

ORDINANCE NO. 2019-0018

Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

May 28, 2019

An Ordinance Listing 730 I Street (Bank of America Branch Building) as a Landmark on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources

BACKGROUND

- A. The city council has found “that significant aspects of the city’s rich and diverse historic resources deserve recognition and preservation to foster an understanding of our heritage, and to promote the public health and safety and the economic and general welfare of the people of the city. The preservation and continued use of historic resources are effective tools to sustain and revitalize neighborhoods and business districts within the city, enhance the city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability and urban character.” (Sacramento City Code section 17.604.100.A.)
- B. To this end, the City Code provides a mechanism for listing landmarks, historic districts, and contributing resources on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources (“Sacramento register”).
- C. On April 4, 2019, the Preservation Director reviewed a statement of nomination and determined that the property located at 730 I Street is eligible for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources a landmark. On April 17, 2019, the Preservation Commission concurred with the findings of the Preservation Director and recommended the City Council list the property at 730 I Street as a landmark in the Sacramento register.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO:

SECTION 1

- A. 730 I Street (Bank of America Branch Building) meets the criteria for listing on the Sacramento register provided within City Code section 17.604.210.A.1.iii and 17.604.210.A.1.iv. In addition, the city has considered City Code Section 17.604.210.A.1.b-c in determining the resource is eligible for listing.
 - i. 730 I Street embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction (17.604.210.A.1.a.iii)

This Bank of America Building at 730 I Street (Figure 1) is an iconic representative of a “modern” building with International style influences. The building was designed by the notable Bay Area architecture firm Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, who incorporated references to the work of notable European architect Mies van der Rohe into the building’s aesthetic. The International style evolved from the design work of European modernists that espoused minimalist and functional aesthetic principles through the use of modern materials and construction techniques. The International movement was initiated in 1932 with the exhibition and publication of “Architecture Since 1922: The International Style” by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock. The exhibition took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and emphasized the use of flat roofs, windows set flush with outer walls, unornamented surfaces, large window groupings, expanses of windowless wall surfaces, and unified wall cladding. Following the 1932 unveiling by Johnson and Hitchcock, the International style gained prominence throughout the United States and can be seen today in both residential and commercial applications throughout the country. The Bank of America Building at 730 I Street exhibits classic elements of the International Style, including the use of steel framing to display black and grey granite panels, glass mosaic spandrels designed by Alfonso Pardiñas, and the 182 large four by eight-foot glare-free glass window panels set flush into aluminum frames. The publicly accessible interior (former) bank lobby contains teak paneling from Thailand and large pillars surfaced with multi-colored glass mosaic tiles. Together, these elements make the property a distinctive representation of the International movement in Sacramento and qualify it for listing as a historic landmark on the Sacramento register pursuant to City Code section 17.064.210.A.1.a.iii.

- ii. 730 I Street represents the work of an important creative individual or master (17.604.210.A.1.a.iv)

The Bank of America Building at 730 I Street was designed by prominent Mid-Century architecture firm Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons (WBE). The company was a highly successful northern California company and influential design firm founded in 1926 and remaining an industry leader well into the 1970s. William Wurster founded the architectural office in San Francisco, Theodore Bernardi joined the firm in 1934, and Donn Emmons was the last of the three namesakes to join the company in 1938 (shown in Figure 2). By the end of World War II, all three were partners in the highly successful company that had grown to around 50 employees and become known as a “finishing school” for many young Bay Area architects. The company received more than 100 awards for excellence in design. When the Bank of America Branch building at 730 I Street was completed, Donn Emmons’s influence had become paramount. During Emmons’s prominence, the company completed notable projects such as Golden

Gateway redevelopment project (San Francisco), Bank of America World Headquarters (San Francisco), Capitol Towers (Sacramento), Merritt College Campus (Oakland), Mill Valley Public Library, Woodside Community Church, and the Bank of America Building at 730 I Street in Sacramento. WBE received more than 100 awards for excellence in design, including the notable American Institute of Architects award for being a distinguished architectural firm in 1965.

WBE contracted with Byzantine Mosaics, and master mason Alfonso Pardiñas, to install the colorful mosaic tile work on the exterior spandrel panels, and interior pillars in the Bank of America Branch Building at 730 I Street. After earning his U.S. citizenship in World War II, Pardiñas returned to Mexico, where he worked under the tutelage of master artists such as Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. In the early 1950s, Pardiñas founded the company, Byzantine Mosaics, with Jorge Rodriguez and Manuel Perdamo. Most of the company's mosaic works were assembled in Mexico before being shipped to the United States for installation. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Pardiñas was prominent in San Francisco bohemia circles and collaborated with such regional artists as Benny Bufano, Jean Varda, Ruth Asawa, architect Leonard Cahn. Byzantine Mosaics was a prominent manufacturer of architectural mosaics and provided murals for at least six Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations, the Russian Orthodox church on Geary Street in San Francisco, and office buildings, including the Bank of America in San Mateo, and the Sentinel Building in San Francisco. The tile mosaic work on and in the Bank of America Branch building at 730 I Street is of high quality and contributes substantially to the artistic character of the building's design. The design of 730 I Street represents the work of an important creative individual or master (17.604.210.A.1.a.iv)

- iii. 730 I Street has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular criterion or criteria specified in subsection A.1.a of this section (17.604.210.A.1.b)

The Bank of America Building at 730 I Street is in its original location. While the building has undergone several renovations, including the current adaptive reuse; the work has preserved important features of the International style, on the building's exterior, and the publicly accessible interior spaces. Overall the renovation has been compatible with the character of the building and the original materials that convey the historical significance of the building remain; therefore, the property retains a moderate to high historic integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building is located on a prominent corner adjacent to the County Center complex, a notable redevelopment project from the late Mid-Century period. This area provides important context to the era's design, setting, feeling, and association related to the Bank of America Building at 730 I Street. Therefore, the building retains its historic integrity of location, design, setting,

materials, workmanship, and association consistent with the requirements of City Code.

- iv. 730 I Street has significant historic or architectural worth, and its designation as a landmark is reasonable, appropriate and necessary to promote, protect and further the goals and purposes of this chapter. (17.604.210.A.1.c)

The Bank of America Building at 730 I Street has significant historic and architectural worth. It has been well-maintained and retains a high level of integrity with regards to its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. Further, it's designation as a landmark is reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purposes of the historic preservation chapter of the city code as it is an excellent example of the International architectural style, the work of master architects Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons, and is an important representation of the design and decorative arts of the Mid-Century modern period in Sacramento.

Adopted by the City of Sacramento City Council on May 28, 2019, by the following vote:

Ayes: Members Ashby, Carr, Guerra, Hansen, Harris, Jennings, Schenirer, Warren and Mayor Steinberg

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Attest: **Mindy Cuppy** Digitally signed by Mindy Cuppy
Date: 2019.06.04 09:50:24
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Mindy Cuppy, City Clerk

The presence of an electronic signature certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy as approved by the Sacramento City Council.

Passed for Publication: May 14, 2019

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