial chain-banking institutions along this busy thoroughfare the independent Ahmanson Bank & Trust bank building was built in 1959 as their main office.

The marble clad, neoclassical Greek inspired Modern style structure was designed by Millard Sheets in association with architect S. David Underwood who was a member of Sheets' design

studio. Rectangular in plan with an extended flat roof porte-cochere off its east (side) elevation the modest two-story bank building initially featured a fountain, indoor-outdoor reflecting pool, round elevator, and interior and exterior artwork. The façade (front, south elevation) abuts the sidewalk and features large aluminum framed glazed entry doors while the side (east) and rear elevations are punctuated by fixed pane fenestration. The rear (north) elevation also has a set of double glazed aluminum framed entry doors that open out to a paved parking lot. The initial design, massing, shape and form, and materials of the two-story property reflected a simple yet refined elegance that Ahmanson wanted to evoke to his local banking patrons.

The structure is capped with a flat roof with minimal parapet and has a decorative cornice line. Using similar materials found on the property located 9245 Wilshire Boulevard the Ahmanson Bank & Trust building is sheathed in Italian Lasa Bianco (white) marble with a top cornice faced with ceramic fired gold tiles. A huge golden winged lion or 'griffin' was originally set at the upper left corner of the front façade as was the bank's logo, a large capital "A" with a smaller capital "B" stacked over a smaller capital "T" just off to the right of it. The 'griffin' symbol was the Ahmanson business emblem and was incorporated into most of his financial institutions as well as his foundation. Much of the white marble and all of the glazed cornice line have been painted over by subsequent occupants of the structure. Both the 'griffin' and the bank's logo on the facade have been removed as well by those succeeding tenants. Two "monumental" Millard Sheets designed mosaics adorn the recessed wall space over the main entry off Wilshire Boulevard. The mosaic on the left depicts an image of a man and boy fishing while the mosaic on the right illustrates a group of women and girls in a tree with birds. These two mosaics are still intact over an altered entry approach and fenestration. Along the east side of the building are two uniquely designed concrete screens that help to diffuse visibility into the lobby area of the bank and also provides decorative interest to this elevation. The screens depict a modernistic interpretation of a tall tree with branches, leaves, and flying birds. This thematic design of the "tree of life" is also complemented on the interior of the building by the use of stained glass panels and inlaid wood elements. The multi-color inlaid marble scene on the east wall of the central banking area conveys the tree of life with various types of birds. From within the building this artistic element is visually framed by the outside concrete window screens that are evident through the flanking fenestration. Set as part of the glazing system along the rear (north) wall and exit door are two floor-to-ceiling stained glass pieces that depict the tree of life with various animals. When looking from within the building, the multi-color stained glass piece west (left) of the rear exit door illustrates a modernistic interpretation of a tree with ducks, rabbits, deer, peacocks, sheep, fish, chickens, etc. during the day (hence the word "DAY" at the bottom and the full sun at the top). The multi-color stained glass piece east (right) of the rear exit door shows the tree of life at night with stars sparkling and numerous animals, including a leopard, fish, bald eagle, horses, birds, lion, owls, dove, etc. within and or near the it (hence the word "NIGHT" at the bottom and the crescent moon at the top). Acting as an upper transom is a row of smaller stained glass panels depicting various animals set above the two elongated stained glass "DAY" and "NIGHT" panels. All of these pieces were the design of Millard Sheets many in association with Susan Hertel. They were executed with the aid of various artists and craftspeople from his design studio. The stained-glass windows were

fabricated by the Wallis-Wiley Studio of Pasadena. Master mosaicist Denis O’Conner participated in the production of the mosaics for the Sheet’s studio.

Building Permit History. A review of building permits and upon conducting an inspection of the site it appears that the property has undergone some exterior modifications since it was built in the late-1950s. Relevant alterations that have been recorded with the City of Beverly Hills, include the following:

MO/YEAR	DESCRIPTION OF WORK
Dec 1959	New basement and two-story bank building (\$250,000)
May 1959	Fire sprinkler system (\$2,000)
Oct 1960	Replacement of damaged cornice stone (\$2,500)
Mar 1972	Parking lot wall and landscaping (450)
Nov 1978	Canopy (\$2,500)
Nov 1980	ATM machine installed (\$2,500)
1996	Re-roof (\$1,927)
Jul 1997	Re-stripe parking lot for ADA compliance (\$6,000)
Dec 1997	Demo planters for ADA handrails (\$9,000)
Dec 1997	Block wall footings – Demo planters
Jun 2000	Install two signs: First Bank
Jun 2004	Replace ATM surround (5,000)
Jan 2007	Install wall sign for First Bank (\$3,500)
Feb 2011	Façade remodel/ATM replacement/ADA ramp/roof HVAC and screen (\$436,000)
Dec 2012	Re-roof
Jan 2013	Interior remodel/ADA restrooms/new front door (\$85,000)

The building has undergone a number of alterations over the years. Some of the early work such as the partial replacement of cornice stone was done as in-kind repair work under the supervision of Millard Sheets. Most of the more significant exterior alterations occurred when the bank changed hands in the mid-1970s. These recent modifications included painting over and/or physically removing some of the exterior features on the building’s front (south) and side (east) elevations, as well as some changes to the interior space.

