



Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of January 26, 2026, Item 6a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning

I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant: Peter Godinez
Vogue Sign Company
715 Commercial Avenue
Oxnard, CA 93030

Property Owner: Commodore Investments Partners LLC
6000 Physicians Boulevard, Suite 210
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Business Tenant: Khaled Tawansy, MD
143 W 5th Street
Oxnard, CA 93030

II. REQUEST:

A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of a non-illuminated dimensional letter sign totaling 49 square feet at a business located at 143 W 5th Street, Oxnard, CA 93030 (Bank of A. Levy, Ventura County Landmark #56). The proposed sign would consist of ¼-inch-thick letters that are acrylic painted dark bronze and stud-mounted flush with a silicone glazing sealant. Letters would be drilled into the building's concrete tile wall (Case No. CH25-0063).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

143 W 5th Street, Oxnard, CA 93030
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 202-0-121-080
Historic Designation: Ventura County Landmark #56
Common/Historic Name: Bank of A. Levy Building

The subject property is a Beaux-Arts-style commercial building constructed in 1927. The building features a simple rectangular footprint and rises one and one-half stories in height. It is organized in a classical three-part composition, with two broad, smooth stone courses forming the foundation. Located on a corner parcel, the building has two primary elevations facing the public streets.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The proposed scope of work consists of the installation of a non-illuminated dimensional letter sign totaling 49 square feet at a business located at 143 W 5th Street, Oxnard, CA 93030 (Bank of A. Levy, Ventura County Landmark #56). The proposed sign would consist of ¼-inch-thick letters that are acrylic painted dark bronze and stud-mounted flush with a silicone glazing sealant. Letters would be drilled into

the building’s concrete tile wall. The proposed signage is associated with the building’s new current use as a medical office. Figure 1 shows the proposed sign along the building’s façade on A Street.

Figure 1 – Proposed Sign Along “A” Street Façade



Source: Vogue Sign Company

According to City of Oxnard Planning Staff, the proposed sign was preliminarily determined to meet the requirements of section 16-154 of the Oxnard Downtown Code, which regulates signage for properties under downtown zoning designations. The sign is classified in the code as a façade sign. Façade signage is limited to one externally or non-illuminated sign, with a limit of 24 inches in height, less than 60% of the width of the façade, and maintaining 24 inches of clearance from openings.

V. SIGNIFICANCE AND BACKGROUND:

The Bank of A. Levy building was evaluated for historical significance by San Buenaventura Research Associates in the 2005 *Downtown Oxnard Historic Resources Survey Final Report* (Exhibit 2) and again in the 2013 *Phase 11 Historic Resources Report* (Exhibit 3) as part of an adaptive reuse project. San Buenaventura Research Associates described the history of the building as follows¹:

¹ San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Downtown Oxnard Historic Resources Survey Final Report*, July 2005.

