RESOLUTION NO. HPC 18-126


The Historic Preservation Commission of the City of West Hollywood does hereby resolve as follows:

SECTION 1. An application for Master Project (MP17-0076) including Certificate of Appropriateness (COA17-0021); Demolition Permit (DMP-014-012); Development Permit (DVP-014-017); Conditional Use Permit (CUP-014-002 & CUP-014-003); Minor Conditional Use Permit (MCP-014-006); Administrative Permit (AP-014-014); Specific Plan (SPA-014-001); General Plan Amendment (GPA-014-001) and Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA-014-001) was filed on May 15, 2014 by Faring Capital, LLC and Robertson Court, LLC for the redevelopment of a 1.94-acre site to include rehabilitation and relocation of a cultural resource and construction of a new, 241-room hotel with associated restaurant, retail, fitness, spa and nightclub uses. The application was deemed complete on June 23, 2014.

SECTION 2. Notice of the public hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission was posted on the site for a period of at least 28 days beginning on December 22, 2017. Notices to surrounding property owners and residents as well as to Neighborhood Watch groups and interested parties including those who have previously commented on the project were mailed on January 8, 2018. Copies of the staff report and attachments have been on file at the West Hollywood City Hall and West Hollywood Library since January 12, 2018. The Historic Preservation Commission properly reviewed and considered this matter at a public hearing on January 22, 2018.

SECTION 3. Pursuant to noticing requirements set forth in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21092.5), the City circulated a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a period of 43 days from December 11, 2014 through January 23, 2015. A public scoping meeting was held on January 7, 2015. The City prepared the Robertson Lane Project EIR in its capacity as Lead Agency under (CEQA) and in compliance with CEQA. A Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR was circulated for a period of 62 days from March 23, 2017 to May 24, 2017. All required notifications were provided pursuant to CEQA and all comment letters were incorporated into the Final EIR.
SECTION 4. In accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21092.5, the City provided written proposed responses to public agencies that commented on the Draft EIR ten (10) days prior to certification of the Final EIR.

SECTION 5. The City prepared the Robertson Lane Hotel Project EIR in its capacity as lead agency under CEQA and in compliance with CEQA. The Final EIR consists of the Initial Study, NOP, Notice of Availability, Draft EIR, Technical Studies, the Responses to Comments, Errata, and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. Hereafter, these documents will be referred to collectively as the “Final EIR.” These Findings are based on the entire record before the Historic Preservation Commission, including the Final EIR.

SECTION 6. In accordance with WHMC Section 19.58.040.H, the Historic Preservation Commission is tasked with reviewing all applications for permits and environmental impact reports pertaining to potential and designated cultural resources. In this context, the review is conducted under the auspices of a certificate of appropriateness. In accordance with CEQA Section 21082.1, the Historic Preservation Commission independently reviewed and analyzed the Final EIR and the administrative record relating to the proposed project and any designated and potential cultural resources. The Final EIR constitutes an accurate and complete statement of the environmental impacts of the proposed project. The Final EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Historic Preservation Commission. For the reasons set forth in the Commission’s January 22, 2018, report, it hereby recommends that the City Council adopt the facts and analysis in the Final EIR and certify the Final EIR, specifically related to Cultural Resources under EIR Chapter 3.3. The omission of some detail or aspect of the Final EIR does not mean that it has been rejected by the Historic Preservation Commission.

SECTION 7. Changes or alterations have been required in the project that, to the extent feasible, substantially lessen the environmental effects identified in the EIR. These changes or alterations are included in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Attachment A). The Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that the City Council adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program incorporated herein as Attachment A, specifically Mitigation Measures MM-CUL-1 through MM-CUL-14 related to Cultural Resources under EIR Chapter 3.3. During the public comment period, the City received comments from members of the public, historic preservation groups and Commissioners with suggestions for ways to enhance the project with respect to the character defining features of the Factory, relationships between the Factory and the hotel building, and additional refinements to the Mitigation Measures. The applicant agreed to incorporate many of the suggestions into an additional project alternative (Alternative 3) and enhanced several of the Mitigation Measures. The Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends approval of Alternative 3, and incorporation of the enhanced mitigations.
SECTION 8. In accordance with Section 19.48.050 of the West Hollywood Municipal Code, the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the City Council make the following findings regarding Certificate of Appropriateness 17-0021:

