

Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

**CASE NO.: CHC-2013-1538-HCM
ENV-2013-1539-CE**

HEARING DATE: June 6, 2013
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 6101 W. Wilshire Blvd.
Council District: 5
Community Plan Area: Wilshire
Area Planning Commission: Central
Neighborhood Council: Mid City West
Legal Description: Lot 1 of TR 7555

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
JOHNIE'S COFFEE SHOP RESTAURANT

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

OWNER: Au Zone Investments #2 L.P.
4000 Union Pacific Avenue
Commerce, CA 90023

APPLICANT: Los Angeles Conservancy/MODCOM
523 W. 6th Street, #826
Los Angeles, CA 90014

RECOMMENDATION **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal warrants further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning
[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:
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Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: Historic-Cultural Monument Application

Johnies Coffee Shop and Restaurant

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SUMMARY

Built in 1956 and located at the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Ave, this one-story commercial building exhibits character-defining features of Googie style architecture. The subject building is rectangular in plan and features a prominent butterfly wing form roof with wide cantilevered eaves covered in rolled asphalt. This roof is supported by angled pylons clad in natural stone, concrete walls, and by steel columns integrated into a glass-wall frame. A low screen wall hides mechanical equipment on the roof. At the north and south elevations, the roof form folds down and then up in a “knuckle” shape. Five raised stripes delineated by metal impressed with a modified egg-crate style texture provide definition to the roof form. Panels of scintillating incandescent lightbulbs fill the space between the five raised stripes. Neon signage spelling “Johnie’s Coffee Shop Restaurant” is located on this horizontal band and directly located over the off-center entrance. A secondary sign spelling “Coffee Shop Restaurant” is located on the downward sloping side elevation eaves. This side elevation contains a low natural stone wall integrated into the glass wall. The back elevation has a third sign spelling “Johnie’s.” The interior space contains terrazzo flooring, formica veneered counters, fixed seating booths, counter stools, and high acoustic tile ceiling. The rear parking lot has a freestanding neon sign consisting of a curved arrow. Planting beds are located around the exterior stone pillars and walls.

The proposed Johnie’s Coffee Shop and Restaurant historic monument was designed by architects Louis Armet (1914-1981) and Eldon Davis (1917-2011) of the firm Armet & Davis. The firm was extremely influential in the development of the Googie style and the California Coffee Shop. Beginning with their first coffee shop design in 1951, they designed several notable Googie coffee shops for chains such as Norm’s, Pann’s, Ship’s, as well as Denny’s and Big Boy.

The subject building was built in 1956 as Romeo’s Times Square. A year later, the restaurant was renamed Ram’s. In 1967, the restaurant was purchased by Frank and Marie Johnson who changed the name and altered the signage to its existing name. The subject building closed as a restaurant in 2000 and has served primarily as a film location.

Alterations to the subject property include the addition of a freestanding billboard structure, removal of sections of exterior glass and stone wall, and some interior remodeling.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

FINDINGS

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property may be significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.