



Staff Report

City of Pomona Historic Preservation Commission

June 4, 2025

FILE NO: DHS-000112-2025

A request for a Determination of Historic Significance.

ADDRESS: 1057 E. Mission Boulevard

APPLICANT: David Lee

PROJECT PLANNER: Carlos Molina, Associate Planner

RECOMMENDATION: Determine that the property located at 1057 E. Mission Boulevard (File No. DHS-000112-2025) is historic and adopt Resolution No. 25-014 (Attachment No. 1).

Property Background:

The application was submitted on January 29, 2025, for the purpose of determining any potential historic significance of the existing structure(s) located at 1057 E. Mission Boulevard. On April 15, 2025, the application was deemed complete.

Architectural Style:

The structure is built in the Googie architectural style (Attachment No. 2). Googie has been described as Modernism for the masses. With its swooping lines and organic shapes, the style attempted to capture the playful exuberance of postwar America. Named for the John Lautner-designed Googie's Restaurant in Los Angeles, the style was widely employed in roadside commercial architecture of the 1950s, including coffee shops, bowling alleys, and car washes.

Character-defining features include:

- Expressive rooflines, including butterfly, folded plate, and cantilevers
- Organic, abstract, and parabolic shapes
- Clear expression of materials, including concrete, steel, asbestos, cement, glass block, plastic, and plywood
- Large expanses of plate glass
- Thematic ornamentation, including tiki and space age motifs
- Primacy of signage, including the pervasive use of neon

Architectural Description:

In comparison between the original design rendering and photos of the Pomona location while in operation (Attachment No. 4), the existing building and sign remain in good to excellent condition (Attachment No. 5). The building maintains its original form, inclusive of its window type and style, roof line, red and white tile exterior façade, and the non-structural arches that terminate at the ceiling.

RELEVANT ALTERATIONS:

Removal of arches above roof
Replacement of sign face
Removal of neon elements

Character-Defining Features:

1. Expressive sloped roof with cantilever
2. Organic, abstract, and parabolic shapes
3. Clear expression of materials, including concrete, steel, asbestos, cement, glass block, plastic, and plywood
4. Large expanses of plate glass
5. Primacy of signage, including the pervasive use of neon
6. Original tile work

HISTORY:

The site (formerly addressed as 1075 E. 5th Avenue) is located on the eastern portion of Mission Boulevard; a principal arterial roadway spanning approximately six miles from the City's western boundary to its eastern boundary.

According to LA County Assessor data and historic aerial imagery dating back to 1938 (Attachment No. 6), the area west of the site consisted of residential neighborhoods with homes dating back to the early 1900s whereas the bulk of the land located east of the site was undeveloped, consisting primarily of agricultural land. Following the beginning of the post-war boom in the late 1940s, both Assessor and aerial data confirm that the regional trend of commercial development along major transit corridors began to make its way along Pomona's major transportation corridors, inclusive of Mission Boulevard.

According to available building permits (Attachment No. 7) held by the City of Pomona Building and Safety Division, the site was issued a building permit for the existing, original building on June 15, 1954. The building permit describes the structure as a 30'x44' drive-in restaurant built in the concrete block construction style with a flat built-up cover roof. Additional building permits found for the site include a myriad of electrical, refrigeration, and miscellaneous construction permits ranging from 1954-2011.

Historic Context Statement:

The property falls under the Residential Development Theme of Chapter X. Postwar Growth, Diversification, and Redevelopment (1946-1980) (Attachment No. 9). The subject site was developed in 1954, at a time where the end of World War II had already begun to usher in a time of prosperity and optimism in American life. For Southern California, it was also a time of great population growth. Many veterans came through Southern California during the war on their way to the Pacific theater – experiencing the mild climate and broad vistas firsthand. Others learned of the promise of California through national magazines that focused on ideas about postwar lifestyles rooted Southern California's gentle climate and ample opportunity.

In Pomona specifically, the population rose to 50.4% between 1940 and 1950 to 35,405 residents; between 1950 and 1960 it rose 89.7% to 67,157 residents. The decade between 1960 and 1970 saw another 30.1% increase, with residents numbering 87,384 at the end of the decade.

In Pomona, commercial growth was seen along Route 66 (present-day Arrow Highway), Garey Avenue, Mission Boulevard, Holt Avenue, Calley Boulevard, and Indian Hill Avenue. Many of the commercial structures built after the war responded to both the growing middle class and suburban leisure culture, and the automobile: coffee shops, fast food establishments and restaurants, supermarkets, department stores, and specialty retailers all designed to appeal to the passing motorist and conveniently located away from downtown. Commercial development along Route 66 picked-up after World War II with the development of properties commonly associated with a tourist corridor: gas stations, motels, and restaurants.

