

Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2012-1408-CR

HEARING DATE: June 7, 2012
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 700 W. State Dr.
Council District: 8
Community Plan Area: South Los Angeles
Area Planning Commission: South Los Angeles
Neighborhood Council: Empowerment Congress North Area

REQUEST: Comments to State of California Office of Historic Preservation on proposed listing of the California Aerospace Museum to the California Register of Historical Resources

APPLICANT: Kelly Sutherlin McCleod
KCM Architecture
3827 Long Beach Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90807

PREPARER: Laura O'Neill
Galvin Preservation Associates
231 California Street
El Segundo, CA 90245

OWNER: State of California 6th District
Agricultural Association
700 State Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90037

RECOMMENDATION **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

Adopt the proposed resolution.

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager
Office of Historic Resources

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:
[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

FINDINGS

See Resolution in Attachment A.

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the State Office of Historic Preservation and the National Park Service approved the City of Los Angeles' application to become a "Certified Local Government" (CLG) for historic preservation under the National Historic Preservation Act. This action provided official recognition to the City of Los Angeles for its new comprehensive historic preservation program with the establishment of the Office of Historic Resources. CLG status gives the City of Los Angeles formal authority to comment on nominations of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects to the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources. Both National Register and California Register nominations are ultimately reviewed by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and presented for approval before the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC).

With input from the Rules and Government Committee and the City Council, the Office of Historic Resources developed a procedure to provide comments from the City of Los Angeles to the SHRC while conforming to the City's Intergovernmental Relations process. Approved in December 2008, this process calls for preparation of a proposed resolution (Support/Opposition/General Comments), for approval by the Cultural Heritage Commission, City Council, and concurrence by the Mayor.

CA REGISTER CRITERIA

Criterion 1: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

Criterion 2: Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history.

Criterion 3: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.

Criterion 4: Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

DISCUSSION

The written nomination contends that the California Aerospace Museum meets Criteria 3 for the California Register of Historical Resources for its distinction as a seminal work of master architect Frank Gehry. The museum is classified as a definitive work of the architect and the "most important example of his warehouse/collision typology."

Having begun his career in Los Angeles in 1962, Gehry has had a major influence in architecture both in Los Angeles and around the world. The application argues that California Aerospace Museum, built in time for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, demonstrates the rise of Gehry's international celebrity as it was his first major public project and one which earned him the title of the "regional architect" nationally and internationally. The museum marked "a critical turning point in Gehry's career" as he went on to design high profile projects in various cities all around the world.

A major character-defining feature of the subject building is its “formal irregularity” composed of an angular seven-sided polygonal design and a large off center prism at the top of the building. The main entrance of the building to the north exhibits a rectangular solid form, therefore appearing as if the building complex is in the process of morphing from regular forms to irregular forms from north to south in plan. The material of the subject building also changes as the stucco cladding on the solid form becomes sheet metal cladding on the heptagonal form attached in horizontal strips with exposed fasteners. This design aesthetic of the California Aerospace Museum led some architectural critics to describe Gehry as a Deconstructivist, having been included in Phillip Johnson’s 1988 exhibit “Deconstructivist Architecture.”

According to the Special Considerations in the *California Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Series #6* concerning historic resources built in the last fifty years, “sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource. A resource less than fifty years old may be considered for listing in the California Register if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance.” Based on the research provided in the application, the application did attempt to provide some scholarly research to determine the subject building’s significance in the context of Gehry’s work. Although the subject building was built just under thirty years ago, the application provided sufficient academic perspective on Gehry and the architectural context of the building in order to argue that the California Aerospace Museum is eligible under Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources.

BACKGROUND

The California Register application was received by the Los Angeles Office of the City Clerk on March 16, 2012.

ATTACHMENT A: Proposed Resolution

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles through the Cultural Heritage Commission and its duties as a Certified Local Government has reviewed the California Register of Historical Resources nomination for the California Aerospace Museum located at 700 W. State Drive; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles deems that the applicant (Kelly Sutherlin McCleod, KCM Architecture) and preparer (Laura O'Neill, Galvin Preservation Associates) submitted a complete application and followed proper notification procedures for California Register of Historical Resources nominations; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles believes that the application thoroughly photo-documents the subject building and provides an adequate architectural description; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles believes that the application may benefit from additional background information on Exposition Park, the California Aerospace Museum, as well as primary material related to the subject building; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles cites that the application has a discrepancy in page 8 of 11 where it cites Criterion 2 for eligibility instead of Criterion 3 and believes this may be a typographical error; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles believes that Frank Gehry rises to the level of master architect for his contributions to the field of architecture in Los Angeles and around the world (Criterion 3); and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles believes that the application provides a thorough assessment of the career of master architect Frank Gehry notwithstanding the fact that he is still a practicing architect; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles believes that although the California Aerospace Museum building is less than fifty years old, the application successfully argues that the subject building is significant in the career of Frank Gehry as one of his first major museum commissions and as representative of one of his distinctive design styles (Criterion 3); and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles SUPPORTS the proposed listing of the California Aerospace Museum to the California Register of Historical Resources.