



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Landmark Designation Case Report

*Hearing Date:* December 6, 2017  
*Case No.:* 2017-013035DES  
*Project Address:* 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building)  
*Zoning:* C-3-O (SD) – Downtown - Office (Special Development)  
*Block/Lot:* 3736/006  
*Property Owner:* 246 First Street SF Owner LLC  
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### PROPERTY DESCRIPTION & SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

234-246 First Street (Phillips Building, subject property) was constructed in 1930 and occupies a 75' x 182' lot on the southwest corner of First and Tehama Streets. The ramp to the Bay Bridge is located immediately south of the subject property. Adjacent parcels are occupied by four to seven story office buildings constructed in the 2000s. On the opposite side of First Street is a three-story brick building constructed in 1917. The subject property is located approximately two blocks from the Transit Center.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is the consideration of the initiation of landmark designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.1, and recommending the Board of Supervisors approve of such designation.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, landmark designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

### GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 2: Conservation of Resources that provide a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding.

- POLICY 4: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

Designating significant historic resources as local landmarks will further continuity with the past because the buildings will be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Landmark designation will require that the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features. Both entities will utilize the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

#### **SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed designation is consistent with the priority policies in that:

- a. The proposed designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. Landmark designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) will help to preserve an important historical resource that is architecturally significant as a distinctive example of the Art Deco style, specifically the Mayan Deco substyle, and is the largest Art Deco style loft building in San Francisco; and is significant for its association with master architects Henry H. Meyers and George R. Klinkhardt.

#### **BACKGROUND / PREVIOUS ACTIONS**

234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) is currently listed as an Article 11 Category I – Significant Building. The subject property was added to the Landmark Designation Work Program on May 12, 2012. The landmark designation report was prepared by Architectural Resources Group on behalf of the property owner. A final draft of the report was submitted to the Department on November 8, 2017.

A Major Permit to Alter was filed in May 2016 and included seismic upgrades to bring the building in compliance with current codes; the addition of 7,903 square feet of new floor area at the mezzanine level; removal of a loading door and installation of a new window system on the north façade; installation of new windows on the south facade; and a new elevator penthouse and deck on the roof. The project required a total of 8,550 square feet of Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) due to the expanded mezzanine level and because the property was already legally exceeding its allowable FAR. Per Section 128(c)(2) of the Planning Code, TDR may be transferred to an Article 11 Significant building provided the HPC finds that the additional space resulting from the transfer is essential to make the seismic reinforcement of the building economically feasible. The HPC made such a finding in the Major Permit to Alter (Motion No. 0297, 2015-009899PTA) approval on January 18, 2017.

#### **OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

If the Historic Preservation Commission adopts a resolution to initiate designation of the subject property as an Article 10 landmark at its December 6, 2017 hearing and directs staff to finalize the landmark designation report, a second Historic Preservation Commission hearing will be scheduled for the

Commission's recommendation of approval of the designation. At the second hearing, if the Historic Preservation Commission recommends approval of the designation, its recommendation will be sent by the Department to the Board of Supervisors. The nomination would then be considered at a future Board of Supervisors hearing for formal Article 10 landmark designation.

## APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

### ARTICLE 10

Section 1004 of the Planning Code authorizes the landmark designation of an individual structure or other feature or an integrated group of structures and features on a single lot or site, having special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, as a landmark. Section 1004.1 also outlines that landmark designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission and the initiation shall include findings in support. Section 1004.2 states that once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for a report and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve, disapprove or modify the proposal.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, if the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors and without referral to the Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation.

In the case of the initiation of a historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission shall refer its recommendation to the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 1004.2(c). The Planning Commission shall have 45 days to provide review and comment on the proposed designation and address the consistency of the proposed designation with the General Plan, Section 101.1 priority policies, the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area. These comments shall be sent to the Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution.

Section 1004(b) requires that the designating ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors shall include the location and boundaries of the landmark site, a description of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and a description of the particular features that should be preserved.

Section 1004.4 states that if the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days.

### ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK CRITERIA

The Historic Preservation Commission on February 4, 2009, by Resolution No. 001, adopted the National Register Criteria as its methodology for recommending landmark designation of historic resources. Under the National Register Criteria, the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association, and that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;

or that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or properties that have yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

## PUBLIC / NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

There is no known public or neighborhood opposition to designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) as an Article 10 landmark. The Department will provide any public correspondence received after the submittal of this report in the Historic Preservation Commission's correspondence folder.

