



Historic Preservation Commission

Staff Report

May 7, 2025

FILE NO:	DHS-000278-2025 A request to make a Determination of Historic Significance.
ADDRESS:	2250 N. Garey Avenue
APPLICANT:	Satwinder Singh
PROJECT PLANNER:	Irene Moure, Assistant Planner
RECOMMENDATION:	Determine that the property located at 2250 N. Garey Avenue (File No. DHS-000278-2025) is historically significant and adopt Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 25-011 (Attachment No. 1).

BACKGROUND:

On March 11, 2025, Mr. Satwinder Singh submitted a request to determine the historic significance of the commercial structure located at 2250 N. Garey Avenue.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:

The Pomona Historic Context Statement classifies the commercial structure as a "chuckwagon" building, a popular design for the Arby's fast-food restaurants during the late-1960s to the mid-1970s.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The subject structure is located on a northern portion of Garey Avenue, the main vein of the city that runs from the entirety of North to South Pomona. This portion of Garey Avenue is surrounded by mixed-use development, primarily commercial and residential uses.

Based on visual analysis, the existing building is a single structure designed as a covered Conestoga wagon or "chuckwagon". The structure is rectangular with a curved roof and overhang. The windows on the east elevation are broad and cover a large portion of the façade. Rock-like siding dominates the north, east, and south elevations.

Relevant Construction/Alterations:

1. Arby's Restaurant Construction – 1970
2. Construction of Drive-Thru Addition – 1985
3. One Pole Sign – 1970
4. Add Exposed Neon to Pylon Sign Face – 1990 (Pylon demolished approximately year 2012)

Character-Defining Features:

1. Covered Conestoga wagon/chuckwagon style building
2. Curved roof and overhang
3. Broad windows on façade
4. Rock-like siding on elevations and pillars

HISTORY:

Historic Context Statement:

The structure is highlighted in the Theme: Commercial Development section of the Citywide Historic Context Statement. The following pages from the Historic Context Statement identify criteria and integrity standards for historic consideration.

Survey Information:

The 1993 Survey did not survey the subject property.

City Directories:

The subject structure is not found in archived City Directories from 1896 to 1948.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

The City's Sanborn Maps collection was maintained from 1885 to 1957. The final addendum was added in 1957, 13 years before the construction of the commercial structure.

Significance:

The subject building is captured in Chapter 9, Postwar Growth, Diversification, and Redevelopment (1946-1980) of the Citywide Historic Context Statement. The structure is specifically highlighted in the Commercial Development Theme section on page 218 (Attachment No. 2).

This theme is summarized as a period of postwar population growth, suburban development, and a significant increase in auto-oriented culture where cars became more than just a form of transportation. Much of the notable commercial development during this era of the City occurred on the major corridors currently established as Arrow Highway, Garey Avenue, Mission Boulevard, Valley Boulevard, Indian Hill Avenue, and Holt Avenue. Roadside architecture evolved into elaborate and

deliberate expressive styles, such as Googie, to attract motorists. The subject structure is a remaining intact example of that era and to the City of Pomona (Attachment No. 3).

Furthermore, throughout the nation, this era experienced a spur of fast-food restaurant development. During this expansion, Arby's introduced the Conestoga wagon or chuckwagon design style for their restaurants. Wiley Christian Riedel is responsible for these unique building designs from 1964 to the 1970s. However, by the mid-1970s, these covered wagon designs were phased out.

The Los Angeles County Assessor and Building & Safety permit records history show the commercial structure was built in 1970. In 1985, a drive-thru addition – approved by the Planning Commission in Resolution No. 8597 – was constructed. Lastly, in 1990 exposed neon lights were added to the iconic Arby's ten-gallon hat pylon sign. However, while there is not permit evidence recording the deconstruction of the sign, an article from the Inland Valley Bulletin captured the demolition in 2012 (Attachment No. 4).

According to Business License Records, the Arby's restaurant use ceased in 2012. While the use has changed over time, the structure's character-defining elements and architectural features are primarily intact except for minimal exterior work, such as paint and the removal of outdoor dining tables.

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).

This commercial structure is an excellent example of programmatic, or novelty architecture during Pomona's, and largely Southern California's, commercial and residential postwar boom. It is representative of the 1950-60s California car culture that developed and spread nationwide. It is reminiscent of an era where automobiles expanded beyond a simple means of transportation to a culture symbolizing freedom and influencing commercial development, in particular, roadside architecture. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

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

The structure is associated with the founders and legacy of Arby's restaurants. Furthermore, Wiley Christian Reidel is noted to have designed the covered chuckwagon restaurants. The expansion of Arby's restaurants starting in 1964 from the state of Ohio to California and nationwide runs parallel to the captured history of Pomona's fast-food restaurant development. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

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

Programmatic or novelty architecture is reminiscent of an era of roadside architecture during the postwar population and development boom. The building has eccentric elements for the purpose of advertising to passing motorists. From the covered chuckwagon design to the large window façade, this building represents an era of roadside architecture that coincides with the evolution of American car culture. 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 may have been important to Indigenous 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).

This commercial structure is an excellent example of programmatic, or novelty architecture during Pomona's, and largely Southern California's, commercial and residential postwar boom. It is representative of the 1950-60s California car culture that developed and spread nationwide. It is reminiscent of an era where automobiles expanded beyond a simple means of transportation to a culture symbolizing freedom and influencing commercial development, in particular, roadside architecture. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

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

While the founders or the designer of these Arby's restaurants are not prominent to local or California history, the covered Conestoga wagon or chuckwagon design is a part of an era of roadside attraction and fast-food development boom. Therefore, the property does not meet this criterion

3. 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 3).