Currently, however, the building is being restored by its current owner with in-kind materials using photographic and physical evidence. Many of the missing or broken features both on the exterior and within the interior are being repaired, replaced, and/or reconstructed in-kind. Because the overall composition and design of the existing building and its prominent site-specific artwork are still substantially intact the previous changes have not severely compromised its general historic character, unique architectural qualities, or important character-defining features.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Beverly Hills. The early settlement and development of Beverly Hills began on what was called Rancho Rodeo de las Aguas. This land was originally claimed by Mexican settlers Maria Rita Valdez and her husband Vicente Valdez around 1822. Aptly named The Ranch of the Gathering of the Waters, the swamps or “cienegas” that characterize the natural landscape were created by rain run off flowing out of Coldwater and Benedict Canyons. Vegetable farming, sheep herding, bee keeping and the raising of walnut trees were the primary agricultural activities within the rancho lands during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Several attempts at subdividing and establishing communities on the ranch lands were attempted during the 1860s and 1880s, but ended in failure.¹

In 1906, the Amalgamated Oil Company reorganized as the Rodeo Land and Water Company. Burton Green played a leading role in formulating the plans for a garden city, located between Whittier Drive on the west, Doheny Drive on the east, Wilshire Boulevard on the south, and the foothills above Sunset Boulevard to the north.² The syndicate hired notable California park planner, Wilbur F. Cook, Jr., to plan the new community. Cook had worked with landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted prior to moving to Oakland in 1905 to establish his own firm. Comprised of “Beverly” in the commercial triangle between Santa Monica and Wilshire boulevards and “Beverly Hills” north of Santa Monica Boulevard, the new community was one of the earliest planned communities in southern California.

In 1914, concern over establishment of a secure water system and the desire to improve the local school system prompted incorporation of the City of Beverly Hills. The original boundaries of the City were much the same as they are today, except for the area south of Wilshire Boulevard, annexed in 1915, and Trousdale Estates, annexed in 1955. Most of the City was open land at the time of incorporation with development scattered around Canon Drive, Beverly Drive, Crescent Drive, and the downtown triangle.³

The architecture of Beverly Hills in the years following the City’s founding was dominated by the Craftsman, Mission Revival, and Period Revival styles (Tudor, Georgian, Beaux-Arts Classicism). With Beverly Hills establishing itself as a haven for movie stars in the 1920s, the architectural character of the city began to realize a varying degree of extravagance in the

¹ *Beverly Hills Historic Resources Survey 1985-1986*, pg. 5.

² *Ibid*, pg. 8-9.

³ *Ibid*, pg. 11.

design of its housing stock. Flamboyant art directors and producers showed how delightful the art of set decoration could be applied to real life. Hence, fanciful houses such as Pickfair, Dias Dorados, and Greenacres were built. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s sophisticated period revival styles dominated both the domestic and commercial architecture of the city. By the mid to late 1930s Beverly Hills became one of the areas in southern California most closely connected with the development of the Hollywood Regency style. Born of the meeting of Moderne sleekness with the elegance of early nineteenth century architectural forms, it used simple, primary forms and blank wall surfaces to project exclusivity and sophistication.⁴ Beverly Hills' architecture in the post-World War II era saw the incorporation of Revival references in its new building stock, and also the introduction of contemporary, luxury designs reflective of the International Style and Mid-century Modern idiom. The International Style, Corporate Modernism, and Mid-century Modernism dominated the commercial, banking, and office buildings constructed throughout much of the City in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly along Wilshire Boulevard and within the downtown commercial triangle area. During the 1960s and 1970s, the City's downtown urbanization continued until the westernmost section of the downtown area was as densely developed as any other southern California office cluster outside of downtown Los Angeles.⁵

9145 Wilshire Boulevard, Ahmanson Bank & Trust. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company was founded as a local financial institution in 1957 by Howard F. Ahmanson. It was established as a small independent bank that provided personalized service to the "old-line" residents of Beverly Hills and the surrounding communities. The bank's slogan "A Distinguished Bank for Distinguished People," said it all. The concept for this bank was focused on luxury and personal service. Ahmanson promised that in his private bank, customers would not have to wait in line.⁶ If customers could not come to the bank an officer would go to them. By designing high counters and other adult-like amenities children were discouraged from coming into the bank. Sheets designed the building with an artistic sense of security, stability, and trust.

The opening of this bank marked another Ahmanson venture into the financial industry that also included operation of the Homes Savings and Loan Association and the National American Insurance Company. Guests at the formal ground breaking ceremony for the Ahmanson Bank & Trust held February 19, 1959 included William H. Ahmanson, then president of the bank; Beverly Hills mayor George Davis; David B. Heyler, representing the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce; Wayne S. Mullin, vice-present of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; and Millard Sheets, the designer of the structure.

In June of 1960, the building received a Los Angeles Beautiful award for its outstanding efforts towards beautifying the Los Angeles region. Out of over 300 nominations, the Ahmanson Bank & Trust building was one of forty winners of this award, which was given for contributing to the beautification and aesthetic development of the community by the Los Angeles Beautiful Committee.

⁴ *Ibid.* pg. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 19.

⁶ *Abrahamson, Eric John. Building Homes: Howard F. Ahmanson and the Politics of the American Dream, pg. 159.*

This branch and headquarters office of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust closed in 1976 and became a branch of the California Overseas Bank. This new occupant of the bank building painted over much of the structure's white marble cladding and gold ceramic cornice tiles in a dark green color in an attempt to modernize the property. It was also at this time that the Ahmanson Bank & Trust logo and Ahmanson's winged lion logo figure were removed from the façade. They also removed the lower, 5th row of screening detail from each of the two concrete window/wall screens along the side (east) elevation.