## PROPERTY OWNER INPUT

Staff met with the property owners and Architectural Resources Group on August 23, 2016 to discuss landmark designation report requirements. A report outline was received by the Department in January 2017. A draft of the landmark designation report was received in October 2017 with a final draft received on November 8, 2017. A site visit was conducted on November 3, 2017 with Architectural Resources Group present at the meeting.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

The case report and following analysis was prepared by Department staff. The Department has determined that the subject property meets the requirements for Article 10 eligibility as an individual landmark. The justification for its inclusion is outlined below under the Significance and Integrity sections of this case report.

The subject property appears to meet two the Historic Preservation Commission's priorities for designation which are:

- 1. The designation of underrepresented Landmark property types including landscapes*  
San Francisco's most well-known Art Deco buildings are generally theaters, schools or office buildings, including the El Rey Theater (1970 Ocean Avenue, 1931, LM No. 274), James Lick Middle School (1220 Noe Street, 1932), Medico-Dental Building (450 Sutter Street, 1925), Western Furniture Mart Building (1355 Market Street, 1937), Pacific Telegraph and Telephone Building (140 Montgomery Street, 1925). The Phillips Building was constructed to house the industrial processes associated with a large-scale printing operation. The subject property is the largest Art Deco style loft building in San Francisco, a relatively rare architectural style applied to this property type.
- 2. The designation of buildings of Modern design*  
The subject property is not a Modern style building; rather it is an Art Deco style building.
- 3. The designation of buildings located in geographically underrepresented areas*  
234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) is currently listed as an Article 11 Category I – Significant Building; however there is only one other existing landmark located nearby at 443 Folsom Street.

It is Landmark No. 149, the Edwin Klockars Blacksmith shop designated in 1982. The false front, wood frame building is significant as the last blacksmith in the South of Market.

4. *The designation of properties with strong cultural or ethnic associations.*

The subject property does not appear to have specific cultural or ethnic associations.

SIGNIFICANCE

*Significant architecture*

The Phillips Building is historically and architecturally significant as a distinctive, and highly intact, example of the Art Deco style, a relatively rare architectural style in San Francisco. Specifically, the subject property is representative of the Mayan Deco substyle that is characteristic of most of the city's Art Deco architecture. Unlike San Francisco's most well-known Art Deco buildings, however, which are generally theaters, schools or office buildings, the Phillips Building was constructed to house the industrial processes associated with a large-scale printing operation. As such, the subject property is the largest Art Deco loft building in the city. The subject property is also significant for its association with master architect Henry H. Meyers and his associate George R. Klinkhardt, prominent local architects who designed public buildings throughout the Bay Area, including several Veterans Memorial Buildings. The Phillips Building is a rare extant example of Meyers & Klinkhardt's commercial work.

Beginning in the 1920s, many architects and designers adopted the abstracted, graphic elements of the Art Deco style, particularly for the design of commercial and public buildings including office buildings, hotels, and theaters. Art Deco was popularized by the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts) in Paris, which emphasized the work of Europe's leading Modern artists, designers, architects, and craftspeople. The stylized motifs and geometric forms of Art Deco were further disseminated to American audiences through films of the late 1920s. The design motifs of Art Deco were taken from diverse sources including Mayan, Egyptian, Moorish, and Asian influences. Unlike their eastern U.S. and European counterparts, California architects tended to draw inspiration from the pre-Columbian architecture of Mexico and Central America instead of Middle Eastern or African sources, giving rise to a regional school of the Art Deco style commonly known in California as the "Mayan Deco" style.

The Phillips Building is particularly notable as a loft building rendition of the Art Deco style. These hybrid commercial/industrial loft buildings are common in the South of Market area, though most are smaller than the Phillips Building. The term "loft" refers to a building that contains offices and/or retail space on the first floor and multiple floors of flexible unpartitioned space on the upper floors. Loft buildings resemble traditional warehouses in having few internal structural supports to avoid impeding the efficient use of space. Optimally located with frontage on two or more streets – with the public façade facing the primary street and a secondary façade facing an alley or side street – loft buildings typically feature a loading dock or freight door facing the secondary street. After the First World War, concrete became the dominant material because of its strength, suitability for spanning large distances without intermediate supports, and relative inexpensiveness. Loft buildings were designed in styles popular during the era they were constructed, with Art Deco and Streamline Moderne becoming more popular during the 1930s and 1940s.

Henry H. Meyers work includes the portal entrance of the Posey Tube in Alameda, ten veterans' buildings throughout Alameda County, and numerous public buildings and churches. Meyers first partnered with George R. Klinkhardt beginning in 1922. Meyers and Klinkhardt, as well as Meyers' daughter, Mildred, designed a number of veterans' memorial buildings throughout Alameda County in cities such as Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, and Pleasanton.

#### PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) has a period of significance of 1930, the year it was completed.

