

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TELEPHONE COMPANY EXCHANGE**

650-668 South La Brea Avenue

**CHC-2025-781-HCM**

**ENV-2025-782-CE**

**FINDINGS**

- The Southern California Telephone Company Exchange “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” as an example of an early Southern California Telephone Company telephone exchange building in the Wilshire area and for its association with communications infrastructure development in Los Angeles.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The Southern California Telephone Company Exchange meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria for designation.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” as an example of an early Southern California Telephone Company telephone exchange building in the Wilshire area and for its association with communications infrastructure development in Los Angeles. Telephone exchange buildings, first introduced by the Sunset Telephone Company between 1910 and 1912, are a form of industrial building that served as local landmarks due to their size and placement in highly visible locations. The 1920s and 1930s saw the construction of numerous telephone exchanges across the city, such as the subject property, which contained telephone switching equipment and its operators. However, while there are other extant 1920s exchange buildings in Los Angeles, most have been altered beyond recognition.

As exhibited by the subject property, telephone exchanges are characterized by large-scale multistory massing and limited fenestration. The period of significance of the subject property is 1924 to 1941, which encompasses its original construction date and its later expansion and refacing during Southern California Telephone Company’s post-Depression era construction program to accommodate service expansion and updates to equipment. This expansion and updating coincided with the development of the modern dial system to connect callers. The evolution of the subject property during the period of significance illustrates the changing nature of telephone service, in both its equipment and its business organization. The subject property has continuously housed telecommunications equipment from 1924 to present day.

While the subject property has experienced a number of alterations to the interior, mostly to service its use as a telecommunications facility, there have been only a few minor alterations to the exterior, aside from the 1941 remodel that occurred within the period of significance. The subject property appears to retain a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS**

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 *“consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.”*

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 *“consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.”*

The designation of the Southern California Telephone Company Exchange as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to an Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2025-782-CE was prepared on April 11, 2025.