The building is now occupied by First Bank, who had painted over the dark green color of the exterior with a neutral white color to complement the visibly remaining white marble cladding on the building. They are currently rehabilitating the building and restoring many of the broken, damaged, or missing site-specific art elements, however.

Howard F. Ahmanson, Sr. The H.F. Ahmanson & Company was a California holding company named after its founder Howard Fieldstead Ahmanson, Sr. It is best known as the parent of Home Savings of America. Ahmanson was born in Omaha, Nebraska on July 1, 1906. After graduating from the University of Southern California he established his own company in 1927, which specialized in casualty insurance. During the depression the company prospered by dealing with foreclosures. In 1943, Ahmanson bought control of Omaha-based National American Insurance Company. Following the end of World War II, he purchased the Home Building and Loan Association (later renamed Home Savings and Loan and then Homes Savings of America), a savings and loan association in 1947. Founded in 1889, Home Savings became the cornerstone of its parent company, H.F. Ahmanson & Company. In the decade that followed, Ahmanson acquired 18 additional financial institutions, merged them under the name Homes Savings and Loan, and turned the group into a financial giant.

While involved in this burgeoning savings and loan association, H.F. Ahmanson also formed the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company in 1957, the National American Title Insurance Company in 1958, and the National American Life Insurance Company of California in 1961. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust was Ahmanson's private banking institution created to cater to the old time residents of Beverly Hills. Members of the board initially included Howard Ahmanson, chairman; Robert H. Ahmanson; William H. Ahmanson; Wade Bennett; Kenneth D. Childs; Robert M. DeKruif; David H. Hannah; Jack Irvine; and Donald A. Wilson. Bennett, who was president of the Hollywood State Bank from 1950 to 1956, became the president of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust in November 1959.

Having hired Sheets to design his H.F. Ahmanson & Company and National American Fire Insurance Company building as well as the Home Savings & Loan headquarters building at 9245 Wilshire Boulevard, Ahmanson commissioned Millard Sheets once again to design his private, independent bank facility at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard. As he did with the Home Savings & Loan building Ahmanson wanted Sheets to design a building that integrated the entire site and combined the art and flavor of the local community with the utilitarian needs of a banking institution. The building was similar in scale, form, and general appearance as the nearby Home Savings & Loan structure but was smaller in mass. The well designed building with its luxurious

offices, site specific-artwork and purposeful landscaping visually reflected Ahmanson's goal of having a strong, conservative, and independent bank with artistic value.

Howard F. Ahmanson suffered a heart attack and died on June 17, 1968, while on vacation in Belgium with his second wife Caroline Leonetti Ahmanson and his son by his first marriage. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust continued to operate into the mid-1970s until it merged with California Overseas Bank (renamed Century Bank) and became a branch office that institution until it was acquired by First Bank & Trust in 1999.

Millard Sheets. One of the most prominent figures in the southern California art and design community, Millard Sheets exerted a wide influence through his prolific artistic practice, his role as an educator, and his curatorial initiatives. A Pomona native, Sheets studied art and taught watercolor at Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, where his virtuosic and innovative pursuit of the medium and focus on California subject matter established his reputation. In accordance with his belief that art should be integral to all aspects of daily living, Sheets also worked in the applied arts. From 1931 to 1953 he designed and painted murals for private and public buildings, created department store displays, and produced illustrations. This business evolved into his Claremont based firm Millard Sheets Design, Inc., which designed and executed large-scale murals, mosaics, and stained-glass windows. Sheets' artistic legacy in southern California is most visible in the design and decoration of more than 120 branches of the Home Savings and Loan Association, an endeavor he began in 1952. His influence was also felt through his teaching and curatorial efforts. He served on the faculty and later as director of art at Scripps College and Claremont Graduate School, and was also the director of the Los Angeles County Art Institute. As director of art exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Fair from 1931 to 1956, Sheets exposed the work of contemporary local artists and craftspeople to a broad public. He was again commissioned by Howard F. Ahmanson to design his private bank and headquarters for the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Company at 9145 Wilshire Boulevard. Using many of the design principles and materials as he used for the various Home Savings & Loan branch offices Sheets designed the Modern style Ahmanson Bank & Trust building with neoclassical Greek influences and site-specific artwork throughout the site.

Sheets relocated to northern California (Gualala in Mendocino County) sometime in the mid-1970s where he built a home and studio, which he called Barking Rocks. He eventually settled there with his wife permanently in 1978. Outside of California his major commissions included murals for the Detroit Public Library, the Mayo Clinic, the dome of the National Shrine in Washington, D.C., the Notre Dame University Library, and the Hilton Hotel in Honolulu. His art work has been widely exhibited and is included in the collections of many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Millard Sheets passed away at his home in Gualala on the Mendocino coast at the age 81 on March 31, 1989.

EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Evaluation Criteria. In analyzing the historical significance of the subject property, criteria for designation under the City's local landmark program was considered. Additionally,

consideration of historical integrity and the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) survey methodology was used to survey and assess the relative significance of the property.

City of Beverly Hills Landmark Criteria. The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code Title 10 Chapter 3 Article 32; BHMC 10-3-32) authorizes the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) to recommend the nomination of properties as local landmarks to the City Council. The Council may designate local landmarks and historic districts by the procedures outlined in the ordinance.

The Preservation Ordinance also establishes criteria and the process for evaluating and designating properties as potential local landmarks. Under the City's criteria a property must be more than 45 years old, unless it possesses exceptional significance; retain sufficient historical integrity to physically illustrate its significance; and satisfy significance criteria.

