MEMORANDUM

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CITY OF SANTA MONICA
PLANNING DIVISION

DATE: April 13, 2015
TO: Honorable Members of the Landmarks Commission
FROM: Planning Staff
SUBJECT: 174 Kinney Street, 15ENT-0084

Public Hearing to Consider a Landmark Designation Application for the existing one-story commercial building (Enterprise Fish Company) located at 174 Kinney Street.

PROPERTY OWNER: COC Real Estate LLC
APPLICANT: City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Commission will be conducting a public hearing to consider a landmark designation application for the subject building, a one-story commercial building (currently in operation as the Enterprise Fish Company restaurant) located at 174 Kinney Street. Originally constructed in 1913 with significant improvements made to the façade in 1926, the building is vernacular commercial in design with added Art Deco architectural elements. The building’s original architect is not known.

The building was identified by the Landmarks Commission as one of its priorities for potential designation along the Main Street corridor. On February 9, 2015, the Commission formally filed a landmark designation application after a brief discussion on the building. Please note that the application was filed solely for the building that faces Kinney Street. The 171 Pier Avenue building in the rear was not a part.

The City’s historic consultant, Architectural Resources Group “(ARG)”, has conducted the necessary research and prepared a written report of its findings. The revised report is included as an attachment. This report concludes that 174 Kinney Street appears to satisfy two of the landmark designation criteria and appears eligible for listing as a City of Santa Monica Landmark.
Historic Status

The property at 174 Kinney Street has been previously evaluated twice as part of the City’s ongoing historic resource survey efforts. In 1983, it was assigned a status code of 3 (appears eligible for National Register of California Register through survey evaluation) and was also recommended to be a contributor to a potential Main Street Commercial Historic District. In 2007, this status code was updated to 5D3 (appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation). In its update of the City’s historic resource inventory, ICF Jones & Stokes recommended the property to be a contributor to a potential Main Street Commercial Historic District.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Notice of the public hearing was provided as follows: Pursuant to SMMC Section 9.36.120, notice of the public hearing was mailed to all owners and residential and commercial tenants of property within a 300-foot radius of the project and was published in the Santa Monica Daily Press at least ten consecutive calendar days prior to the hearing. A copy of the notice is included as Attachment C.

ANALYSIS

Architectural Description

The property at 174 Kinney Street is a one story rectangular building with brick and stucco cladding, designed in a commercial vernacular manner, with Art Deco design elements added at later date (in 1926) to its primary façade. The roof is low-pitched, front-gabled roof and features three monitors at the roof ridge. The two northernmost monitors have hipped roofs and feature multi-light wood skylights. The primary façade is symmetrical and divided into three bays, which are articulated by brick pilasters. A recessed entry of partially glazed double wood doors, surrounded by wide wood sidelights and a transom, is located in the central bay. Large paired fixed wood windows are located in each outer bay. The entrance doors, sidelights, and transom in the central bay likely replaced a vehicular (automobile) entry when the building became a restaurant in the late 1970s. The west elevation features paired multi-light wood casement windows with thick concrete lintels that are uniformly spaced on the façade. Near the center of the elevation are a single multi-light wood casement window and a plain wood door. The east elevation faces a narrow patio now used for outdoor dining purposes. Much of the façade is not visible from the public right-of-way. The elevation has been re-clad with stucco, and two small wood additions have been constructed near its south end.

It appears as though the building was designed and functioned as a garage from approximately 1926 until it was converted to a restaurant use in 1978-79. Although permit records do not specify actual work performed, the consultant speculates that the
alterations to the building that have occurred were done to accommodate the new restaurant use, including:

- new primary doors, sidelights and transom at the main entry;
- glazing replacement in the fixed wood windows in the primary façade;
- the addition of oversize lanterns at the top of the parapet;
- the installation of seismic anchor plates;
- wall recladding and the construction of several small wood additions at the east elevation; and
- the addition of exterior light fixtures and planters.

