



## Legislation Text

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**File #: O-345-21, Version: 1**

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### LANDMARK DESIGNATION 245 N. SUMMIT

**Accepting the City Plan Commission’s recommendation for local landmark designation for the Building known as the Elsas Building (AKA Toledo Trust Building) located at 245 N. Summit Street, in accordance with Toledo Municipal Code Section 1111.1002; and declaring an emergency.**

#### SUMMARY & BACKGROUND:

This request is for the review of the landmark designation for the Elsas Building, also known as part of the Toledo Trust Building and Riverfront Apartments, located at 245 North Summit Street. The companion case to this request is M-3-21 located at 239 N. Summit Street that is referred to as Elsas Building that is the attached building to the south of this subject parcel. Both buildings, if approved, will be considered two separate locally designated landmark buildings.

The City of Toledo currently has three locally designated historic districts: Old West End, Vistula, and Westmoreland. Four other properties in the City of Toledo have been locally designated in the last five years; the Fiberglas Tower/Levis Square Park, located at 200, 435 North Saint Clair was the first locally designated landmark structure and this subject site abuts that historic designated property. The applicant is seeking the designation in order to obtain State Historic Tax Credits. They are also seeking to list the building in the National Register of Historic Places for its historic significance so it will qualify for Federal Tax Credits. The building is considered historically significant since it was constructed circa 1921 to 1924. The applicant proposes to use the building for residential apartments.

The process for landmark designation outlined in the Toledo Municipal Code, Chapter 1111.1000 Historic Districts and Landmarks (Designation or Expansion), Section 1111.1104 Report Contents states the following:

The reports of the Plan Commission and City Historic District Commission, containing their written recommendations to the City Council, must include information about how the proposed historic district or landmark, or expansion, is of special historical and architectural significance. The reports must include the following:

- A. whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated is listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- B. whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated provides significant examples of architectural styles of the past; and
- C. a description of the district or landmark to serve as an informational resource. The description must include, but need not be limited to, the following:
  1. a geographic description including location and its relationship to the entire City;

2. a description of the general land uses;
3. a general description of the building conditions;
4. a general description of the socio-economic characteristics;
5. a description of existing developmental plans or programs within or including the historic district or landmark; and
6. a list of neighborhood organizations within or serving the historic district or landmark.

The required information for this landmark designation is delineated below.

**A.** Whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated is listed in the National Register of Historic Places;

The applicant is currently applying for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The process takes significantly more time than the local designation and they are estimating a response from the Department of the Interior within the next six to twelve months.

**B.** Whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated provides significant examples of architectural styles of the past;

The Toledo Trust Building, constructed in 1912-1913 in the Neo-classical style, was designed by the Daniel H. Burnham Company, at the time one of the leading architectural firms in the United States whose founder led the planning for the highly influential World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The 21-story tower was among the first high-style skyscrapers built in Toledo. It was the tallest building in Toledo (and the second tallest in Ohio) from its construction in 1913 until the completion of the Ohio Bank Building at 405 Madison Avenue in 1930. It featured a tripartite division of base, shaft, and capital and had Classical detailing, both characteristic of Neo-classical skyscraper architecture of the period. The brick exterior of the shaft and capital was decorated with bands of terracotta with a Greek key detail and the twentieth-floor windows were divided by Classical urns.

The building was constructed by the Second National Bank, which was founded in 1864, shortly after the passage of the National Banking Act of 1863. By 1912 the bank claimed to be "the strongest bank in northwestern Ohio." Its purchase of the site on Summit Avenue was reportedly the largest real estate deal in Toledo's history to that time, at \$4,583 per front foot.

At its opening, the building contained a banking lobby and bank offices on the first floor and mezzanine. The upper floors were divided into leased offices occupied by a variety of tenants including the National Progressive Life Insurance, Power Equipment, Ohio State Life Insurance, and Central States Coal companies, plus a number of professional offices for doctors and lawyers. By 1915 most floors were leased, from doctors, lawyers, and jewelers occupying one or two rooms to tenants encompassing entire floors, such as the Kelly Martin and Company advertising agency that occupied the entire sixth floor and a commercial seed and grain testing laboratory on the twenty-first (attic) floor.