To be eligible for local designation as a historic landmark, properties must satisfy the following criteria:

- A. The property meets at least two of the following (significance) criteria:
 - 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, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
 - 2. Is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history;
 - 3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction;
 - 4. Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value;
 - 5. Has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City or community;
 - 6. Is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park 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.

- B. The property retains integrity from its period of significance. The proposed landmark retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular significance criteria specified above.

- C. The property has historic value. The proposed landmark 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 purposes of the City's historic preservation ordinance.

California Office of Historic Preservation Survey Methodology. The evaluation instructions and classification system prescribed by the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in its publication *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources* provide a three-digit evaluation rating code for use in classifying potential historic resources. The first digit indicates one of the following general evaluation categories for use in conducting cultural resources surveys:

1. Property listed in the National Register or the California Register;
2. Property determined eligible for listing in the National Register or the California Register;
3. Property appears eligible for the National Register or the California Register through a survey evaluation;
4. Property appears eligible for the National Register or the California Register through other evaluation;
5. Property recognized as historically significant by local government;
6. Property not eligible for any listing or designation; and
7. Property not evaluated for the National Register or California Register or needs re-evaluation.

The second digit of the evaluation status code is a letter code indicating whether the resource is separately eligible (S), eligible as part of a district (D), or both (B). The third digit is a number that is used to further specify significance and refine the relationship of the property to the National Register and/or California Register. Under this evaluation system, categories 1 through 4 pertain to various levels of National Register and/or California Register eligibility. The California Register, however, may also include surveyed resources with evaluation rating codes through level 5. In addition, properties found ineligible for listing in the National Register, California Register, or for designation under a local ordinance are given an evaluation status code of 6.

Historical Integrity. "Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance." In addition to meeting the criteria of significance, a property must have integrity. Integrity is the authenticity of a property's physical identity clearly indicated by the retention of characteristics that existed during the property's period of significance. Properties eligible for local landmark designation must meet at least two of the local landmark designation criteria and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their historical significance.

Both the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources recognize the seven aspects of qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity. To retain historic integrity a property should possess several, and usually most, of these seven aspects. Thus, the retention of the specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. The seven qualities that define integrity are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The seven qualities or aspects of historical integrity are defined as follows:

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Application of City Landmark (Significance) Criteria. In summary, based on current research and the above assessment the three Millard Sheets designed artwork installations located at 9245 Wilshire Boulevard, 9145 Wilshire Boulevard, and 450 North Rexford Drive appear to meet the necessary City of Beverly Hills Landmark criteria.

The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria, as follows:

- A. The property meets at least two of the following criteria (BHMC 10-3-3212(A)).

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(1) *The property 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, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community.*

This particular property was designed and built to serve the financial needs of the local community of Beverly Hills. Howard F. Ahmanson was intent on creating an independent private bank that provided exceptional customer service to the residents of the city and that

was also aesthetically pleasing and appreciated by the community and others. Ahmanson believed that many of the commercial buildings of the day lacked the presence of integrated art. Thus, he gave Millard Sheets liberty to design a modest financial institution that not only conveyed stability, security, and trust but also an appreciation of the arts. The bank building maintained its local presence until it closed in the mid-1970s. 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, artistry and aesthetic value, and general function and use of the site as a specialty banking facility. Upon review and consideration, the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(2) *The property is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history.*

The design and development of the subject property and its site-specific artwork is due in part to Howard F. Ahmanson, the bank's first president and owner. Because of his appreciation of the arts and financial investment in aesthetics he had the wherewithal to allow Millard Sheets to realize his vision in the form of the subject property. This collaborative effort between the client/owner and designer created a unique financial institution that conveyed stability, strengthen, security, and trust, as well as a sense of community and family. Because of this type of incentive to invest in local architecture and art Ahmanson is considered a significant person important to the community. Thus, the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(3) *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction.*

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 independent type bank building. The Ahmanson Bank & Trust property demonstrates some of the key characteristic elements of the style and the unique collaborative effort of integrating architecture and art. Such design features include the building's Italian white marble cladding, top cornice faced with fired gold tiles, fired gold tiles on the porte cochere and elsewhere on the building, symmetry and proportion of design, and the incorporation of large site-specific artwork into the design of the building and site. The skillful design, composition, materials, and artistry of these elements collective make the property a valuable example important for its style, type and method of construction. The type and method of construction for the site-specific Millard Sheets designed artwork installations entails expertise that only masters in their field could have attained. With his design team Sheets created initial sketches of the artwork, then created full-color gouaches, made full-size projections of the approved designs, and selected the correct tile colors. The small, textured glass tiles were hand cut into the perfect shapes, mixing shades to give the illusion depth, movement, and shadows. They were then pasted onto numbered sections of paper, and then delivered to the site for installation. The tiles were then installed onto the facing of the bank's exterior wall. Set with a base layer of cement the tiles were carefully inlaid and finished with a

grout sealer.⁷ 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. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(4) The property represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value.

Millard Sheets (1907-1989) was a highly acclaimed painter, designer, illustrator, and artist who worked in various mediums of the craft. He was also a strong proponent for the integration of art and architecture and as such incorporated all forms of art, including murals, mosaics, sculpture, stained glass, and ceramic into his architectural designs. He worked primarily throughout much of southern California, including Beverly Hills. He is most recognized for his work in designing many of the Home Savings & Loan financial institutions throughout the State and elsewhere in the country. He also was the architect for the subject property, the Ahmanson Bank & Trust building. Though not a licensed architect, Sheets is credited for the architectural design of the subject property and its associated site-specific interior and exterior artwork. This property along with the bank building at 9245 Wilshire Boulevard (Chase Bank) and the large mosaic recently installed on the west wall of the Civic Center parking structure (number 5) at 450 North Rexford Drive represents Sheets' extant portfolio of work within the City of Beverly Hills. In consideration of the subject property's association with a noted master architect and an individual listed on the City's List of Master Architects this significance criterion appears satisfied.

