



Staff Report

City of Pomona Historic Preservation Commission

October 1, 2025

FILE NO: DHS-000541-2025

A request for a Determination of Historic Significance to determine if the property located at 362 E. 4th Street is historically significant.

ADDRESS: 362 E. 4th Street

APPLICANT: Li Yan Ma for Mr. Yes Pomona Investment LLC

PROJECT PLANNER: Irene Mouré, Assistant Planner

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: This project is exempt for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(a) of the California CEQA Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve File No(s). DHS-000541-2025 and adopt Resolution No. 25-026 (Attachment 3).

Architectural Style:

The current structure on the property is best described as “industrial vernacular” with minimal brutalist architectural elements. For instance, the structure has a heavy façade, simple metal doors, no trim or architectural detailing and exposed ducts and pipes are reminiscent of brutalism. However, the overall design of the structure is simple and there are zero windows on the structure, which was somewhat common during Pomona’s industrial development period from 1946 to 1980. The lack of windows suggests that the building relies on an internal system to control the interior environment in terms of lighting and conditioning. Photographs of the property are attached for review (Attachment 2).

Architectural Description:

The structure is a one-story height configuration constructed in 1966 for the purpose of a security alarm services type of business. In 2001, a 2,809.50 square foot structure was attached to the easterly side of the subject structure to accommodate a telecommunications service.

The front and side façade of the structure is embossed in brick masonry with the rear being of cement plaster. There is also façade extensions that add some decorative detailing to the subject building’s street-facing exterior. The rear of the structure is enclosed with a six-foot wrought iron security fencing and has an exterior of cement plaster. The structure is currently vacant with the exposed mechanical equipment in the rear.

RELEVANT ALTERATIONS:

1966 – Demolition of a dwelling and garage

1966 – Construction of structure

1997 – Tenant improvement for equipment room, power room, map room, and break room
2001 – 2,809.50 square foot addition to easterly side of structure for office space

Character-Defining Features:

1. One-story height
2. Brick Masonry Construction façade
3. Flat roof
4. Simple massing

HISTORY:

Prior to the construction of the industrial building, there was previously a single-family dwelling and garage structure located on the property. However, the dwelling and the accessory structure were both demolished in April 1966, with the construction of the current structure starting immediately afterwards and completed September 1966. Since the previous structures were demolished, staff's assessment of the property in its current state. Below is the assessment determining the eligibility criteria for the subject property.

Historic Context Statement:

The eligibility standards set forth in "Theme: Industrial Development" of Chapter X: Postwar Growth, Diversification, and Redevelopment (1946-1980) is used to determine the significance of the site. The property must meet both Criterion A/1/1,9 (Events/Patterns of Development) and Criterion C/3/3,5,7 (Architecture and Design) to be eligible for historic designation (Attachment 3).

Survey Information:

The subject property was not surveyed in the 1993 Citywide survey.

City Directories:

The subject property or occupants were not included in archived City Directories.

Land Use and Business License History:

The subject property was specifically constructed for commercial industrial uses, such as alarm and telecommunications services. Based on building permit records and business licenses, three companies occupied the structure.

The first and most memorialized operator of the structure was Valley Alarm Co. There are a few archived Progress Bulletin articles pertaining to Valley Alarm Co. For instance, one article describes a request for bids for alarm services within City Hall and mentions that Valley Alarm Co originally operated at 118 E. 3rd Street in 1963 prior to constructing and operating at 362 E. 4th Street. Another article details a new alarm system with a roof mounted beacon, known as Alpha 5, sold exclusively by Valley Alarm Co and marketed in Pomona. Other articles detail Valley Alarm Co.'s salesmanship and services in nearby jurisdictions, specifically school districts, such as Rancho

Cucamonga and San Dimas. Lastly, while Valley Alarm Co.'s main goal was to eliminate burglaries through their alarm system, one of their employees used their burglary knowledge to commit nefarious acts of burglary.

While the Valley Alarm Co. was the only operator to have captured the journalistic eye of the Progress Bulletin, the structure remained in use until 2024 when MPower Communications Inc. ceased operations and sold the property (Attachment 4).

Year	Type of Business, Company Name
1966	Alarm Services, Valley Alarm Co
1983	Alarm Services, A.P.I Alarm Inc.
1997	Switch Telecommunications, MPower Communications Inc.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

Pomona's Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps has the property archived as a parking lot. The subject was added in 1966 and may have not been recorded by the city's map collection.

Significance:

The subject property is part of Pomona's industrial development pattern during the mid-1940s to 1980 where traditional industrial developments and the industry became more diversified and included commercial services, such as alarm and telecommunication services. Furthermore, the first operator of the site made frequent appearances in the Progress Bulletin, where their then niche operations provided services for different government agencies, including City Hall and other various school districts.

Moreover, while the industrial vernacular structure does possess some distinguishing brutalist features, such as raw material façade of brick and the exposed mechanical equipment, it is not an exemplary example of brutalism within the city. There are more rare examples designed by distinguishable architects.