In 1924 Second National Bank was acquired by the Toledo Trust Company, another banking institution

that had been founded as the Toledo Savings Institution in 1868. The Toledo Trust Company was one of a handful of Toledo banks to survive the 1931 banking crisis, and it emerged from the crisis as Toledo's largest and fastest-growing bank. The same year, the bank acquired the neighboring five story building (the Elsas Building at 239 North Summit Street) and expanded its operations into the new building.

The Toledo Trust remained Toledo's leading bank in the 1940s and 1950s. In the mid-1940s, it was among the 100 largest commercial banks in the United States, hovering around 70th, and the only Toledo bank rated in the top 300. It was eclipsed in Ohio only by three Cleveland banks.

The tower's decorative upper cornice was removed in 1954 following incidents in other cities in which deteriorated cornices fell to the street below, injuring or even killing pedestrians and causing damage. Although the Toledo Trust's cornice was inspected and appeared to be sound, its removal was taken as a precautionary measure, a common response at the time. The building's base (first through third floors) was refaced in 1965-66 with black slate panels and window grids separated by charcoal granite spandrel panels. The refacing of commercial storefronts was characteristic of the mid twentieth century when downtowns were modernizing their architectural character to compete with new suburban commercial development.

The Toledo Trust moved out of the building in 1981 following the construction of a new headquarters across the street. The company was acquired by the Society Corporation of Cleveland in 1990, and the building at 245 North Summit was sold in 1995 to an investment group that planned to renovate the building. These plans fell through, but it was purchased in 1998 by the Eyde Company. The building's first floor, historically the bank lobby, remains in retail use, while the upper floor offices have been converted to apartments. The building is now called the Riverfront Apartments.

From its initial construction in 1913, the Toledo Trust Building has exemplified the history of the banking industry in Toledo and represented the changing fortunes of the city's downtown commercial district. The record price paid for the land on which the building stood, its status as the tallest building in Toledo (and second tallest in Ohio), and the prestigious national architect engaged to design the building reflected the substantial prosperity of banks and of Toledo itself during the opening decades of the twentieth century. The acquisition of Second National Bank by the Toledo Trust in 1924 was illustrative of the volatile growth of banks during the 1920s, fueled by frequent mergers and an economy hurtling toward the 1929 stock market crash and the Depression of the 1930s. The Toledo Trust managed to not only survive Toledo's banking crisis in the summer of 1931, but to emerge as the city's largest bank. For the next four decades, it would remain the largest bank in Toledo, one of the top five banks in Ohio, and among the 100 to 150 largest commercial banks in the United States. Like many downtowns across the country, Toledo faced significant challenges from suburbanization in the post-World War II era. Businesses like the Toledo Trust modernized their building facades and interiors as a response to these economic and demographic trends, yet the upper floors of the 21-story tower are still evocative of the bank's, and Toledo's, early twentieth century history.

C. a description of the district or landmark to serve as an informational resource. The description must include, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. a geographic description including location and its relationship to the entire City;

The subject property is a .18-acre site located in downtown Toledo and bounded by Summit Street, Madison Avenue, Levis Square, and the adjoining building at 239 North Summit Street. The tower is

built out to the lot lines and is attached to 239 North Summit Street, which was physically and functionally connected to the tower in 1931. It has no adjoining buildings on the north, east, and west. Southwest of the building is the Fiberglas Tower (Tower on the Maumee), which is also a Toledo landmarked building. One block east of the building is the Maumee River. The building lies in the Downtown Commercial District and within the Downtown Overlay District.

2. a description of the general land uses;

The subject property is zoned Downtown Commercial (CD). The building operated as a bank and office building from its construction in 1913 until 1981. Since 1999 it has operated as a retail space and apartment building. Surrounding land uses include a large office building directly to the north, public parks to the east and west, and a parking garage to the south.

3. a general description of the building conditions;

The building was originally used as a bank and office building until 1981. The offices above the first floor were converted to residential apartments circa 1999. The building is partially occupied. It is structurally sound and in fair condition.

