



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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LPB 228/24

MINUTES

Landmarks Preservation Board Meeting

City Hall, Room L2-80

Hybrid Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2024 - 3:30 p.m.

Board Members Present

Dean Barnes

Roi Chang, Vice-Chair

Matt Inpanbutr

Ian Macleod, Chair

Lawrence Norman

Katie Randall

Becca Pheasant-Reis

Marc Schmitt

Harriet Wasserman

Staff

Sarah Sodt

Erin Doherty

Melinda Bloom

Absent

Taber Caton

Lora-Ellen McKinney

Padraic Slattery

Chair Ian Macleod called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

082124.1

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

082124.2 **MEETING MINUTES**
June 5, 2024 Deferred.

082124.3 **NOMINATION**

082124.31 Fifth Avenue Court
2132 5th Avenue

Ellen Mirro, Studio TJP prepared and presented the nomination report. She provided context of the area noting topography and grade change. She said the wood windows have been well-maintained, and she noted the terracotta sills, string courses and cornice. She indicated the main entry with arched opening, Ionic columns, arches above entry with shell motif, and leaded glass window. She noted the grade change as evidenced on the Blanchard façade with board formed concrete below the brick and explained it is a physical marker of the last regrade activity. A narrow alley entered from 5th Avenue leads into the center light court. She noted the exterior marble panels and stairs and leaded sidelights at the entry vestibule.

Katie Jaeger, Studio TJP provided contextual history of the site which in 1898 housed a duplex rooming house. The second of the three Denny regrades was completed in 1911. Early photos show a portion of the northeast side of 5th Avenue that had been at least partially cleared by 1922 when the plans for the subject building were announced in the Seattle Times. The building was completed later that year, originally owned by developer William Carol. By 1923, the owner was Sibella Davis, and the building was known as Siabella Court. Early photos show how close the building is on two sides to what remains of Denny Hill and so you can really get a sense of where the retaining wall was relative to the regrade activity. The third and final regrade was completed in 1930 and early photos show how that land was carved away from the building.

She said by 1930, the building had already been renamed Fifth Avenue Court. Unlike an SRO, the Fifth Avenue Court offered self-contained ensuite apartments with kitchen facilities intended to cater to middle class residents. She provided photos to show the extent of development in the 20 years or so after the regrade was completed. The building had several different owners over the decades, and in 2006 was converted to condominiums, which is what it remains today. She said the building may qualify under Criterion A due to its status as being sandwiched physically and temporarily in the middle of two phases of the Denny regrade. She said the building didn't qualify for B.

Ms. Jaeger said that under criterion C, the building is associated with the Belltown neighborhood and the development of apartment buildings in Seattle. The area now known as Belltown was part of the ancestral land of the Duwamish tribe. There were two long houses formerly located in the neighborhood closer to the waterfront with a large prairie reaching back from the waterfront towards what is

now known as like union. She said Belltown and in particular what we now call the Denny Triangle was known as an apartment district.

Ms. Mirro said before 1900, multi-family dwellings in Seattle were mostly either boarding houses or SRO hotels, single resident occupancy hotels. In these multi-family typologies, bathrooms were shared and there was not a lot of common area like lobbies. In SROs, lightwells and courts provided light and ventilation, similar to the apartment developments. Belltown was a residential district, and it contained cottages and rooming houses and hotels that served industrial and maritime workers and their families. Around the turn of the century apartment buildings started to serve the growing numbers of the middle class in Seattle. Early luxury apartment hotels provided meals in a central dining room, but every apartment building is marked with apartments that have their own kitchens and bathrooms. The Chelsea apartments is one of the earliest apartment buildings. The central courtyard is a front facing courtyard and the shared entry there. This is the Old Colony on First Hill, and it has more of an E shape for lightwells. The Moore Hotel was a bit of a different typology, it has a mixed use with the theater and retail on the main floor and then apartments above. She noted the Charlesgate and Cornelius apartments as well. She said the lower apartment typology buildings didn't have elevators but apartment buildings like the Cornelius and the Sheridan did have elevators because they were more than three or four stories.

Ms. Mirro said that architects Lawton and Moldenhour designed the building. She noted this section in the report was written by architectural historian Mimi Sheridan who wrote an earlier nomination report in 2007. It was her opinion that the Fifth Avenue Court is an outstanding example of the apartment work of George W. Lawton and Herman Moldenhour. She said that it's notable for its finally detailed entry and terracotta ornamentation. George W Lawton was the lead architect, he was born in Wisconsin in 1863 and moved to Seattle shortly after the fire. He worked as a draftsman for Saunders and Houghton before becoming partners with Charles Saunders. They designed a wide range of projects, but specialized in apartments and hotels, and they also did warehouse structures. Their notable buildings were the landmarked Horace Mann School and Beacon Hill Elementary, as well as the Masonic Temple which is now the SIFF Cinema Egyptian Theater. Lawton also worked with Gould on the Arctic building. In 1922, Lawton became partners with his former office boy, Moldenhour, forming Saunders and Lawton. The building plans for 5th Avenue Court listed Moldenhour as associate architect, and the project was probably done shortly before they formed their partnership in 1922. Lawton and Moldenhour had worked on two other apartment buildings before they became partners: in 1918, the Castle apartments, which is the City of Seattle landmark, and the Franklin Apartments that is also landmarked and the two worked on together other joint projects of Lawton and Moldenhour include the Ravenna United Methodist Church, the 4th and Pike Building, also known as the Liggett building, which is a City of Seattle Landmark and the Melbourne Tower.