Besides architectural merit, the site-specific artwork integrated into the subject property also possesses high artistic and aesthetic value. The interwoven artwork inside and outside of the building is an artistic object of noteworthy interest and value in that they convey various forms of family values and the tree of life in their design and meaning. Because of their site-specific thematic content and mastery of design and execution the various pieces of artwork on the property are highly valued as an aspect of community sentiment and pride. In applying the artistic and aesthetic portion of this criterion to the subject property it appears warranted and satisfied.

BHMC 10-3-3212(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.

The subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(6) The property is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park 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.

⁷ Arenson, Adam. "Paying Dividends," *Huntington Frontiers*, March 16, 2012, in *Fall/Winter 2011*.

The subject property is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources, nor has it been formally determined eligible for listing on the National Register or the California Register. The subject property, therefore, does not satisfy this criterion.

B. The property retains integrity from its Period of Significance (BHMC 10-3-3212(B)).

The period of significance for the subject property is from 1959, when the building was completed and opened for business, to 1976 when it ceased operating and merged with another financial institution. Those important characteristics and features of the building, including its location, setting, overall design, materials, spatial relationships, and site-specific artwork from the property's period of significance are still sufficiently evident to convey its historical, architectural, and artistic significance. Therefore, they appear to satisfy this criterion.

C. The property has Historic Value (BHMC 10-3-3212 (C)).

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. Therefore, the property appears to satisfy this criterion.

Character-defining Features. Every historic property is unique, with its own identity and its own distinguishing character. A property's form and detailing are important in defining its visual historic character and significance. It is a property's tangible features or elements that embody its significance for association with specific historical events, important personages, or distinctive architecture and it is those tangible elements; therefore, that should be retained and preserved.

Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic property. According to *National Park Service Brief 17, Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character*, character-defining features include the overall shape of a property (building, structure, etc.), its material, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features (as applicable), as well as the various aspects of its site and immediate environment (form, configuration and orientation).

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* defines historic character by the form and detailing of materials, such as masonry, wood, stucco, plaster, terra cotta, metal, etc.; specific features, such as roofs, porches, windows and window elements, moldings, staircases, chimneys, driveways, garages, landscape and hardscape elements, etc.; as well as spatial relationships between buildings, structures, and features; room configurations; and archaic structural and mechanical systems. Identifying those features or elements that give a historic property visual character and which should be taken into account and preserved to the maximum extent possible is important in order for the property to maintain its historical significance.

The key features associated with the subject property that are visible and evident from the public right-of-way include, but are not limited to, its prominent location at the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and North Oakhurst Drive; its current form, massing, scale, proportion, orientation, height, materials, and general design scheme; and those physical attributes that define the property's type and style (Modern with neoclassical Greek influences). Additional exterior character-defining features include the building's Italian Lasa Bianco (white) marble cladding, ceramic-fired gold tiles (some currently painted over), the decorative cornice, glass tesserae mosaics, the porte cochere with decorative features and driveway, plaster "tree of life" window wall screen adjacent the side (east) elevation, landscaped planter boxes and associated landscape features, and orientation and location of entry doors on the front (south) and rear (north) of the building. Character-defining features of the Sheets designed site-specific artwork includes, but is not limited to its materials (glazed tiles, marble, glass, lead, wood, plaster/concrete, etc.), size and shape, content of design and theme, form, volume, setting, location, texture, finish, color, transparency in some instances (stained glass), installation method and materials, and public visibility.

CONCLUSION

As discussed above, the Ahmanson Bank & Trust property appears to meet the City of Beverly Hill's criteria for local landmark designation, as required in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (BHMC Section 10-3-3212).

The property satisfies the requirement of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(1), in that it "exemplifies important elements of the City's cultural, economic, and architectural history." The property also satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(2), in that it "is directly associated with the lives of significant persons important to national, state, City or local history." The general idea and financial incentive to incorporate art and architecture into the design of the subject property is credited to Howard F. Ahmanson, the initial president and namesake of the bank. In addition, the subject property satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(3), in that it "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction." The building and site-specific artwork embodies the distinguishing features of a particular property type (bank) and the architectural style of Modern design with neoclassical Greek influences. Because of its method of design, execution, and assembly the site-specific artwork also embody and physically reflect unique and distinctive methods of construction. And finally, under the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(A)(4), the building and site-specific artwork satisfy this criterion in that they "represent a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects." Both the Ahmanson Bank & Trust headquarters office/bank and its associated site-specific artwork were designed by noted artist and designer Millard Sheets, who is was one of the most recognized and well-respected individuals in his field, and who is also included in the City's List of Master Architects. Both the building and artwork installations at this site also satisfy this criterion for having "high aesthetic value" as they are masterful works of art with high aesthetic value. The subject property satisfies the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(B) in that it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical, architectural, and artistic significance. Further, the property satisfies

BHMC 10-3-3212 subsection 10-3-3212(C) as it possesses high design merit and exceptional artistic and aesthetic value, and is also the representative work of a master designer who is listed on the City's List of Master Architects.