a. The proposed work will neither adversely affect the significant architectural features of the cultural resource nor adversely affect the character or historic, architectural, aesthetic interest or value of the cultural resource and its site in that the proposed project was evaluated by a qualified historic preservation professional who determined that while the proposed work will demolish a portion of the resource, and relocate and reconfigure the resource on the same site, when the project is completed, the Factory Building will retain its significant architectural features and character. Completion of the Robertson Lane Hotel Project will result in the truncation, relocation, and reconfiguration of a historical resource. However, due to its nature as a prefabricated, modular, steel building, the Factory Building is uniquely capable of undergoing such changes while maintaining sufficient integrity to justify its listing in the California Register of Historic Resources and the City of West Hollywood Local Cultural Resource Register. Key portions of the building will be retained and rehabilitated, ensuring that the dual histories of the Mitchell Camera Corporation and Studio One are carried forward and made available on a long-term basis to new users as part of an adaptively reused building. The mitigation measures incorporated include documentation, commemoration and interpretation of each of these periods of significance, in addition to requirements for appropriate treatment of the historical materials and features. Further, the project involves restoration, rehabilitation and enhancement of key features of the Factory Building to ensure they are consistent with historic appearances. The building will continue to convey its importance in the historical context of the City of West Hollywood as well as the state of California. Appendix D to the EIR, as well as the Supplemental Historical Report provide background and evidence supporting this finding.

b. The proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design guidelines, if any, prepared by the Historic Preservation Commission for the particular resource, and to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and does not adversely affect the character of the cultural resource. The City of West Hollywood has not adopted prescriptive standards for this resource. The proposed work conforms to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as well as the Guidelines for Rehabilitation in the following ways:
1. The property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

The Factory building will be adaptively reused as retail and restaurant space. These uses are flexible and will require relatively few changes to the building. The most dramatic change to the Factory building will be its truncation and relocation on the site, such that a majority of the building’s length will span a north-south axis, parallel to Robertson Boulevard, rather than perpendicular to it. While this will change certain aspects of the spatial relationships associated with the Factory building, the structure will remain on the same site within the same city block and retain its relationship within the larger context of the site as it relates to the industrial history of West Hollywood as well as the growth LGBTQ-related uses in this portion of the City. While the building will no longer be accessed from both La Peer Drive and Robertson Boulevard, both entrances will be retained and rehabilitated to represent both the Mitchell Camera Factory and Studio One periods of significance.

Surrounding the relocated Factory building will be retail and restaurant uses at ground level, similar to what currently exists along Robertson Boulevard in this area, and a hotel building rising to approximately 120 feet above. These uses will be situated so that the Factory Building is both incorporated into the development as a component, and given enough space to be experienced as its own entity. Particularly, Alternative 3 presents a refined project in which the new construction is pulled away from the relocated Factory Building above the first floor level, and the portion of the new building fronting Robertson Boulevard north of the Factory Building will be lowered so that it is in line with the height of the historic structure and the other buildings on the street.

While the spatial relationships will change on the site, the larger context is retained, and the relocated historic structure will experience minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, and spaces.

2. The historic character of the property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

While the proposed alterations to the Factory Building would alter the spatial relationships of the building by truncating a portion of the building and turning it 90 degrees on the site, the project, considered as a whole, will retain and preserve the historic character of the property. The unique shape, including the lantern roof and large multi-light windows that enabled the early factory work within and the prefabricated steel structure made up of modular components provide character and distinction to the Factory building. These aspects of the
building will be preserved and restored through the implementation of the proposed project. With respect to its association with the Mitchell Camera Company, the Factory building is located within the larger context of the portion of West Hollywood that was located near the rail yards on San Vicente and associated with industrial uses, during the early part of the area’s development. The location of the Factory building upon completion of the project will be consistent with this context. While additional development will be added to the site, the building has been part of a built-out urban environment for decades, so the spatial relationships to other buildings and the commercial neighborhood at large will not change substantially. Furthermore, as addressed in the technical report and supplemental technical report, prepared by Architectural Resources Group, the building will be rehabilitated, and mitigation has been enhanced with respect to commemoration and interpretation to better convey the distinctive characteristics of the historical materials and features.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties will not be undertaken.

The proposed rehabilitation of the Factory building will not use conjecture or false materials from other sources to complete the work. As discussed in the technical reports, the portions of the building that are being removed will be salvaged and used to restore the remaining portion of the Factory building, minimizing the need for non-original materials.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

The analysis and rehabilitation plan for the Factory building takes into account both periods of significance for the site: Mitchell Camera Factory as well as the Studio One discotheque. All significant periods, and subsequent related changes, will be considered and treated accordingly.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

The Factory building is defined by its distinctive shape, pre-fabricated modular construction, metal materials, window patterns, and cavernous interior spaces – all of which contributed to both the original use of the building as a factory as well as the subsequent nightclub use. As required by the project’s mitigation program, all of these materials, features, finishes and construction techniques will be rehabilitated and preserved to the fullest extent possible. Portions of
the building that are being removed will be salvaged and preserved and will be available for future use and potential repairs.