A more exuberant, expressive Modernism emerged in commercial design after the war, capturing both the zeitgeist and playful exuberance of the moment and appealing to the modern, automobile-oriented consumer. The style became known as Googie, after Googie's Diner in Los Angeles designed by John Lautner in 1949. The style has been described as Modernism for the masses. It was widely employed in roadside commercial architecture of the 1950s, including coffee shops, bowling alleys, and car washes. Henry's Restaurant and Drive-in (not extant) was one of the premiere examples of the Googie architectural style. It was located along Route 66, at Garey Avenue and Foothill Boulevard.

Because of its suburban development and auto-oriented road system, Pomona enjoys a wealth of roadside architecture that extended beyond Route 66. These expressive modern buildings, some more elaborately Googie than others, relied on structure expression, large expanses of glass, neon and kinetic signs both to display their goods and services and to lure in motorists. Pole signs often remain at some of Pomona's roadside buildings that have been altered.

To support its postwar population, greater Pomona was dotted with several fast-food restaurants and coffee shops. One prime example is the site in question, known as McDonald's #7. Although altered as it's no longer operating as a McDonald's, the building and primary sign retain their primary elements and forms. Other extant early examples of iconic fast-food restaurants located in Pomona from the postwar period include Der Wienerschnitzel (794 E. Mission Blvd), two original Arby's (2250 N. Garey Avenue and 1175 E. Holt Avenue), Tastee Freeze (794 E. Mission Blvd), Donahoo's Fried Chicken (1074 N. Garey Avenue), and a diner located at 1280 E. Holt Avenue originally built as a Breakfast at Carl's. Keeping in line with the Googie style, key similarities across these buildings include their expressive building forms, expansive façade windows, and prominent, easy-to-find signage.

Survey Information:

At the time of the 1993 city-wide survey, the property had not been developed for more than 50 years, therefore the subject property was not included in the survey.

City Directories:

Due to library renovations, staff was unable to access the physical directories from 1952-1989. Please note that there was no impact to the required findings as much of the information staff searches for through directories were identified in other documents such as building permits.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

The City keeps a 1928 Sanborn Map that was updated by the Building and Safety Division approximately up until 1958. The building on the site is included in the Sanborn Map and is reflective of what is currently existing (Attachment No. 10).

Significance:

According to articles published in the Progress Bulletin (Attachment No. 8), the building had its grand opening as a McDonald's on Friday, September 3, 1954. The McDonald's operated for approximately 14 years until the location closed in 1968. Following its closure in 1968, limited information was found regarding how the site was used throughout the 1970s; unofficial records indicate that the building may have operated as a taco shop. By 1984, City business license records began to show Star Taco as the occupant of the building up until 1986, from 1985–1986 the site operated as Hong's Fast Food, and from 1986-present, the site has operated as AMA Donuts. The building on the site is modeled after the original McDonald's design (Attachment No. 3) designed by Stanley Clark Meston; an architect based out of Fontana, CA. Meston was hired by the McDonald brothers in 1952 to design a restaurant capable of maximizing operational efficiency while also serving a visually striking building capable of setting it aside from the competition. Many of the first franchise locations used the original design. The first location to debut the design opened in Tucson, Arizona in May of 1953; three months later, the second location sporting the design opened in Downey, CA. The Pomona location was the seventh McDonald's location to open which had its grand opening on September 3, 1954. As of 2025, several of the original locations have been demolished, including its Arizona location. As of 2025, the Downey location is the oldest extant McDonald's, leaving the Pomona location to be the second oldest original McDonald's building in existence.

Designation Criteria:

Staff reviewed the National Register, California Register, and local designation criteria to determine whether the property is historic.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CRITERIA

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A).

There are no specific events related to this site that are significant even though the property is related to the general suburbanization of Pomona and Southern California. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion.

2. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (Criterion B).

The structures on the site were designed by the architect, Stanley Charles Meston. Meston worked closely with the McDonald's brothers to devise of the iconic restaurant design which the site is modeled after. Meston's work can also be found regionally, nationally, and internationally; much of which is tailored for commercial and institutional purposes. Therefore, the site may be eligible for designation under this criterion.

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (Criterion C).

The property retain many of the original Googie architectural design details and materials which includes their building forms, expressions, window shape and style, and façade materials. The Googie style

represented a dramatic change in architecture because of the influence of the automobile, making the style distinctive. Therefore, the property meets this criterion

4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory (Criterion D).

This criterion relates to archaeological resources and there is no information that this site could have been important to Native American tribes in the area. Therefore, the property is not likely to yield any information and does not meet this criterion.

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States (Criterion 1).

There are no specific events related to this site that are significant even though the property is related to the general suburbanization of Pomona and Southern California. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion.

2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history (Criterion 2).

The structures on the site were designed by the architect, Stanley Charles Meston. Meston worked closely with the McDonald's brothers to devise of the iconic restaurant design which the site is modeled after. Meston's work can also be found regionally, nationally, and internationally; much of which is tailored for commercial and institutional purposes. Therefore, the site may be eligible for designation under this criterion.

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values (Criterion 3).