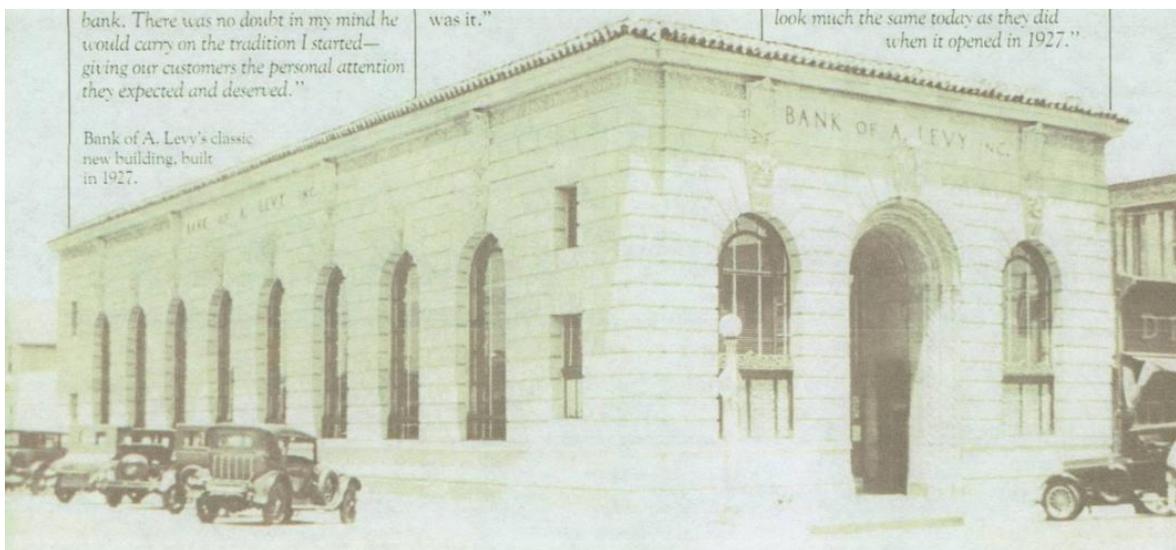
Achille Levy, a Hueneme grain and bean broker, established the Bank of A. Levy in Oxnard in 1898. This building is the third and most elaborate building the bank owners constructed on Fifth Street in 1927. Levy hired the reputable Los Angeles architectural firm of Morgan, Walls and Clements to design an elaborate Beaux Arts Classical style building to occupy the prominent corner of A and Fifth streets. Levy's banking success led him to establish branch banks throughout Ventura County, with this building serving as the main headquarters. The Bank of A. Levy was sold to First Interstate Bank in 1995, which was then acquired by Wells Fargo Bank.

Morgan, Walls and Clements was one of the longest continuously operating architectural firms in Los Angeles. Known principally during the 1920s as the designers of prominent commercial, industrial, public buildings and theaters in historical styles, few architects in the region could match Morgan, Walls and Clements' reputation and experience, particularly where historic revival architecture and large-scale projects were concerned. The firm was also notably experienced in the application of reinforced concrete building techniques, still a relatively new and untested method of construction in the 1920s.

The bank played an important role in financing the development of agriculture and the city's economic development. Achille Levy was a major banking figure in Ventura County. The building, as designed by the prominent Los Angeles firm of Morgan, Walls and Clement, is a fully-realized monumental classical design from the 1920s, one of the few buildings of this type and period remaining in downtown Oxnard.

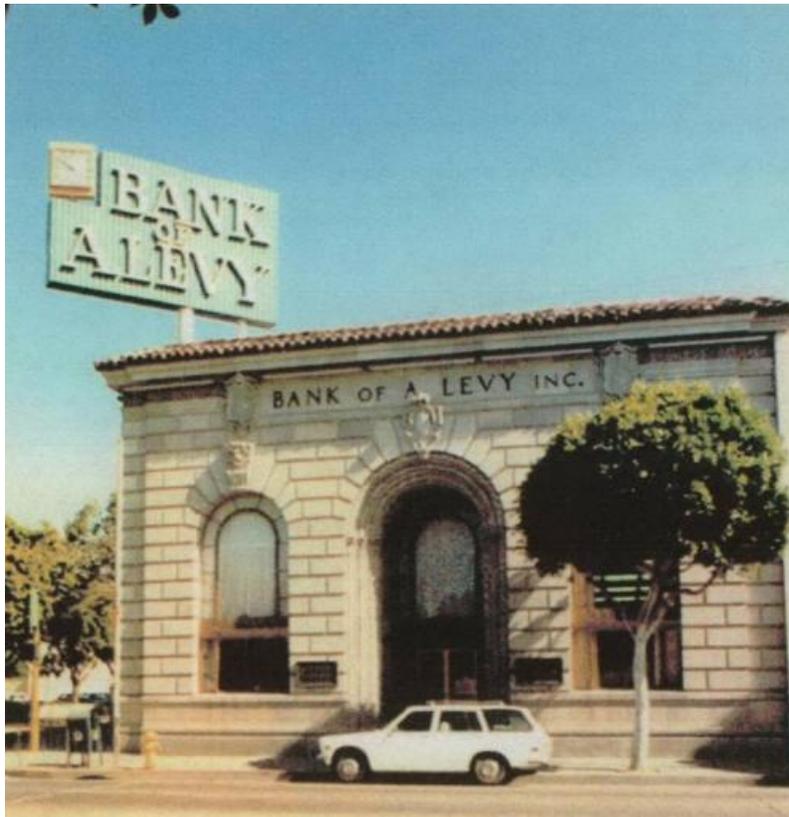
Figure 2 provides a historical view of the property circa 1927 following its completion, and Figure 3 provides a view of the property in the 1980s. Historical lettering associated with Bank of A. Levy Inc. was previously removed at an unknown date.