As noted in the Historic Context Statement, the commercial building is a remaining example of iconic fast-food restaurants from the postwar period. Like the chuckwagon building, the method of construction intended to serve not only as a restaurant but a form of advertising. Therefore, the property 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 may have been important to Indigenous 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);

This commercial building is designed to resemble a covered Conestoga wagon or chuckwagon, which were used by early pioneers during western expansion of the United States. The structure is an excellent example of a period where commercial outlets were designed to resemble objects for the purpose of roadside attraction. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

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

The designer of Arby's chuckwagon restaurants was Wiley Christian Riedel. Riedel is noted to have been the prominent designer for these outlets from 1964 to the mid-1970s, where they were eventually phased out. The design was prominent throughout the nation and had a significant impact on the design of fast-food restaurants. Therefore, the property meets 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 structure is of roadside architecture for the purposed of advertisement that is a microcosm of a period of architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represents significant structural, architectural achievement, and innovation.

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);

Between the years of 1964 to the mid-1970s, Arby's restaurants were designed to resemble a covered Conestoga wagon or chuckwagon. In 2010, David Allen of the Inland Valley Bulletin noted that the intact commercial structure was one of 10 remaining in Southern California. However, like the other chuckwagon building on Holt Avenue, the chuckwagon design is only associated with

Arby's restaurant which experienced growth during the same period as commercial and residential development in north Pomona. Journalist, David Allen, for the Inland Valley Bulletin noted that in 2012, the building was the structure was one of the few left and expressed nostalgia for the both the restaurant use and the chuckwagon building. Therefore, the property meets 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);

In the Historic Context Statement, like many other downtown areas within Southern California and the larger United States, fast-food restaurant development was strategically built away from the downtown Pomona area along Arrow Highway. However, this area does not have any significant physical characteristics that would represent a familiar visual feature of the neighborhood or the City of Pomona. Therefore, the property 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 property reflects Pomona's geographic and cultural growth patterns distinctive to postwar development and alignment with the evolution of car culture from a means of transportation to a symbolic representation of independence. However, its location on Garey Avenue is not significant as the main development corridor's during the period of significance was Foothill Boulevard, Mission Boulevard, and Holt Avenue. Therefore, the property 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).

The commercial structure is one of two chuckwagon restaurant buildings in the City of Pomona, both of which were Arby's restaurants at one point. Moreover, it is one of few examples left in Pomona of 1950s and 1960s roadside architecture and the larger Los Angeles County and Orange County regions as well due to its novelty architecture type and historical significance to auto-oriented commercial development. 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);

While the remaining structure is not associated with persons significant in Pomona history, the covered chuckwagon design is solely connected to Wiley Christian Riedel. Moreover, cultural and

social events, such as the evolution of car culture and suburban development, which led to the construction of the building aligns and runs parallel to Pomona's history of a burgeoning postwar residential and commercial development. 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 Historic Context notes that the subject structure is a part of a rich history of commercial development along the State Route 2, Arrow Highway. This commercial structure is an excellent example of programmatic, or novelty architecture during Pomona's, and largely Southern California's, commercial and residential postwar boom. It is representative of the 1950-60s California car culture that developed and spread nationwide. It is reminiscent of an era where automobiles expanded beyond a simple means of transportation to a culture symbolizing freedom and influencing commercial development, in particular, roadside architecture. 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 may have been important to Indigenous 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 is not located in an area that is a potential 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*); and

The property reflects Pomona's geographic and cultural growth patterns distinctive to postwar development and alignment with the evolution of car culture from a means of transportation to a symbolic representation of independence. However, its location on Garey Avenue is not

significant as the main development corridor's during the period of significance was Foothill Boulevard, Mission Boulevard, and Holt Avenue. Therefore, the property 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 commercial structure is one of two chuckwagon restaurant buildings in the City of Pomona, both of which were Arby's restaurants at one point. Moreover, it is one of few examples left in Pomona of 1950s and 1960s roadside architecture and the larger Los Angeles County and Orange County regions as well due to its novelty architecture type and historical significance to auto-oriented commercial development. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

The designer of Arby's chuckwagon restaurants was Wiley Christian Riedel. Riedel is noted to have been the prominent designer for these outlets from 1964 to the mid-1970s, where they were eventually phased out. The design was prominent throughout the nation and had a significant impact on the design of fast-food restaurants. Therefore, the property meets this criterion.

INTEGRITY:

While the property was not included in the 1993 historic resources survey, staff has determined the structure has minimal alterations. The chuckwagon design and significant architectural elements have remained largely intact. Only minor exterior alterations have been observed, such as the removal of plastic picnic tables from the front yard setback and exterior paint. Therefore, the building retains a high level of architectural and historic integrity.

CONCLUSION:

The commercial structure is a remnant, and a significant example, of roadside architecture in Pomona that characterized the California car culture that developed following World War II. It is an exemplary example of novelty and roadside architecture that captures a cultural, social, and community planning trend in an era of unprecedented growth and change. Furthermore, the Conestoga wagon or chuckwagon design is solely connected to the once iconic fast-food giant, Arby's. While Arby's restaurants are being phased out nationwide, the intact structures, such as one located at 2250 N. Garey Avenue is a rare piece of Americana and Pomona history. Therefore, staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission determine that the property is historic.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 25-011

2. Historic Context Statement – Commercial Theme (1946-1980)
3. Inland Valley Daily Bulletin Newspaper Article – “Old-Style Arby’s is One of the Few Left
4. Inland Valley Daily Bulletin Newspaper Article – “It’s RIP for Arby’s in Pomona”
5. Site Photographs