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Kelly Music Building in Westwood under consideration for monument designation

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The building that formerly housed Tanino Ristorante may be recognized as a historical building if the city council approves it. The building was designed by Paul Revere Williams, the only certified African American architect west of the Mississippi River at the time. (Emily Ng/Daily Bruin)

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A building on Westwood Boulevard could soon become a Historic-Cultural Monument, depending on an upcoming vote from the Los Angeles City Council.

The Kelly Music Building, which most recently housed an Italian restaurant called Tanino Ristorante, was completed in 1930. It was one of the first buildings in the commercial district of Westwood Village. The new

Kelly Music Building in Westwood under consideration for monument designation would protect and privilege the building, prompting support and concern among stakeholders in the Village.

The building was designed by Paul Revere Williams, the only certified African American architect west of the Mississippi River at the time.

Alison Simard, director of communications for Paul Koretz, council member for the 5th District, which includes Westwood, said the councilman is supportive of designating the building as a Historical-Cultural Monument.

"The building is a fine example of late 1920s architecture as designed by master architect Paul Revere Williams and hearkens back to a cultural and artistic legacy of the early Westwood Village," Simard said.

The Los Angeles Conservancy, a historic preservation organization, nominated the building for local HCM recognition on June 28. The Cultural Heritage Commission, the five-member commission that considers these nominations, voted in favor of the nomination in September.

The nomination is pending a hearing in the LACC's Planning and Land Use Management Committee and is expected to be voted on by the LACC by Dec. 11.

The Los Angeles Conservancy submitted the building for consideration of being an HCM because it meets two criteria required by the Office of Historic Resources for designation as an HCM.

The criteria it meets include its historical contributions to the Village's culture, economy and social environment, as well as its distinctive design by Williams.

If the building is given HCM status, it would fall under a selective category of buildings given HCM regulations and privileges. These privileges include recognizing the building as important to the history of its city and providing a potential tax reduction for its owners.

Additionally, the building will follow the California Historical Building Code. The CHBC aims to preserve architectural heritage through building regulations different from those for non-HCM buildings in order to help maintain the building's historical significance.

While the designation may protect a historic building, some stakeholders and students expressed reservations about the move.

Michael Skiles, president and land use committee chair of the North Westwood Neighborhood Council, said preserving historic landmarks is important, but added it can impede a community's commercial growth.

"There is a downside, and that is that it can make it very hard for new businesses and concepts to come in," Skiles said. "As a result, you might have these places vacant, where otherwise you might have business."

Andrew Thomas, executive director of the Westwood Village Improvement Association, also said he thinks HCM status can pose a challenge for a community's growth and progress. He added it could negatively impact housing availability, a growing problem in the Village.

"I think designating properties that don't have as much historic value can prevent change and development, such as mixed use development, where you have retail developments in the bottom, and residential units in the top floors," Thomas said. "I know Westwood was recently called the third-highest rent in the country, and one of the reasons our rent is so high is because our inventory is so scarce."

[Related: Students, faculty discuss implications of Westwood's expensive housing options]

Miguel Gallardo, a third-year mathematics student, also said he is concerned about how housing could be impacted should the building be approved as an HCM.

"If it's super popular, there could be a raise in prices and people, which in LA isn't the best because of the major congestion we have in traffic," Gallardo said.

Alejandro Huerta, a first-year art student, said he thinks designating the Kelly Music Building an HCM would cause residents to develop an added level of appreciation for the Village.

"I think it's a good idea to make buildings in one's community a historic landmark because it usually makes a community proud of where they live," Huerta said. "If people really cared to catch up on the history of the Village then maybe they'd appreciate their surroundings a little bit more."

Skiles said he thinks the Kelly Music Building is a representation of the Village's historic architecture. He added the Village has many buildings worth appreciating.

"I certainly would encourage students to spend more time in Westwood Village and take in the historic buildings that Westwood has," Skiles said. "It's a beautiful and historic community, and I think it's always going to stay that way."