Figure 2 – View of property circa 1927 (looking northeast)



Source: file photo

Figure 3 – View of property in 1980s (looking north)



Source: file photo

VI. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHB HEARINGS

On February 12, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Board considered a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for new signage at the Bank of A. Levy building. The CHB approved the request with conditions requiring review of the proposed blade sign designs, consistency in spelling, and the waterproof patching of any unused sign holes in a manner compatible with the existing materials.

On May 13, 2013, the CHB reviewed and approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the adaptive reuse of the Bank of A. Levy building and associated tenant improvements, with recommendations related to certain interior modifications intended to maintain and preserve the building's character-defining features.

VII. CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:

The scope of work requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the CHB. Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (Ordinance) §1371-4 provides that the

CHB uses the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards* in its evaluation of the property and the proposed scope of work. CHB staff determined the standards for rehabilitation are appropriate for this request and evaluated the scope of work against the relevant standards below. Unless a project involves a historical property subject to a Mills Act contract, Ordinance §1371-1 limits cultural heritage review to the exterior of a building.

Using the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards* as a guide, the CHB shall approve the COA for any proposed work on the site if one of the standards identified in Ordinance §1371-4 can be met. The relevant standard for this request is that the work will neither reduce the significant architectural features nor reduce the character of historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the site. Pursuant to Ordinance §1371-4(d), the COA may be approved if the applicant presents facts and clear evidence, as described therein, demonstrating that failure to approve the request for a COA will cause a hardship because of conditions peculiar to the structure or other feature involved, or damage to the property owner is unreasonable in comparison to the benefit conferred to the community.

Standards	Staff Comments
<p>#1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.</p>	<p>The property has already been converted into use as a medical office which did not involve any other exterior changes. The property would continue to be used for commercial purposes.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p>#2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.</p>	<p>The <i>Secretary of the Interior’s Standards</i>² encourage the retention of historic features that contribute to the interpretation of the significance of a historic property and, when appropriate, repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts rather than full replacement.</p> <p>The upper entablature is a character-defining architectural element of a Beaux-Arts–style commercial building. The proposed installation of a non-illuminated dimensional letter sign within the upper entablature would not involve the removal of distinctive historic materials or character-defining features of the Beaux-Arts–style commercial building. The sign is designed as individual, dark bronze–painted acrylic letters, which are compatible in scale, color, and appearance with the building’s historic character. The use of stud-</p>

² Weeks, Kay D., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, revised 2017, pg. 140.

Standards	Staff Comments
	<p>mounted, flush lettering minimizes visual intrusion on the façade, and the absence of illumination further reduces potential reduction of historic character.</p> <p>Although the letters would be drilled into the concrete tile wall, the installation method is typical for commercial signage and does not substantially alter the building’s defining features, spaces, or spatial relationships.</p> <p>However, the applicant proposes signage in a modern acrylic material that is not consistent with traditional signage materials, such as wood, glass, copper, or bronze letters.</p> <p>Therefore, staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>
#3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.	Not Applicable.
#4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.	Not Applicable.
#5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.	<p>The <i>Secretary of the Interior’s Standards</i>³ encourage the retention of historic features that contribute to the interpretation of the significance of a historic property and, when appropriate, repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts rather than full replacement.</p> <p>The upper entablature is a character-defining architectural element of a Beaux-Arts–style commercial building. The proposed installation of a non-illuminated dimensional letter sign within the upper entablature would not involve the removal of distinctive historic materials or character-defining</p>

³ Weeks, Kay D., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, revised 2017, pg. 140.

