



Legislation Text

File #: O-344-21, **Version:** 1

LANDMARK DESIGNATION 239 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 239 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 239 North Summit Street. 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 Elsas Building was constructed around 1924; previous buildings on this parcel included the Anderson Block and the Alhambra Theater. It was constructed by a Toledo syndicate as a commercial building that was leased first to Tobias for Women's Wear (1925) and then Elsas for Women's Wear (1928-1930). The five-story building was of steel-frame and brick construction. It was one bay wide and extended to the same depth as the Second National Bank Building next door. On the east elevation, the first floor had a glass and steel storefront with recessed entry, while on the upper floors multi-paned steel windows with transoms spanned single wide openings. Smaller multi-paned steel windows were located on the two floors of the utilitarian south elevation that projected above the adjoining building to the south.

The building was acquired by the Toledo Trust Company in 1931. The Toledo Trust had been founded as the Toledo Savings Institution in 1868 and in 1924 acquired the Second National Bank, headquartered in the 21-story tower to the north of the Elsas Building.

The Toledo Trust 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. Following the closure of other area banks in the summer of 1931, the Toledo Trust's staff had increased by 50%, and the bank "rushed" plans for expanding into the Elsas Building to increase the bank's capacity by half, including more teller windows to serve savings, commercial, and discount customers on the main floor and additional space for the trust department on the second and third floors.

Historic images also suggest that the Toledo Trust extended the cornice above the third floor of the 21-story building across the east and west elevations of the Elsas Building and may have also replicated some exterior decorative details on the Elsas Building to visually tie the buildings together. 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 Elsas Building and the base of the Toledo Trust Building (first through third floors) were 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. While the 21-story tower was converted to retail and apartment use, the Elsas Building remained as office space. It is currently vacant.

From its acquisition by the Toledo Trust Company in 1931, the Elsas Building has exemplified the history of the banking industry in Toledo and represented the changing fortunes of the city's downtown commercial district. 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 and the Elsas Building's exterior remains evocative of that 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 .11-acre site located in downtown Toledo and bounded by Summit Street, Levis Square Park, the adjoining Toledo Trust Building at 245 North Summit Street, and the alley dividing the building from a parking garage to the south. The Elsas Building is built out to the lot lines and is attached to 245 North Summit Street, which was physically and functionally connected to the Elsas Building in 1931. It has no adjoining buildings on the south, east, and west. Southwest of the building is the Fiberglass 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 commercial clothing store from 1924 to 1930 and then as a bank and office building 1931 to 1981. It is currently vacant. Surrounding land uses include a large commercial and apartment buildings 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 commercial store from 1924 to 1930. In 1931 it

was converted to a bank lobby (first floor) and offices (upper floors) as an expansion of the Toledo Trust Building. It served in that use until 1981. The building then gradually fell vacant. It is structurally sound and in fair condition. The interior partitions have mostly been removed, leaving the interior spaces open with some finishes on the perimeter walls.

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

The future use of this building is for residential apartments to match the use of other buildings on this block. 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- 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 Elsas Building at 239 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 239 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