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APPENDIX

Tax Assessor Map

Location Map

Photographs

Ephemeral Material

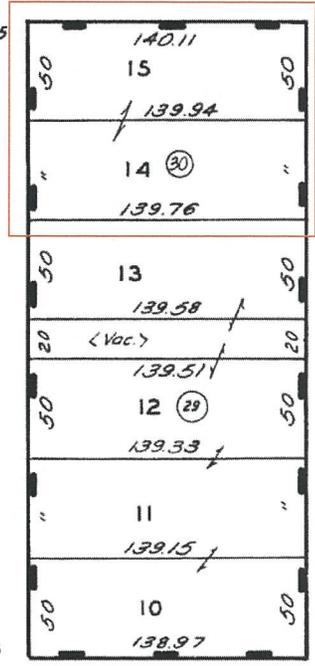
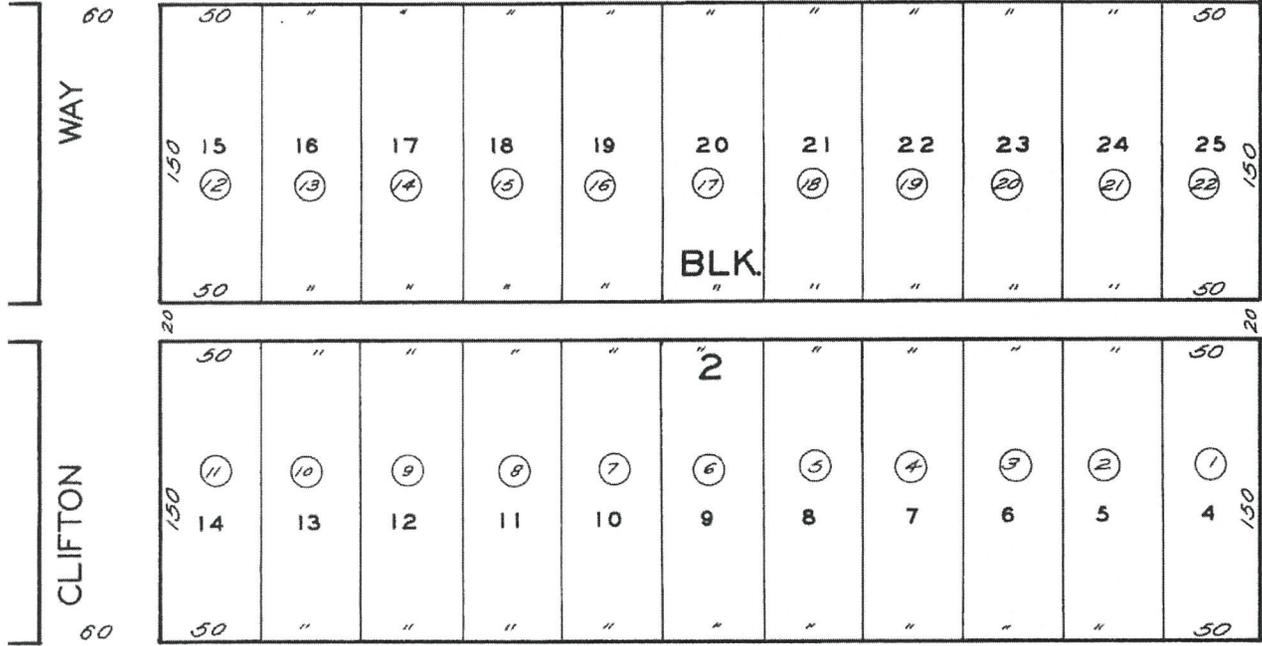
TAX ASSESSOR MAP

4342 | 32
SCALE 1" = 60'

OAKHURST

DR.

3-8-58
4-19-60
7-15-60



BLVD.

PALM DR.

