

APPROVAL NO. 2024-_____
RECORD OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALO ALTO LAND USE APPROVAL FOR 271 UNIVERSITY AVE:
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY CATEGORY 3 TO CATEGORY 2 UPGRADE (24PLN-00039)

On June 17, 2024, the Council held a duly noticed public hearing and, after considering all of the evidence presented, approved the property owner's request to reclassify the commercial building at 271 University Avenue, currently a Local Category 3 Historic Resource. The Council approved the Historic Resources Board (HRB) recommendation to an upgraded level, Category 2 Historic Resource on the City of Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory. In approving the application, the Council make the following findings, determination, and declarations:

SECTION 1. **Background.**

- A. On February 7, 2024, the property owner contacted staff to request a reclassification of a one-story commercial building designed by Carl I. Warnecke of Miller & Warnecke in the Art Deco style completed in 1930 from a 'Contributing Building' Category 3 resource to a 'Major Building' Category 2 resource on the Palo Alto Historic Inventory. With the owner's request and funding, staff obtained a historic resource evaluation from the City's consultant, Page & Turnbull, including an integrity evaluation to understand building's eligibility for a classification upgrade. The historic resource evaluation supports a classification upgrade to a Category 2 historic resource. The consultant describes the building's eligibility in a report dated November 1, 2023, noting its eligibility under local criteria 2, 5, and 6.
- **Criterion 2** (The structure or is particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state or nation)
 271 University Avenue is an excellent and rare commercial example of the Art Deco style in Palo Alto. The defining style of Palo Alto throughout its commercial and residential areas is by far the Spanish Colonial Revival (also called Spanish Eclectic or Mediterranean Revival), as well as other predominant styles, including Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Midcentury Modern. Overall, there are only a handful of buildings built in the Art Deco style in the area, the most notable being the Hoover Pavilion at Stanford University and a few others that would be considered Streamline or "Nautical" Moderne style. Research uncovered no other commercial buildings in Palo Alto designed in the Art Deco style specifically with Zig-Zag Moderne characteristics, which include zigzags and chevron motifs, molded ornamentation, decorative parapets and cornice, and metal window hardware. 271 University Avenue is an important extant example of commercial Art Deco with Zig-Zag Moderne characteristics that retains its character-defining features such as original metal casement windows, stepped parapet walls, molded chevron cornice and floral medallion ornamentation, reeded pilasters, and zigzag structural motifs. Despite alterations to the storefront system, the building has retained the majority of its original Art Deco characteristics and has been a stately and elegant presence on University Avenue for nearly the last century.
 - **Criterion 5** (The architect or building was important)
 Carl I. Warnecke is an architect of merit who contributed a rich legacy to the architectural field, and specifically to the East Bay where he predominantly worked in Oakland and Piedmont through the partnership of Miller and Warnecke. Throughout his career and partnership, Warnecke designed largely in the Tudor Revival style, and was also known mostly for his residential and later civic and

institutional designs. Research uncovered no other examples of buildings by Warneke located in Palo Alto, regionally in the South Bay, or overall designed in the Art Deco style. The subject building is therefore important as both a rare example of work by Carl I. Warnecke locally and regionally in Palo Alto and the South Bay, and also stylistically as a unique variation of the commercial Art Deco Zig-Zag Moderne style.

- **Criterion 6** (The structure or site contains elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship)
The primary façade of the subject building features excellent examples of Art Deco ornamentation that is not only unique within the architectural context of Palo Alto, but also showcases the high level of craftsmanship and architectural design implemented by architect of merit Carl I. Warnecke. Elements of the façade that meet the definition of Criterion 6 include the stepped parapet walls, the molded chevron cornice and floral medallion ornamentation, reeded pilasters, and zigzag structural motifs.

- B. On April 11, 2024, the HRB received a staff report (ID #2403-2767), conducted a public hearing, and concurred with the consultant's evaluation regarding the building's eligibility for category upgrade from the current local historic inventory Category 3 to Category 2.

SECTION 2. Environmental Review. The project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as it is not a project under CEQA Guidelines per Section 21065.

SECTION 3. Designation Findings.

- A. The following criteria, as specified in Municipal Code Section 16.49.040 (b), shall be used as criteria for designating historic structures/sites to the historic inventory:
1. The structure or site is identified with the lives of historic people or with important events in the city, state or nation;
 2. The structure or site is particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state or nation;
 3. The structure or site is an example of a type of building which was once common, but is now rare;
 4. The structure or site is connected with a business or use which was once common, but is now rare;
 5. The architect or building was important;
 6. The structure or site contains elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship.

The building at 271 University Avenue met many of the above criteria when it was first listed on Palo Alto's Historic Resource Inventory in 1983. With the historic assessment in 2023, the building's status as a historic resource has remained per Page & Turnbull's conclusion.

- B. The definition of Category 2 in Municipal Code Section 16.49.020 (b) must be met to allow the upgrade to the structure's category designation:

Category 2 Definition: "Major building" means any building or group of buildings of major regional importance, meritorious works of the best architects or an outstanding example of an architectural style or the stylistic development of architecture in the state or region. A major building may have

some exterior modifications, but the original character is retained. The applicant requested and the consultant found Category 2 appropriate for this building.

Page & Turnbull historic consultant supported applicant's request. The City's consultant found the building at 271 University Avenue meets the Palo Alto Inventory Category 2 Definition. The integrity evaluation found that the building at 271 University Avenue retains all seven aspects of integrity (location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association).

The minor exterior modifications cited in the consultant's report have not caused the building to lose its original character.

National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources listing: 271 University Avenue is currently listed in the City of Palo Alto Historic Inventory as a Category 3: "Contributing Building." It was surveyed for the Historic Resources Inventory in 1978 and added to the local register in 1979 when the Palo Alto Historic Inventory was first adopted by the City Council.

SECTION 4. Category Upgrade Approved. The City Council approves the property owner's request for re-classification of 271 University Avenue to a Category 2 historic resource on the City's Historic Resources Inventory.

PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

City Clerk

Director of Planning and
Development Services

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Deputy City Attorney