#### INTEGRITY

234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) retains a high level of integrity and has only minimal exterior alterations, including a metal roll-up door and louver vents near the middle of the building's north elevation, which are not original. As such, the building clearly retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling. The building's integrity of setting has been reduced by the significant changes made to its immediate vicinity in the decades since Phillips & Van Orden Company's departure from the subject property in 1948, including extensive new construction and the freeway ramp immediately south of the subject property. Phillips & Van Orden's departure also reduced the subject property's integrity of association. These reductions in integrity of setting and association, however, are to be expected in a dense urban environment and, by themselves, do not render the subject property unable to convey its historic significance.

#### CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Whenever a building, site, object, or landscape is under consideration for Article 10 landmark designation, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to identify character-defining features of the property. This is done to enable owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

As described in the Landmark Designation Report, the following is a list of exterior and interior character defining features of the 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building).

The character-defining *exterior* features of the building are identified as all exterior elevations, including but not limited to form, massing, structure, architectural ornament, and materials, including:

- Reinforced concrete construction
- Rectangular plan
- Stucco and cast concrete cladding
- Flat roof
- Front (east) façade:
  - Four bays separated, at ground floor, by rusticated stucco piers and, at upper floors, by narrow stucco pilasters with decorative fluting and by cast concrete Mayan Deco capitals
  - Recessed stucco spandrel panels
  - At cornice, frieze with recessed octagonal stucco motifs and cast concrete coping ornament
  - Metal casement and fixed windows at ground floor, with zig-zag mullion
  - Multi-light, steel industrial sash windows at upper floors; arched at top floor

- Recessed entry at south bay with double wood doors and transom
- Vestibule at south bay entry with decorative plaster ceiling featuring overlapping painted triangles
- Incised "Phillips Building" lettering in concrete panel above south bay entry
- Recessed entry at north bay featuring single wood door with sidelights and transom, and extensive stucco decoration, including dentils and fluted pilasters with Mayan decostyle capitals
- Above double-height first floor, "Phillips Building" lettering in recessed cast concrete panel flanked by case concrete ornaments with diamond motif
- North façade:
  - Nine-bay configuration
  - Multi-light, steel industrial sash windows at all floors
  - Rusticated stucco piers, fluted stucco pilasters, recessed stucco spandrel panels, and recessed cast concrete octagonal motifs at easternmost and westernmost bays
  - Recessed entry with multi-light transom in westernmost bay
  - Two pair of partially glazed metal sliding doors with divided lights
  - Window openings at base of wall (louvered vents, security bars, and wired glass do not appear to be original)
- South façade:
  - Blank, windowless south façade with smooth finish concrete cladding (adjacent to freeway ramp)
- West façade:
  - Blank, windowless west façade with smooth finish concrete cladding visible at top (lower portion is obscured by neighboring building)

The character-defining features of the interior are identified as:

- Former showroom space and office
  - Wood wainscoting along the east wall
- South recessed front entry
  - Vestibule, elevator lobby, and closet with narrow wood door
  - Simple wood molding at ceiling
  - Concrete stair with metal rail featuring zig-zag pattern (this original rail continues up to the top floor of the building)

#### INTERIOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

According to Article 10, Section 1004(c) of the Planning Code, only those interiors that were historically publicly accessible are eligible for listing in Article 10. Article 10, Section 1004(c) of the Planning Code states,

(c) The property included in any such designation shall upon designation be subject to the controls and standards set forth in this Article 10. In addition, the said property shall be subject to the following further controls and standards if imposed by the designating ordinance:

- (1) For a publicly-owned landmark, review of proposed changes to significant interior architectural features.
- (2) For a privately-owned landmark, review of proposed changes requiring a permit to significant interior architectural features in those areas of the landmark that are or historically have been accessible to members of the public. The designating ordinance must clearly describe each significant interior architectural feature subject to this restriction.

The interior of the lobby and former showroom was historically publically accessible to the public; therefore it is eligible for protection under Article 10 of the Planning Code.

### **BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE**

The boundaries of the landmark site encompass all of and are limited to Assessor's Block 3736, lot 006.

### **PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the Department's analysis, 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) is individually eligible for Article 10 Landmark designation as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and was designed by master architects. The subject property is architecturally significant as a distinctive example of the Art Deco style, specifically the Mayan Deco substyle, and is the largest Art Deco style loft building in San Francisco; and is significant for its association with master architects Henry H. Meyers and George R. Klinkhardt. Designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) also appears to meet two of four of the Historic Preservation Commission's priorities for designation. Staff recommends approval of the proposed landmark designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building).

The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval, or approval with modifications of the proposed designation of 234-246 First Street (Phillips Building) as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.1. If the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the motion of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which holds a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation (Section 1004.4). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days (Section 1004.5).

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Draft Landmark Designation Report
- B. Draft Motion initiating designation