9145 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

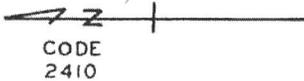
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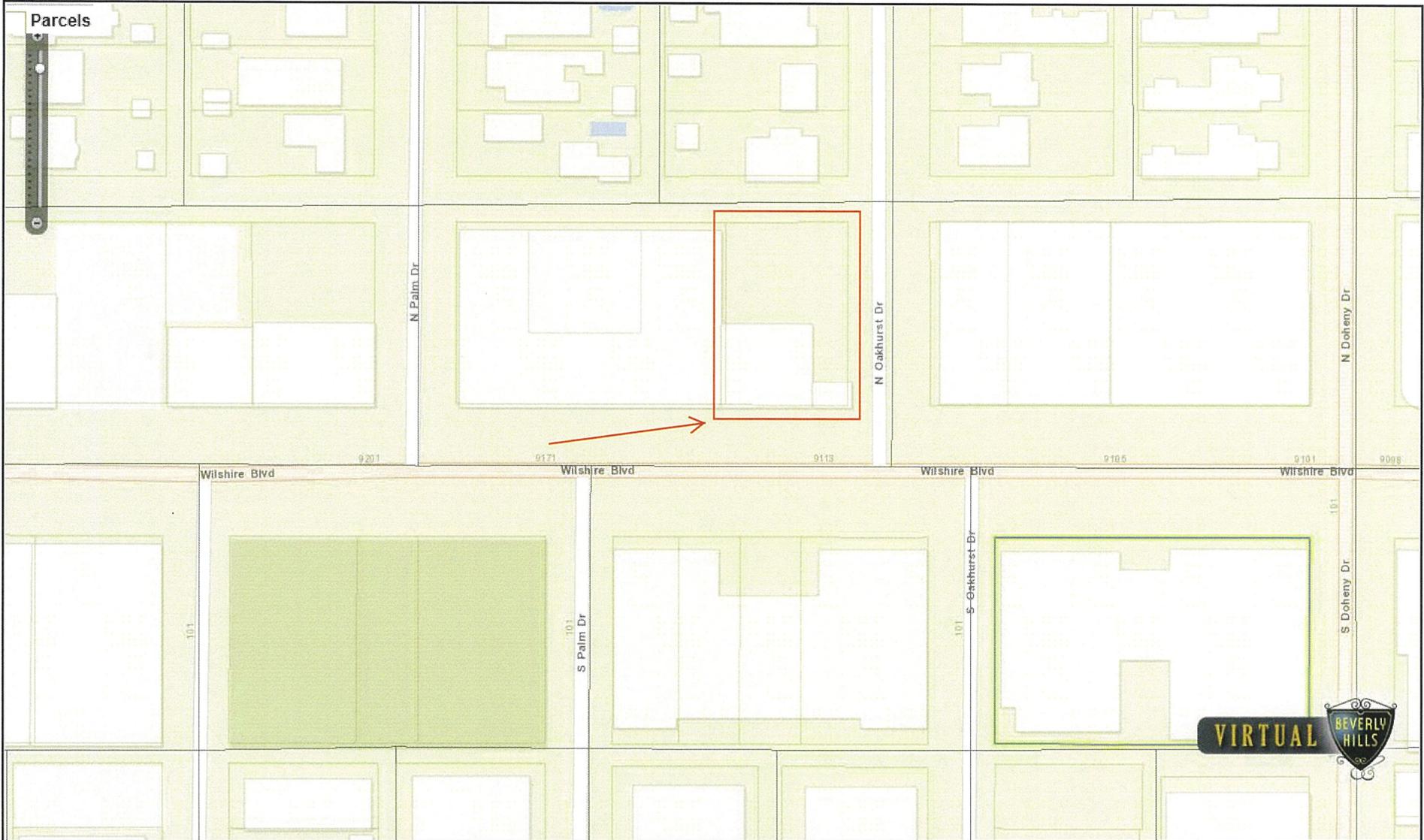
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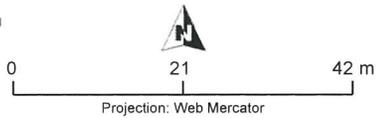


FOR PREV. ASSMT. SEE: 1690-32

LOCATION MAP



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Author:

Date: 26 December 2013

9145 Wilshire Boulevard Location Map

PHOTOGRAPHS

9145 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD



PHOTO - 1: Oblique view of property with front wall mosaics and concrete screens visible, looking northwest



PHOTO - 2: Context view of wall mosaics over front entry to building, looking north



PHOTO - 3: Mosaic detail, west (left) panel on front of building



PHOTO - 4: Mosaic detail, east (right) panel on front of building



PHOTO - 5: Porte cochere element of east (side) elevation, looking northwest



PHOTO - 6: Exposed original gilded ribbed tiles (most are painted over with grey color paint), off east elevation



PHOTO - 7: East elevation context view, looking west (photo credit: Google Earth)



PHOTO - 8: Concrete window screens along east (side) elevation, looking southwest



PHOTO - 9: Concrete screen detail showing now removed elements intact in 1980 (photo credit: Paramount Pictures, "American Gigolo")

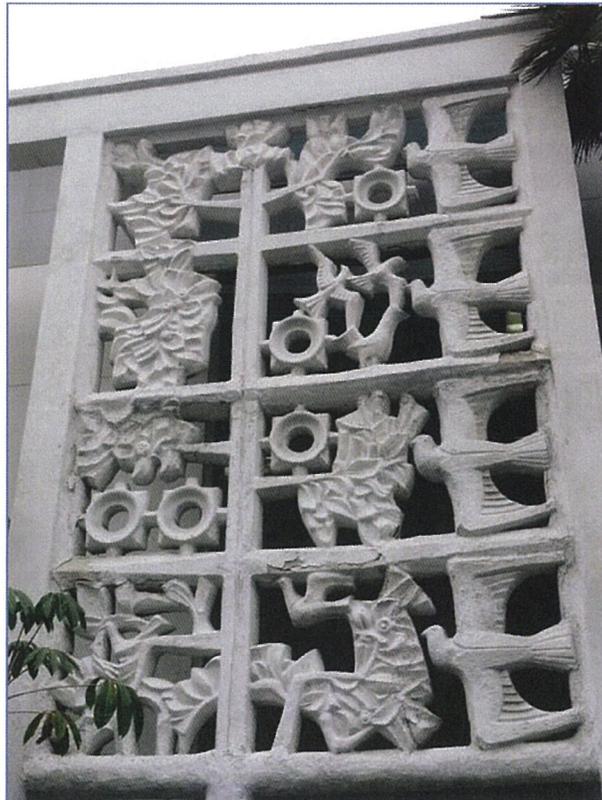


PHOTO - 10: Concrete screen detail, looking west



PHOTO - 11: Backside of concrete screens on east (side) elevation, looking north



PHOTO - 12: Interior view of concrete screens (exterior) and tree of life mosaic (interior), looking east



PHOTO - 13: Context view of north (rear) and east (side) elevation, looking southwest (photo credit: Google Earth)



PHOTO - 14: Stained glass window detail from exterior of building, north elevation, looking southwest



