



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Glendale Central Library (222 E. Harvard Street): Consideration of Glendale Register Nomination

1. Resolution to designate the Glendale Central Library as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.
2. Motion to deny the designation of the Glendale Central Library as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Public Hearing

Approved for October 24, 2023 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To celebrate the 50th anniversary year of the opening of the Glendale Central Library on March 13, 1973, Glendale Library, Arts, & Culture requests the consideration of the Glendale Central Library for listing in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources. Previously, the library building was found eligible for the National Register of Historic Resources, the California Register of Historical Resources, and the Glendale Register of Historic Resources in the 2019 South Glendale Historic Resources Survey.

On March 16, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed the nomination and voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend to the City Council that the Glendale Central Library be listed in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council find the Glendale Central Library eligible for designation and vote to list it in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Since its inception in 1907, the Glendale Public Library has been a critical part of the city's cultural life. From a modest beginning, the library system now has eight branches arrayed across the city, with the Glendale Central Library serving as the concrete nucleus around which the others orbit. Over time, the system has shared a trajectory with libraries around the world, morphing from repositories dedicated to reading, research, and quiet contemplation to today's libraries that serve as dynamic spaces for community engagement that still retain those earlier qualities. This shift is highlighted by the relatively recent expansion of the library department's official name to Glendale Library, Arts & Culture (LAC). It is also manifested in the goals and results of the Central Library's award-winning 2016-17 rehabilitation project, which helped broaden the scope and scale of the library's offerings to the community.

The Central Library building at 222 E. Harvard Street is a magnificent product of its time that has successfully embraced the myriad changes that are required of today's modern libraries. March 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the building's 1973 opening. Its role as one of the city's most important places has only grown through each of the subsequent five decades. Its value to residents comes from both its role in Glendale's social and cultural life and the excellence of its Brutalist-style architectural design by Marvin Taff, who led the design team for the firm Welton Becket and Associates. The South Glendale Historic Resource Survey identified the building as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and, as presently nominated, the Glendale Register of Historic Resources. City staff believe it is eligible under Glendale Register designation criteria 1 and 3, as discussed individually below.

Historical Background and Significance

Please see pages 7 to 13 of the nomination (Exhibit 1).

Architectural Description

Please see pages 3 to 5 of the nomination (Exhibit 1).

Alterations and Integrity

The primary exterior and interior changes made since the original construction include:

Exterior

- New entry doors and wood portals at the north and south facades
- Removal of planters at the base of the north and south facades of the main reading room and construction of new entry ramps, stairs, and landings
- Reconfiguration of staff entrance at lower level of north facade

- Removal of east entry doors and replacement with utilitarian emergency exit doors and glass infill
- Infill of sunken seating area in front of the former east entrance

Interior

- Removal of stairway at southwest corner of main reading room that was added during the Walton remodel (originally, the primary public access point to the second floor was the stairway and elevator at the east side of the building)
- Construction of new stairway at the southeast corner of the main reading room added during the Gruen remodel
- Construction of new elevator in the main reading room and relocation of glass clock to its second-floor landing

Despite the alterations at the exterior and, especially, interior, the scale and complexity of the building allow it to continue to retain a high degree of integrity with regard to its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

Character Defining Features

The building's character defining features include:

Exterior

- Overall blocky massing broken into three distinct sections
- Concrete walls with decorative joint pattern, exposed aggregate, and unfilled tie holes
- Fixed windows of various shapes and sizes set within openings in the concrete walls
- Glazed curtain wall at the second floor of the central portion of the south façade set behind a concrete brise-soleil
- Projecting cornice over the central portion of the north façade with large square structural coffers at the soffit
- Cantilevered second-floor volumes at portions of the north, east, and south façade with smaller square structural coffers at the soffit
- Elevator shaft and wrapping staircase at the east façade
- Sunken seating area in front of the east façade (previously infilled in reversible manner)

Interior

- Coffered ceilings at first and second floors, with smaller coffers at the first and larger ones at the second
- Placement of light fixtures within the coffers
- Large open volume of the main reading room

- Concrete columns and beams (throughout)
- Mezzanine at the south side of the second floor linking east and west wings
- Open area at the west wing overlooking the main reading room floor
- Heavy wood railings at previous two areas and at east stairwell
- Vertical wood-clad air registers adjacent to columns and other areas throughout building
- Wood slat ventilation grilles at various locations
- Glass clock now located at the second-floor landing of the main reading room elevator

ANALYSIS

After conducting research for and preparing the nomination and its supporting documentation, as well as visiting the site, Planning Division staff concludes that the Glendale Central Library appears to meet Criteria 1 and 3 of the eligibility criteria for listing in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

Association with Significant Events [Criterion 1]

To meet Criterion 1, a property must be “identified with important events in national, state, or city history, or exemplify significant contributions to the broad cultural, political, economic, social, tribal, or historic heritage of the nation, state, or city, and retain historic integrity.”

The Glendale Central Library is an important force in enhancing the quality of life for city residents and visitors and has consistently been at the forefront in adapting to the ever-changing role that libraries play in their communities. It has clearly made significant contributions to the social and cultural life of the city that rise to a level that makes it eligible for listing in the Glendale Register under Criterion 1.

Please see pages 7 to 9 of the nomination for additional information regarding this criterion.

Architectural Significance [Criterion 3]

To meet Criterion 3, a property must “embody the distinctive and exemplary characteristics of an architectural style, architectural type, period, or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder or architect whose genius influenced his or her profession; or possesses high artistic values.

The Glendale Central Library is both distinctive and exemplary in its application of the Brutalist style. Its architectural significance extends beyond the boundary of Glendale and it has been recognized as a regionally important example of the style. It is also an important example of reinforced concrete construction technology, and the workmanship and detailing of the building’s forms and surfaces are of the highest quality. Finally, though not enough is known about Marvin Taff’s individual

projects and career at this point, the output of Welton Becket and Associates clearly lifts the firm into the category of “master architect” that influenced the profession. For these reasons, the Glendale Central Library is eligible for listing in the Glendale Register under Criterion 3.

Please see pages 9 to 11 of the nomination for additional information regarding this criterion.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

Stakeholders include all patrons of the Glendale Central Library as well as all city residents.

FISCAL IMPACT

Listing historic properties in the Glendale Register has no fiscal impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

The project is exempt from CEQA as a Class 8 “Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment” exemption and a Class 31 “Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation” exemption pursuant to Sections 15308 and 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it involves the designation and protection/preservation of a historic resource.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

Not applicable.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Designate the Glendale Central Library (222 E. Harvard Street) as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, finding that the property meets designation Criteria 1 and 3.

Alternative 2: Reject designation of the Glendale Central Library (222 E. Harvard Street) as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, finding that the property does not meet designation Criteria 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Alternative 3: Any other alternative not proposed by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Prepared by:

Jay Platt, Principal Planner

Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit 1: Glendale Register Nomination – Glendale Central Library

Exhibit 2: Photographs

Exhibit 3: DPR 523a from South Glendale Historic Resource Survey