6. **Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced.** Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

As discussed in the technical reports, the portions of the building that are being removed will be salvaged and used to restore the remaining portion of the Factory building, minimizing the need for non-original materials. Portions of the building that are being removed will be salvaged and preserved and will be available for future use and potential repairs.

7. **Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.**

Mitigation measure (MM-CUL-4) related to sensitive treatment and conservation of materials will ensure that materials that are in need of repair or treatment for salvage and reuse are handled with the most appropriate and gentlest means available. An on-site historic architect will be present to monitor the administration of all rehabilitation treatment techniques. Mitigation measure MM-CUL-5 requires on-site construction monitoring by a qualified architect to ensure that the preservation of retained materials from the original building are treated appropriately at all times.

8. **Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.**

It is not anticipated that archaeological resources will be discovered during construction of the proposed project. However, mitigation measures are in place to protect any unidentified archaeological resources. See MM-CUL-12, MM-CUL-13, and MM-CUL-14 for specific information regarding possible inadvertent discovery of any archaeological or paleontological resources, or human remains.

9. **New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.**
In developing the Robertson Lane Hotel project, the applicant proposes to remove a portion of the Factory building, reconfigure the building on the same site such that it will align parallel to Robertson Boulevard, and rehabilitate the remaining portion of the building. The act of dismantling and storing a portion of the building will affect some of the historical materials. Mitigation measures have been incorporated to ensure sensitive treatment of materials and appropriate rehabilitation of the significant features of the building. Character-defining features of the Factory Building will be retained and rehabilitated.

On the same site as the reconfigured Factory building will be a new hotel complex spanning from Robertson Boulevard to La Peer Drive. The hotel building has been designed, in an iterative process, to respond sensitively to the relocated Factory building. The new building along Robertson Boulevard is limited to two floors, and contains a restaurant on the ground level, and banquet room pre-function space (indoor and outdoor) on the upper level. Between this portion of the building and the Factory building is a walk-through or paseo known as “Robertson Lane”. This walkway will have approximately 30 feet in width, with retail and restaurant fronting the Lane. Where the Lane meets Robertson Boulevard, a gathering space, or plaza is created which is bounded by the hotel building, the Lane, and the Factory building. This configuration will lend prominence to the Factory building as a focal point of the hotel project on the Robertson Boulevard site. The contemporary design of the hotel building will be well differentiated from the historic structure. The hotel building rises to approximately 120 feet in height on the La Peer side of the site. To ensure that the hotel building is subordinate to the Factory building, the project applicant revised the plans following circulation of the Draft EIR to introduce Alternative 3. In this alternative, the portion of the hotel building directly to the west of the Factory building, which largely blocked the western side of the historic structure from view, has been limited to one story in height with outdoor dining and trellises located on the first floor roof. The relocated Factory Building will appear to be set apart from the larger hotel structure, and will be visible from all sides.

10. New Additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Following implementation of the project, the site of the Factory Building will be permanently changed. Should the hotel structure be removed at a future date, the Factory Building could likely not be reassembled in the same configuration, and some portions of the existing structures which have been identified as unsalvageable will be lost. Nevertheless, while the Factory Building will be modified and
relocated, the project will result in a historic property that continues to convey the significance of the events that occurred there in both periods of significance through both form and siting. Furthermore, the remaining portions of the building will undergo extensive rehabilitation work to restore the pre-fabricated Truscon Steel building to its original condition. These efforts, along with the interpretation and commemoration requirements, and construction monitoring, will ensure that the implementation of the project does not impair the historic property or its environment to a degree that would destroy its ability to convey its significance or jeopardize its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historic Resources or the West Hollywood Local Cultural Resource Register.

B. In the case of construction of a new improvement upon a cultural resource property, the use and design of the improvement shall not adversely affect, and shall be compatible with, the use and design of the existing cultural resources within the same historic district. As discussed at length in standard 10 above, the development of the larger hotel structure on the site will not adversely affect the Factory Building, and has been designed to be compatible with, and give prominence to, the historic structure; and

C. Wherever feasible, the alteration takes full advantage of the State Historic Building Code and Uniform Code for Building Conservation. The proposed work will utilize applicable State Codes as appropriate, and apply the State Historic Building Code wherever possible, for development of the proposed project.

SECTION 9. Based on the above findings, the West Hollywood Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that the West Hollywood City Council certify the Final EIR, adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and approve Certificate of Appropriateness 17-0021 in conjunction with the proposed Robertson Lane Hotel Project.

EDWARD LEVIN, CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:

JENNIFER ALKIRE, AICP
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION LIAISON
This page intentionally left blank