4. a general description of the socio-economic characteristics;

The building is expected to remain in its previous use as first floor retail and upper floor residential. The Downtown Toledo Master Plan notes that housing options in the downtown are somewhat limited to apartments in rehabilitated high-rise buildings such as the Commodore Perry and LaSalle Buildings. The Master Plan recorded average rents for one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments in the center city as approximately \$670-\$1,130. The Fiberglas Tower (Tower on the Maumee) in the same block was recently converted to apartments. The building is also between two public parks, which are identified in the master plan as important livability elements.

5. a description of existing developmental plans or programs within or including the historic district or landmark; and

The Downtown Toledo Master Plan identifies this site to remain in its current Downtown Commercial use. The Downtown Commercial land use category accommodates a broad range of uses to reflect the downtown's role as a commercial, government, residential, cultural and entertainment center. Land uses should be dense, with large, multi-story buildings placed close together to facilitate walkability.

The Master Plan's residential market analysis concludes that an additional 1,250 to 1,500 housing units could be supported in the downtown from 2017-2027. The Toledo Trust Building's residential apartments are currently underutilized due to their age, and rehabilitation and expansion into the adjoining Elsas Building will return these units to the downtown residential market. The plan for this building also represents reinvestment in the city's historic urban fabric and buildings, another core principle of the Master Plan that serves to enhance the downtown.

6. a list of neighborhood organizations within or serving the historic district or landmark.

The Toledo City Historic Districts Commission is charged with the responsibility of being the historical conscience of the City and exists to help preserve and protect Toledo's historic resources. The Toledo

City Historic Districts Commission will have the authority to oversee any exterior changes to the Elsas Building if it is designated as a local landmark. These powers are addressed in the Toledo Municipal Code, Chapter 1112 Review and Decision-Making Bodies, Section 1112.0102 City Historic District Commission, letter D states the following:

In addition to the duties of each Historic District Commission pursuant to Sec. 1112.0102, the City Historic District Commission shall:

1. designate landmark properties;
2. for designated landmark properties, develop appropriate standards and guidelines reflecting the landmark's historic and architectural significance;
3. hear, review, grant, deny and recommend modifications to proposals for Certificates of Appropriateness involving environmental changes to landmarked properties. Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness must be judged using adopted historic landmark standards and guidelines;
4. conduct a continuing survey of cultural resources in the City with the support of the Historic/Environmental Section, Department of Economic and Community Development;
5. advise the Mayor, the Department of Economic and Community Development and other local officials and make recommendations as to the protection of the City's cultural resources;
6. act as a liaison on behalf of the City to individuals and organizations concerned with historic preservation,
7. review all proposed National Register nominations for properties within the City in a manner consistent with federal and state regulations, seeking expertise from disciplines not represented on the Commission as needed; and
8. notify the respective active neighborhood organization of any demolitions requiring City Historic District Commission review, which is in the respective Historic District. Notification must be given to the respective active neighborhood organization at least ten calendar days before the City Historic District Commission hearing.

The Toledo City Historic District Commission reviewed and voted to support the Landmark Designation for this site at their April 26, 2021 meeting. The property will then be under their review for any exterior modifications once the Plan Commission and City Council approve the request.

Staff supports designating the Toledo Trust Building at 245 North Summit Street as a local landmark because of its historic and architectural significance. Additionally, the creation of residential apartments will allow the structure to remain a contributing building in the community. The significance of the building will be preserved and this designation enhances the ability of the Toledo community to preserve a part of the City's history.

NOW, THEREFORE, Be it ordained by the Council of the City of Toledo:

SECTION 1. That "Landmark Designation" for the Building located at 245 North Summit Street, in

Toledo is hereby approved.

SECTION 2. That this Ordinance hereby is declared to be an emergency measure and shall be in force and effect from and after passage. The reason for the emergency lies in the fact that same has had Public hearings and approval from the Historic District Commission, the Toledo Plan Commission and the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee and is necessary for the immediate preservation and property.

Vote on emergency clause: yeas 11, nays 0.

Passed: June 22, 2021, as an emergency measure: yeas 11, nays 0.

Attest:

Gerald E. Dendinger  
Clerk of Council

Matt Cherry  
President of Council

Approved:

June 22, 2021  
Wade Kapszukiewicz  
Mayor