Discussion

The subject building was owned and redesigned by the Pacific Electric company beginning in 1926, however, its use by this company and in what function is unknown. In fact, City business directories indicate the continuous use of the garage by local automobile repair businesses between 1928 and 1961. The City’s consultant does not believe that the building was used as a car barn or transfer station by Pacific Electric as its openings do not appear large or tall enough to enable use as a streetcar barn. That is not to say that a portion of the space may have served other Pacific Electric functions. However, its association with the company is not fully apparent to staff.

The property at 174 Kinney Street reflects a commercial vernacular idiom with distinctive Art Deco design elements including its fluted pilasters that emphasize the verticality of the building. The Art Deco style was most often used in the construction of commercial buildings from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s in Southern California and Santa Monica has numerous examples of Art Deco commercial architecture including the Wilshire Theater (1930), the Bay Cities Guaranty Building (1929), the Central Tower Building (1929) and 301-315 Wilshire Boulevard (1930) which are better examples of the style. All of these examples are designated City Landmarks.

Landmarks Ordinance/Findings and Staff Recommendation

The Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission to review the subject building’s eligibility as a landmark based on the six criteria below. The Commission may designate a building as a Landmark if it meets one or more of these criteria. The City’s historic consultant has analyzed the subject property and prepared a report of its findings as stated below. They conclude that it meets two of the City’s criteria for designation (Criterion #1, and 6). Although staff generally concurs with this recommendation, the import of this building relative to the Pacific Electric Railway Company is not clear or even relevant.

(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.
The property at 174 Kinney Street is associated with the early commercial development of Santa Monica, in particular the most intense period of development of the Ocean Park neighborhood during the 1910s and 1920s. It is a representative, largely intact example of an automobile repair garage that serviced the cars of locals and visitors at a time when automobiles came to eclipse public transportation. The building was owned by the Pacific Electric Railway Company and sited along its right-of-way, Trolleyway (now Neilson Way); while it is not clear how or whether Pacific Electric used the facility for streetcar-related functions, the historical association with the company is unquestionable. In addition, the subject building is a rare surviving example of a 1910s-1920s building on Neilson Way in this part of Ocean Park. As it exemplifies elements of the cultural, social, economic, and architectural history of Santa Monica, the property appears to satisfy this criterion as an individual property.

(2)  *It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.*

The subject property is a largely intact example of a commercial vernacular building with Art Deco elements. However, as one of many examples of this style in Santa Monica, and as a comparably modest example which has experienced some alterations to its original appearance, its aesthetic or artistic value is not highly significant, unusual, or noteworthy; it does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

(3)  *It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.*

No evidence was found that the property at 174 Kinney Street is associated with historic personages or with important events in local, state, or national history. It does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

(4)  *It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.*

While the subject property exhibits elements of the Art Deco architectural style, its overall effect is more vernacular than exemplary, and it does not embody distinguishing architectural characteristics. It is relatively modest in scale and ornamentation compared to many other examples in Santa Monica, and does not possess any unusual or outstanding characteristics valuable to the study of a period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship. The building is not a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail, or historical type and is not distinguished among other examples of the style in the larger body of commercial architecture in the Ocean Park neighborhood or the City as a whole. It does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

(5)  *It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.*
The property at 174 Kinney Street was designed by in-house designers at Pacific Electric Railway and was built by Houghton and Anderson, a Los Angeles contracting firm. Houghton and Anderson worked on a variety of project types and do not appear to have been notable builders. The subject property was not designed or built by a notable builder, designer, or architect, and does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

The subject property is flush with the east side of Neilson Way (Trolleyway); this area was part of the Pacific Electric right-of-way and was mostly undeveloped during the historic period. Today most of the adjacent blocks to the north and south of 174 Kinney Street contain parking lots and modern infill. For these reasons, the property does occupy an unusual location, though not unique as traditionally defined (one of a kind). It has become an established and familiar visual feature of Ocean Park’s Main Street commercial district and is a prominent building. The property appears to satisfy this criterion.

Pursuant to SMMC 9.36.180, the Landmarks Commission’s determination regarding this application may be appealed to the City Council if the appeal is filed with the City Planning Division within ten (10) consecutive days commencing from the date that the decision is made by the Landmarks Commission.

Attachments:

B. Public Hearing Notice
C. DPR Sheets
D. Aerial Photograph