

WATTS CITY HALL AND ENGINE COMPANY NO. 65

1513 – 1525 East 103rd Street

CHC-2022-5974-HCM

ENV-2022-5975-CE

FINDINGS

- Watts City Hall and Engine Company No. 65 “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as one of the only remaining pre-World War II institutional buildings constructed in the Watts neighborhood.
- Watts City Hall and Engine Company No. 65 “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of a municipal building designed in the Beaux Arts architectural style.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Watts City Hall and Engine Company No. 65 meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

It “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as one of the only remaining pre-World War II institutional buildings constructed in the Watts neighborhood. Following significant damage to the original Watts city hall building and fire station addition in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, the Los Angeles City Council voted to construct the subject property as a new branch city hall building that would house all City departments for the area, as well as a fire station. Constructed in 1936, the subject property served as the primary municipal services building for the Watts community up until 1997, when the new civic center building at 10221 Compton Avenue opened. While nearly a thousand buildings were destroyed in the area during the Watts Rebellion in August 1965, the subject property remained standing.

The subject property also “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of an institutional building designed in the Beaux Arts architectural style. Its symmetrical, tripartite design; classical ornamentation; brick and stucco cladding; monumental entrance; and classical details such as a cornice with decorative brackets and columns, pilasters, and an entablature are all distinguishing characteristics of the Beaux Arts style. In addition, given that the subject property is one of only three Beaux Arts-style buildings identified in the city’s historic resource survey of the Southeast Los Angeles Community Plan Area, it represents a rare example of the architectural idiom in the area. Further, unlike in other American cities that boasted grand Beaux Arts-style libraries, railway stations, and museums, Beaux Arts institutional buildings are less common in Los Angeles.

Despite interior and exterior alterations over the years, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, design, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance,*

restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.*”

The designation of the Watts City Hall and Engine Company No. 65 as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2022-5975-CE was prepared on October 21, 2022.