Standards	Staff Comments
	<p>features of the Beaux-Arts–style commercial building.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p>#6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>
<p>#7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>
<p>#8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>
<p>#9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.</p>	<p>The sign is designed as individual, dark bronze–painted acrylic letters, which are compatible in scale, color, and appearance with the building’s historic character. The use of stud-mounted, flush lettering minimizes visual intrusion on the façade, and the absence of illumination further reduces potential reduction of historic character.</p> <p>However, the applicant proposes signage in a modern acrylic material that is not consistent with traditional signage materials, such as wood, glass, copper, or bronze letters.</p> <p>Therefore, staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>
<p>#10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>

VIII. STAFF CONCLUSION:

Based on the above considerations, the scope of work appears partially consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. The upper entablature is a character-defining architectural element of a Beaux-Arts–style commercial building. The proposed installation of a non-illuminated dimensional letter sign within the upper entablature would not involve the removal of distinctive historic materials or character-defining features of the building. The sign is designed as individual, dark bronze–painted acrylic letters, which are compatible in scale, color, and appearance with the building's historic character. The use of stud-mounted, flush lettering minimizes visual intrusion on the façade, and the absence of illumination further reduces potential reduction of historic character.

Although the letters would be drilled into the concrete tile wall, this installation method is typical for commercial signage and does not substantially alter the building's defining features, spaces, or spatial relationships. Based on the location of previous tenant signage, there may be existing unused sign holes; any such holes should be patched in a waterproof manner using materials compatible with the historic façade. The applicant proposes using modern acrylic letters, which differ from traditional signage materials historically associated with buildings of this type, such as wood, glass, copper, or bronze. While the material is durable and lightweight, it is not consistent with the historic fabric of the property.

Based on the above, CHB staff recommends the CHB adopt the below recommendations related to the scope of work in order to better conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

- **Recommendation #1: Sign Material.** The applicant should use a traditional signage material historically associated with buildings of this type, such as wood, glass, copper, or bronze, to ensure consistency with the historic fabric of the property.
- **Recommendation #2: Patch Previous Sign Holes.** Given the location of previous tenant signage, unused sign holes may exist; any such holes encountered during sign installation should be patched in a waterproof manner using materials compatible with the historic façade.
- **Voluntary Recommendation #3: Landmark Plaque Installation.** It is recommended that the property owner consider installing a landmark plaque on the building identifying it as the former A. Levy Bank/Building, using the standard County of Ventura landmark plaque template.

If the applicant does not agree with the CHB's adopted recommendation(s) and incorporate them into the project, CHB staff does not believe that the required findings

to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness can be made (Cultural Heritage Ordinance §1371).

IX. OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW HARDSHIP:

At the CHB public hearing on this matter, if desired, the property owner is provided with the opportunity to present facts and evidence demonstrating a failure to grant the requested Certificate of Appropriateness would cause an economic hardship as provided by Ordinance Section 1371-4(d).

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

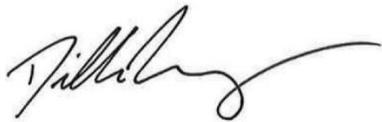
No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

XI. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions regarding the request:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the CHB staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the proposed project meets the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance §1371-4; and
3. Based on the preceding evidence and analysis, **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness (Ordinance Section 1371) with any project modification(s) determined necessary to conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and Ordinance Section 1371-4.

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Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

Exhibit 1: Proposed Plans

Exhibit 2: Historic Survey Record, July 23, 2005

Exhibit 3: Historic Resources Report, April 9, 2013