

**East Los Angeles Unique Dollar Theatre Nomination**

East Los Angeles is the cultural heartland of the Eastside. With its unique public art, cultural assets, and traditional restaurant eateries, East Los Angeles serves as a beacon of traditions and memories for countless generations. One such cultural asset is the Unique Theatre located at 3641 and 3643 E. 1st Street, one of the most historic commercial shopping districts in East Los Angeles. Constructed in 1927, the structure embodies distinctive characteristics of the architectural style Art Deco with Classical detailing. Its primary façade, blade sign and marquee are among the historically significant features. The Unique Dollar Theatre is significantly associated with the East Los Angeles Latino community as a Spanish language theatre and community event space. The theatre is one of only several ~~approximately 20~~ remaining historic movie theatres out of approximately 20 that once existed in East Los Angeles. Given its architectural and cultural significance, I strongly believe this structure is important to preserve for our past, present, and future families of East Los Angeles.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

**MOTION**

MITCHELL \_\_\_\_\_

KUEHL \_\_\_\_\_

HAHN \_\_\_\_\_

BARGER \_\_\_\_\_

SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

1. Finds that the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and
2. Adopts a resolution nominating the Unique Theatre, located at 3641 and 3643 E. 1st Street in the unincorporated community of East Los Angeles, as a Los Angeles County Historic Landmark.

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**RESOLUTION  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
UNIQUE THEATRE LANDMARK NOMINATION  
PROJECT NO. PRJ2021-003049-(1)  
CASE NO. RPPL2021008297**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors (hereinafter, the "Board") of the County of Los Angeles (hereinafter, the "County") conducted a duly noticed public hearing to consider the nomination of the Unique Theatre, located at 3641 and 3643 E. 1st Street in the unincorporated community of East Los Angeles in the First Supervisorial District, a County Landmark pursuant to Chapter 22.124 of the Los Angeles County Code (hereinafter, the County Code) on August 31, 2021.

**WHEREAS**, the Board duly considered all facts and records presented on the nomination, including any and all public comment and testimony; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board makes the following findings on the nomination:

1. The Unique Theatre is located at 3641 and 3643 E. 1st Street (Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 5232015014 and 5232015028 respectively), in the unincorporated community of East Los Angeles in the First Supervisorial District.
2. On July 26, 2021, Dean Edwards of the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) and DRP's consulting Architectural Historian, Carrie Chasteen of Sapphos Environmental, Inc. ("Sapphos") inspected the property. The findings of that inspection are detailed in Sapphos' memo, dated August 3, 2021, and are summarized as follows.
3. The approximately 0.41-acre subject property is developed with a two-story building that includes a former movie theater, three ground-floor shops, and second floor apartments accessed from stairs on E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and a two-story single-family residence (SFR) with a detached single-story accessory dwelling unit (ADU). The movie theater building shares a party-wall with the building located on APN 5232015015 (3645 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street).
4. The Unique Theatre was constructed in 1927 by an unknown architect in the Art Deco style with Classical detailing.
5. The primary façade of the theater faces south toward E. 1st Street. The façade is clad in large brownish-red tiles at the base, and the upper floor is clad in white glazed brick. The primary façade is accented with five symmetrically spaced pilasters. The tops of the pilasters are connected with two terracotta belt courses, which framed decorative vents set into the pilasters. Large, rectangular, floral-patterned terracotta panels are offset in the upper floor between the pilasters. The cornice consists of a simple terracotta coping panel, and tiebacks for seismic retrofit reinforcement are visible. The upper floor windows were multi-light wood, but were largely destroyed in a fire in 2020, which also destroyed the auditorium and roof. Additionally, the fire damaged the upper auditorium brick masonry walls, the roof above the apartments, the interior lobby, and the ADU.
6. The dominant feature of the primary façade is the Art Deco blade sign and marquee. The blade sign features the word "Unique" in channeled neon letters. Decorative scrolls accent the sign, which were also highlighted with neon. The neon tubing is largely extant. It appears metal panels were installed over the lettering channels in the marquee sign.
7. The three original storefronts have been modernized.
8. The movie theater building was previously converted to a retail store.