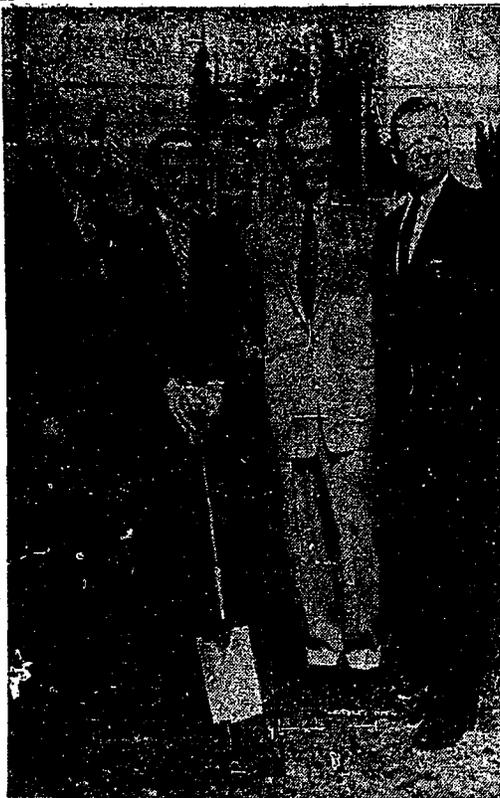
PHOTO - 15: Stained glass window detail from exterior of building, north elevation, looking southeast



PHOTO - 16: "NIGHT" (right) and "DAY" (left) themed stained glass windows at rear (north) exit of building from interior

EPHEMERAL MATERIAL

Ground Broken for New Ahmanson Bank
Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Feb 20, 1959
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989)
pg. B2



BANK SITE- -At ground-breaking ceremonies for Ahmanson Bank & Trust Co., in Beverly Hills are, left to right, Wayne S. Mullin, L.A. Chamber of Commerce, William H. Ahmanson, bank president, Howard Ahmanson, board chairman, and Millard Sheets designer of the new structure, 9145 Wilshire.

Ground Broken for New Ahmanson Bank

Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new permanent office of the Ahmanson Bank & Trust Co. were held yesterday at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. (corner of Oakhurst Dr.), Beverly Hills.

William H. Ahmanson, president, said he expects construction of the two-story, marble-clad structure to be completed Sept. 1 at an estimated cost of \$350,000, excluding land purchase.

Guests attending the ceremony included Beverly Hills Mayor George Davis, David B. Heyler, representing the

Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce; Wayne S. Mullin, vice-president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and Millard Sheets, designer of the 4,340 sq.-ft. structure.

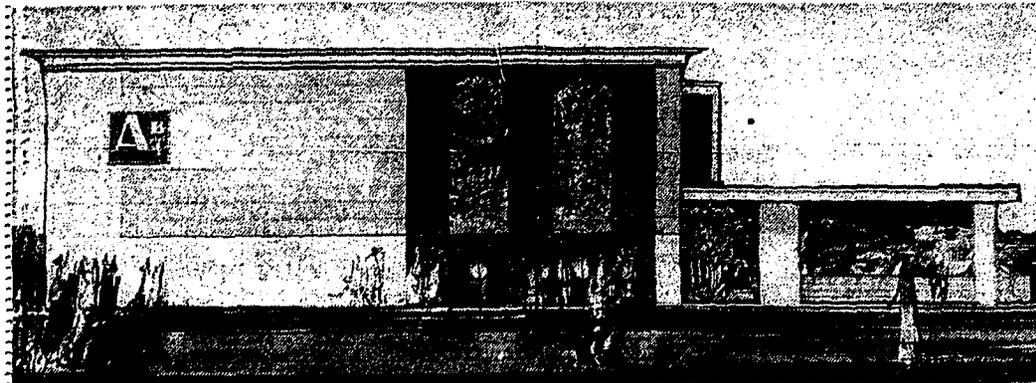
Other Officers

Besides Ahmanson, bank officers include R. H. Hill, vice-president; Robert B. Whitney, secretary; Frank Lober, cashier; Howard F. Ahmanson, chairman of the board of directors, and William H. Ahmanson, Robert H. Ahmanson, Kenneth D. Childs, Robert M. DeKruif, David H. Hannah, Jack Irvine and Donald H. Wilson, board members.

The bank presently is located at 8926 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills.

Photo Standalone 19 -- No Title

Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File): Mar 1, 1959;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989)
pg. G14



BEVERLY HILLS BANK--Sketch of permanent office of Ahmanson Bank & Trust Co. now rising at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. is shown above. The two-story marble-clad structure was designed by Artist Mil-

lard Sheets in association with Architect S. David Underwood. Cost of the building will be \$350,000. Features include fountain, indoor-outdoor pool, and round elevator. Pozzo Construction Co. is contractor.

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Design of Bank Building Cited
Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File): Jul 10, 1960.
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989)
pg 118

Design of Bank Building Cited

The Ahmanson Bank and Trust Co. of Beverly Hills was honored with an award for contributing to "the beautification and aesthetic development of the community," it was announced today.

Presenting the award was Mrs. Rose Navarro, chairman of the Community Awards Committee, a department of the Los Angeles Beautiful Committee, headed by Mrs. Valley M. Knudsen, chairman.

Bank president Wade Bennett accepted the award on behalf of the institution at a luncheon held at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. The Ahmanson Bank is located at 9145 Wilshire Blvd. in Beverly Hills.

Built in contemporary classic tradition, the two-story building is faced with Italian Lassa-white marble with the top sheathed in ceramic-fired gold. A huge, golden winged-lion adorns the southern wall facing Wilshire Blvd.

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