Illustrated Guide to Writing an Architectural Description

Landmark THIS!
Guide for Local Landmark Designation
EXERCISE: Describe the building’s relationship to its site, to the street, or to adjacent buildings. Include specific landscaping features, if appropriate.

RESPONSE: “The Canoga Park Branch Library is located at the southeast corner of Owensmouth Avenue and Wynnadotte Street in the Canoga Park neighborhood of Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley.”
EXERCISE: Write a comprehensive overview sentence that captures some of the building’s major features (including number of stories, style, and use).

RESPONSE: “The single-story, modern building is rectangular in plan and characterized by unpainted brick exterior walls, extensive glazing at the entrance and clerestory windows, and an angular, reinforced concrete roof.”
EXERCISE: Continue with further description of macro aspects: building shape, cladding material, roofing material, and foundation material.

RESPONSE: “The exterior elevations consist of uninterrupted brick walls except for two bays along the front façade on Owensmouth where the main entrance is set back. The pleated concrete roof has two levels: a lower level at the perimeter and a higher level at center.”
**EXERCISE:** Begin to focus on specific features: window type, doors and door surrounds, porches, chimneys, storefronts, etc., and the location of these elements on the facades.

**RESPONSE:** “Glazing is limited to clerestory windows at the roof’s upper and lower levels that are located within the peak of each pleat.”
EXERCISE: Begin to focus on specific features: window type, doors and door surrounds, porches, chimneys, storefronts, etc., and the location of these elements on the facades.

RESPONSE: “At the recessed bays of the building entrance, there are full height glass and steel curtain walls and round reinforced concrete columns.”
EXERCISE: Describe the building’s interior spaces – for a residential structure, note the number of bedrooms and bathrooms and the general configuration of the layout. Include a description of all notable historic interior features, such as lobbies, stairs, mural/artwork, etc.

RESPONSE: “Inside the building is a large open space with round concrete columns supporting the reinforced concrete roof. The lower walls are exposed, unpainted brick. The clerestory windows are visible above both the brick perimeter walls and between the lower and upper roof forms.”
Complete: The Canoga Park Branch Library is located at the southeast corner of Owensmouth Avenue and Wynnadotte Street in the Canoga Park neighborhood of Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley. The single-story, modern building is rectangular in plan and characterized by unpainted brick exterior walls, extensive glazing at the entrance and clerestory windows, and an angular, reinforced concrete roof.

The exterior elevations consist of uninterrupted brick walls except for two bays along the front façade on Owensmouth where the main entrance is set back. The pleated concrete roof has two levels: a lower level at the perimeter and a higher level at center.

Glazing is limited to clerestory windows at the roof’s upper and lower levels that are located within the peak of each pleat. At the recessed bays of the building entrance, there are full height glass and steel curtain walls and round reinforced concrete columns.

Inside the building is a large open space with round concrete columns supporting the reinforced concrete roof. The lower walls are exposed, unpainted brick. The clerestory windows are visible above both the brick perimeter walls and between the lower and upper roof forms.