The building is an excellent example of the Googie architectural style and a rare example of early roadside architecture; therefore, the site meets this criterion.

4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation (Criterion 4).

This criterion relates to archaeological resources and there is no information that this site could have been important to Native American tribes in the area. Therefore, the property is not likely to yield any information and does not meet this criterion.

CITY OF POMONA LANDMARK DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Architecture / Physical Features

1. It embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship (Criterion 3 in previous ordinance).

The existing structures on the site retain their distinctive Googie-style elements and is an excellent example of roadside architecture; therefore, the site meets this criterion.

2. It is the work of a notable builder, designer, landscape designer or architect (Criterion 5 in previous ordinance).

The structures on the site were designed by the architect, Stanley Charles Meston. Meston worked closely with the McDonald's brothers to devise of the iconic restaurant design which the site is modeled after. Meston's work can also be found regionally, nationally, and internationally; much of which is tailored for commercial and institutional purposes. Therefore, the site may be eligible for designation under this criterion.

3. It embodies elements of architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant structural or architectural achievement or innovation (Criterion 7 in previous ordinance).

Although the existing structures retain many of the original architectural design details and materials which includes their building forms, expressions, window shape and style, and façade materials, the Googie style was not known for its structural or architectural innovation and achievements. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion.

4. It is similar to other distinctive properties, sites, areas, or objects based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif (Criterion 8 in previous ordinance).

The buildings present several features that are especially unique and exemplary of notably significant examples of the Googie style. The design is not based on a motif. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion.

5. It has a unique location or singular physical characteristics or is a view or vista representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pomona (Criterion 6 in previous ordinance).

The location of the existing structures along a major transportation corridor and the abundance of asphalt were intentional design choices as the site was designed to cater to the automobile. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

6. It reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning (Criterion 9 in previous ordinance).

The overall site design significantly reflects the pattern of settlement as the site was developed amid a massive population boom which brought with it sudden shifts in architecture, prominent modes of transportation, and community planning efforts which began to be tailored to accommodate the automobile. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

7. It is one of the few remaining examples in the City of Pomona, region, state, or nation possessing distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or historical type or specimen (Criterion 10 in previous ordinance).

The building on the site is the seventh McDonald's built and is currently the second oldest of its original restaurants in existence. Given the good to excellent condition of the building on the site, the property is one of the few remaining examples of early roadside commercial architecture. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

Person(s) and Events Important in Our History

1. It is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history (Criterion 2 in previous ordinance).

The site is identified with the original architect of the iconic McDonald's restaurant, Stanley Charles Meston and is also reflective of the post war population boom which had significant cultural impacts from the local to national level. It is also associated with the McDonald Brothers and the impact that the McDonald's chain had on American culture. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

2. It exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City of Pomona's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history (Criterion 1 in previous ordinance).

The property reflects the impact that the postwar population boom had on the City's development patterns which arguably has had major impacts to the City's cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

Archaeology

1. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

This criterion relates to archaeological resources and there is no information that this site could have been important to Native American tribes in the area. Therefore, the property is not likely to yield any information and does not meet this criterion.

CITY OF POMONA HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION CRITERIA

1. It is a contiguous area possessing a concentration of eligible historic resources or thematically related grouping of structures which contribute to each other and are unified by plan, style, or physical development; and (b) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction; represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic values (*Criterion 4 in previous ordinance*).

The surrounding neighborhood does not possess a concentration of eligible historic resources which would make the neighborhood eligible for designation as a historic district. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion.

2. It reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of a park landscape, site design, or community planning (*Criterion 9 in previous ordinance*).

The overall site design significantly reflects the pattern of settlement as the site was developed amid a massive population boom which brought with it sudden shifts in architecture, prominent modes of transportation, and community planning efforts which began to be tailored to accommodate the automobile. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

Meets at least one of Landmark Designation Criteria as follows:

- a. Architecture / Physical Features Criteria 1, 2, 3, or 4; and/or
- b. Person and Events Criteria 1 or 2.

While the property itself is eligible, the surrounding neighborhood is not historic, and therefore the property would not be a contributor to a historic district.

Integrity:

The structures on the site remain in excellent condition with many of its original elements intact. Therefore, it is staff's opinion that the site does hold significant integrity.

Conclusion:

Based on the designation criteria discussed above, Staff has determined that the property does meet national, state, or local designation criteria. Therefore, staff has determined that the site is eligible to be designated as a local historic landmark.

Attachments:

- 1. Draft HPC Resolution No. 25-014
- 2. Googie Architectural Description
- 3. Original McDonald's Rendering (~1952)
- 4. Photograph – Pomona McDonald's (date unknown)
- 5. Photographs – Existing Site Conditions
- 6. Aerial Photographs (1938, 1972)
- 7. Selected Building Permits (1954-2011)
- 8. Online Articles
- 9. Historic Context Statement – Chapter 10 (1946-1980)
- 10. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
- 11. Library Archive Findings