Ms. Mirro said that Lawton died in 1928, and Moldenhour continued with an independent practice. He was the supervising architect for the Port of Seattle SEATAC Airport administration building in 1948 and he died in 1976. She said she

agreed with Mimi Sheridan and past decisions of the board that would indicate that all of these buildings in Belltown by Lawton and Moldenhour should be landmarked, and 5th Avenue Court is a special example because of its excellent exterior integrity.

Andrew Ellis represented the ownership who supported designation of the exterior. He said they have undertaken large projects including restoration of windows and brick tuckpointing. He said they are interested in incentives as they anticipate seismic upgrades and conversion of gas to heat pump.

Ms. Pheasant-Reis asked if the leaded sidelights are original.

Mr. Ellis said they are.

Ms. Wasserman asked how many owners there are.

Mr. Ellis said there are 31 condos, half are owner-occupied, and half are rentals.

Mr. Norman said the building was immaculate and asked who did the windows.

Mr. Ellis said they used Chosen Wood Windows and for the tuck pointing they used Finishing Touch Masons. He said it was a cost-effective project.

Mr. Barnes asked if the terracotta, Ionic columns, and entry arch were original.

Ms. Mirro said the interior vestibule, sidelights, entry are original; the glass doors were replaced.

Mr. Macleod asked why the building wasn't designated in 2007.

Mr. Ellis said there wasn't full buy-in from ownership back in 2007, but there is now.

Ms. Pheasant-Reis asked if the cornice was terracotta or metal.

Ms. Mirro said it was typical sheet metal and is original. Responding to questions she said the entry vestibule has two sets of double doors, marble steps and wainscot.

Mr. Macleod asked if the building was designed with the knowledge the hill would be coming down.

Mr. Ellis said he didn't think so.

Ms. Jaeger said they had a master plan of the phases, and you know when they did go it all the way down to up to 5th and then stopped. She said it was pretty clear that they were going to keep going someday. She said the lower floor windows are original fenestration.

Ms. Randall noted public comment was received that made a strong reference to the building's strong connection with women's history and providing respectable living situations for single women. She said she didn't see that mentioned in the nomination report and asked for elaboration on it.

Ms. Mirro said it was a theme she saw in the nearby Sheridan Apartments, but she did not find that here.

Ms. Randall noted the second owner of the subject building was a woman, Sibella Davis and asked how common it was for a woman to own a middle-class apartment building.

Ms. Mirro said it was more common than one would think. She said back when the building was constructed, it cost less if you convert for inflation than a typical single-family house does today. She said the difference in what it took to buy a building like that has skyrocketed and would be out of reach for most average people, but it was definitely more affordable then, that it is today.

Ms. Chang asked about original lights from the entry.

Mr. Ellis said the globe lights were removed at some point and the signs were put up to hide the holes. He said they want to bring back period appropriate lights.

Ms. Wasserman supported nomination. She said it is an interesting example and so beautifully preserved. She wanted to add the entry vestibule to the features to be preserved. She said the presentation was well done and she appreciated all the work done on the building especially on the windows.

Mr. Barnes agreed with Ms. Wasserman and said he appreciated the brickwork, which is standard, but the building was the epitome of an apartment building during the 1920s. He appreciated the terracotta work and said it is unique and original. He supported inclusion of the entry vestibule.

Ms. Randall said the level of integrity is well documented as well as the connection to the Denny Regrade and the physical evidence of its connection to the Regrade. She supported nomination and inclusion of the entry vestibule but no other parts of the interior. She appreciated the support of the condo board.

Mr. Inpanbutr commended the condo board for supporting designation and for doing the right thing with renovations and for doing a good job. He said he agreed with everything else that has been said.

Mr. Norman said the building is immaculate and he appreciated the interior too but understood why the ownership didn't want to include that. He commented on the photo showing the hill adjacent to the building and how the building has withstood the sands of time and still looks the same. He commended the condo board for its support.

Ms. Pheasant-Reis appreciated the wonderful restoration and said she agreed what her colleagues have said. She said it is lovely to hear that a full condo board is supportive of nominating a building.

Ms. Chang supported nomination and said she agreed with fellow board members. She said she looks forward to hearing more about the history at designation.

Mr. Schmitt supported nomination and said he appreciated the presentation.

Mr. Macleod said the building is very well maintained. He said he appreciated the comment that ‘every apartment building in Belltown could be a landmark’ and that while he may not agree in a professional capacity, this building stands out for the architectural details and fantastic level of integrity. He said he initially thought the building could meet Criterion A because it literally demarcated where the regrade project began and ended but didn’t know if there was enough information to show the building was up against the hillside. He said it is still a fascinating piece of history associated with the building.

Action: I move that the Board approve the nomination of the 5th Avenue Court at 2132 Fifth Avenue for consideration as a Seattle Landmark; noting the legal description in the Nomination Form; that the features and characteristics proposed for preservation include: the exterior of the building and the entry vestibule; that the public meeting for Board consideration of designation be scheduled for October 2, 2024; that this action conforms to the known comprehensive and development plans of the City of Seattle.

MM/SC/KR/HW

9:0:0

Motion carried.

082124.4

BOARD BUSINESS