

While the 1939 building does not exhibit an architectural design style that rises to the level of local landmark criteria, it does retain significant architectural integrity, setting, and a context to convey the events that occurred there between 1966-1968. Rather than architecture, The Black Cat was nominated as a local landmark for the role it played in the gay and lesbian civil rights movement in Los Angeles. It qualified for designation on these criteria:

- Reflects “the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community; and
- Is identified with “important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history.”

In 2008 The Black Cat was designated as a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

How much history do I include in the nomination?

Include all relevant research material you have collected. “Relevant” is the key word here – include only information that furthers the story you are trying to tell in your nomination, not every single item that your research turns up. Review the criteria and make sure that the information in your significance statement meets one or more of them.

How do I describe my building’s architectural style and features?

As part of a landmark nomination, you are asked to describe the building’s physical description. This is an important documentation of the building (or structure, object, or site) that helps to determine the character-defining features that will be protected through landmark designation.

The description should be the property’s existing condition rather than its original or earlier appearance. Be clear and concise in your language, and keep the description to a page or less. Generally, you should move from the macro to the micro – from its size, style, and use to its doors, windows, and ornamentation. Use style guides and architectural dictionaries to help identify the building’s architectural style and find the correct terminology for its component parts. The Description Worksheet in the HCM application is also a helpful guide in crafting an architectural description for a single building.

Organize your description from the basic to the specific. The style, size, and use of the building should appear in the first sentences. Also, avoid subjective judgments. You are trying to preserve the building and make a compelling case for its significance. Negative comments could have the opposite effect.

WRITING AN ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Tips for Success:

- Begin with a comprehensive overview sentence that captures some of the building’s major features (including number of stories, style, and use).
- Continue with further description of macro aspects: building shape, cladding material, roofing material, and foundation material. Indicate and describe any differentiation between primary (street) facades and secondary (rear and/or side) facades.
- 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.
- Focus in on any particularly distinctive ornamental features or design details
- Discuss the overall condition of the building materials and features
- Note any obvious alterations from the building’s original condition, for example window replacement, additions, or changes in the cladding material.
- Describe the building’s interior spaces – for a residential structure, note the number of bedrooms and bathrooms and the general configuration of the layout. For commercial, industrial, or institutional buildings, note the primary “public” spaces and their uses, along with the general configuration of the layout. Include a description of all notable historic interior features, including built-in furniture, fireplace mantles, decorative moldings, plumbing fixtures, tile work, flooring materials, etc. If you don’t include this information in your nomination, important interior features may not receive the protection they deserve.
- Describe the building’s relationship to its site, to the street, or to adjacent buildings. Include specific landscaping features, if appropriate.