Furthermore, unlike older industrial buildings that utilized windows to capitalize on daylight prior to the widespread use of electric lighting, this structure has no windows as it was constructed in 1966 and relies on an internal system for lighting, air circulation, and climate control. This design specification aligns with the uses that occupied with the building, such as the alarm system and telecommunications services. The lack of windows is not entirely uncommon with industrial structures in Pomona. However, it suggests that the building has more modern systems than others. Lastly, there was a 2,809.50 square foot addition added to the easterly side of the building in 2001. While that structure has its own separate address of 388 E. 4th Street, it

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).

The subject site is a part of national trend of broad industrial development patterns. However, this site is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to this pattern. Therefore, it does not meet this criterion.

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

The site is not associated with the lives of persons significant and, therefore, does not meet 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 subject structure has an industrial vernacular style with minimal brutalist elements as there is an emphasis on a simple, block-like form and raw concrete construction. While the structure does embody some elements of brutalism, there are other distinctive buildings in the city. Therefore, it does not meet 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.

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).

The subject site is a part of statewide trend of broad industrial development patterns. However, this site is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to this pattern. Therefore, it does not meet this criterion.

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

The subject site is not associated with the lives of persons significant to California history and, therefore, does not meet 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 subject structure has a brutalist vernacular style, as there is an emphasis on a simple, block-like form and raw concrete construction. While the structure does embody some elements of brutalism, there are

other distinctive buildings in the city that possess high artistic values. Therefore, it does not meet 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.

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 subject structure has an industrial vernacular style with minimal brutalist elements as there is an emphasis on a simple, block-like form and raw concrete construction. While the structure does embody some elements of brutalism, there are other distinctive buildings in the city. Therefore, it does not meet this criterion.

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

The subject structure is not of the work of a notable builder, designer, or architect. Therefore, it does not meet 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);

The subject structure does not have a distinctive characteristics type. It is of an industrial vernacular style that does not possess any character-defining features or embodies architectural design elements that are significant or innovative. Therefore, it 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);

There are other more distinctive industrial and/or commercial properties that were designed by brutalist architects and designated as brutalism. The subject property may have share some similarities with existing brutalist building but it is not distinctive. Therefore, the structure 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);

While the subject property is located near historic downtown Pomona, near residential and institutional uses, it is not a visual feature of the neighborhood or community. Therefore, the site does not meet 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 subject site is a part of trend of broad industrial development patterns. However, this site is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to this pattern. Therefore, it does not meet 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).

While the front façade of brick has not been architecturally modified, it is not a rare example of industrial vernacular or brutalist structures as the city has several buildings of complete brutalist design, including City Hall, which is a historically designated landmark. Therefore, it does not meet 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 subject property is not associated with person or events that would be considered significant. Therefore, it does not meet 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);

Although the subject site may have had spotlights in the Pomona Progress Bulletin and had some economic influence regarding alarm services in the region, it is not reflective of special elements of the city. Therefore, it does not meet 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.

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 property does not meet this criterion as it is a standalone building and is not a designated resource to the Landmark Quarter Historic District. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics other structures possess in this historic district. Therefore, it 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*); and

The subject site is a part of statewide and regional trend of broad industrial development patterns. However, this site is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to this pattern. Therefore, it does not meet 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.

The property has largely maintained its industrial vernacular architectural style with minimal brutalist elements. The front façade of raw construction materials, such as brick, has not been modified to the point of losing its essential features. The 2,280.50 square foot addition to the easterly side of the subject structure, so the majority if its architectural integrity. However, the structure is not exemplary. There are more distinctive industrial structures in the city. Furthermore, the property is not associated with significant persons or events. It also did not make a significant contribution to the industrial development pattern experienced in Pomona and regionally. Therefore, the subject property does not meet either one of the Landmark Designation Criteria.

Required Findings:

The findings required in Section 800.C.1 of the Pomona Zoning and Development Code for a Determination of Historic Significance are contained in the attached resolution (Attachment 1).

Conclusion:

Based on the criteria and eligibility standards, staff has determined the subject property is not eligible for historic designation. Although the front façade and the majority of the structure has largely remained intact with minimal additions, there are more distinctive and exemplary examples of industrial vernacular structures with brutalist elements in the city, some of which have been landmarked and designated. Furthermore, the site is not associated with events or persons that would be considered significant per the criteria. Therefore, the property is determined to not bare historic significance.

Environmental Review:

Staff has determined that this project is exempt for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(a) of the California CEQA Guidelines as it is not considered a project.

Conditions of Approval:

The Conditions of Approval are contained in the attached resolution (Attachment 1).

Attachments:

1. Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 25-026
2. Photographs of site and surrounding area
3. Excerpt from Pomona Context Statement
4. Land Use and Building records
5. Archived Pomona Progress Bulletin articles