9. The recessed entry is missing a ticket booth typical of movie theaters of this time period, but retains the terrazzo floors. Additionally, the tapered entry intended to funnel customers into the structure and outside was boxed-out with modern storefronts, which are likely reversible and may expose additional original materials and features.
10. The lobby, located beneath the mezzanine, is accented with sculpted round sconces projecting from the wall that would have been up-lit. Recessed niches accent the space and the stairs to the mezzanine are largely extant. A floral-themed chandelier is centrally located in the lobby. The lobby ceiling and the underside of the mezzanine that slightly projects beyond the lobby into the auditorium are accented with pressed-tin panels. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.14.080, character-defining features are defined as “the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the historic character of an historic resource that must be retained to preserve that character.” Although the lobby was substantially damaged in the fire, there is enough character defining features that survived, and the space can be restored.
11. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.080, the Board may by resolution nominate a landmark. Such resolution shall be in writing and include findings of fact in support of the nomination, including reasons why the landmark is eligible for, and deserving of, designation under the criteria set forth in Section 22.124.070 (Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts). The nomination shall be effective as of the date the resolution is adopted.
12. The property is eligible for designation because the following designation criteria has been met pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.A:
  - a. The structure is 50 years of age or older. The Theatre is 94 years old;
  - b. The structure is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history in the community. The site is significantly associated with the Latino community of East Los Angeles. As late as 1970, the Theatre functioned as a Spanish language theater. Additionally, the Theatre functioned as an important community events space for the Latino community, such as hosting the Ms. East Los Angeles beauty contest, fundraisers, and funerals; and
  - c. The structure embodies distinctive characteristics of the architectural style Art Deco with Classical detailing.
13. Pursuant to Section 22.124.070.C, the recessed entry and lobby are eligible for designation because they are interior spaces of a property that were held open to the general public and are historically significant for their Art Deco style.
14. The property is deserving of designation because:
  - a. The Theatre is significantly associated with the East Los Angeles Latino community as a Spanish language theater and community event space.
  - b. The Theatre is one of only several remaining historic movie theaters out of approximately 20 that once existed in East Los Angeles.
  - c. The Theatre is a rare example of an Art Deco with Classical detailing theatre within Los Angeles County.
15. The boundaries of the proposed landmark are: one foot north of the northern edge of the mezzanine of the theater building, the eastern boundary of Assessor’s Parcel Number

(APN) 5232015028, one foot south of the building's primary façade, including its marquee and blade sign, and the western boundary of APN 5232015014.

16. The garage is utilitarian and is therefore not included within the landmark boundaries.
17. Although the second-floor apartments are included within the landmark boundaries, they were not held open to the public and are therefore not included in the nomination.
18. Historic integrity is commonly defined as the ability of a site to convey its historical significance and is the composite of seven qualities or aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Due to extensive alterations, the Craftsman style SFR, likely constructed in 1922, lacks sufficient integrity to be included within the landmark boundaries. Additionally, the auditorium lacks sufficient integrity due to extensive fire damage to be included within the landmark boundaries. The movie theater building's primary façade, blade sign, marquee, recessed entry, and lobby extending to the northern edge of the mezzanine are included within the landmark boundary because they retain sufficient integrity.
19. The ADU, which was also likely constructed in 1922, was damaged extensively by fire and therefore lacks sufficient integrity for further evaluation and is not included within the landmark boundaries.
20. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.080.C, unless the appropriate application has been found complete or a Certificate of Appropriateness or Economic Hardship has been approved, no person shall perform or cause to be performed any work on a property subject to a landmark nomination that has become effective, and no application for a permit or other approval that would authorize such work shall be approved by any County department or commission.
21. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.080, the nomination shall be effective as of the date this resolution is adopted (August 31, 2021), and the decision of the Board is final.



CELIA ZAVALA  
Executive Officer-Clerk of the Board of  
Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles

By: *Marisa Oleceda*  
Deputy

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
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