

Update to 2014 Property Record

This DPR Update for the property known as the Sequoia Building at 933 Van Ness Avenue in Fresno provides updated and supplemental information to Historic Resources Group's DPR 523A (Primary Record) and DPR 523B (Building, Structure, and Object Record) forms from 2011.

***P3a. Description: (continued)**

933 Van Ness Avenue is a one-story commercial building located in Downtown Fresno, California. The building is the adapted first story of the four-story 1912 Sequoia Hotel, which was partially demolished in 1962. The first story was retained and redesigned as a four-unit commercial building in the New Formalist style by renowned local architect Robert W. Stevens. This adapted, extant first story has a rectangular plan, flat roof with shallow parapet wall, and is of brick masonry construction. Its primary (northeast) façade is brick-faced with varying courses and has three oversized, low-arched entrances that open into an arcade with steel-framed display windows and hanging globe lights. A decorative, full-height vented brick screen is located on the southeast portion of the primary façade. The building is situated on a rectangular parcel, with its primary façade facing northeast (**Figure 1**). The building is in visibly good condition and shows no alterations, therefore retaining a good level of integrity.

All site exterior photos taken July 27, 2022 by Page & Turnbull unless otherwise noted.



Figure 1. 2021 aerial view of 933 Van Ness Avenue. The approximate border of the subject parcel is outlined in a red dashed line. Source: Google Earth. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

Northeast (Primary) Façade

The primary (northeast) façade is flat with brick facing of various courses. It features three oversized, low-arched entrances located toward the north portion of the façade, opening into an arcade with concrete and brick benches, globe lights for illumination and steel-framed storefront windows with dentil cornice and metal grille above (Figure 2 and Figure 3). A pop-out storefront volume is located at the northern portion of the arcade (see Figure 3). The arcade is enclosed at the entrances by full-height metal gates (Figure 4). A decorative, full-height vented brick screen is located near the southeast corner of the façade (Figure 5).



Figure 2. Northeast (primary) façade, facing west.



Figure 3. Arcade with globe lights and steel-framed storefront windows with dentil cornice and metal grille above at primary entrances on northeast façade, facing northwest.

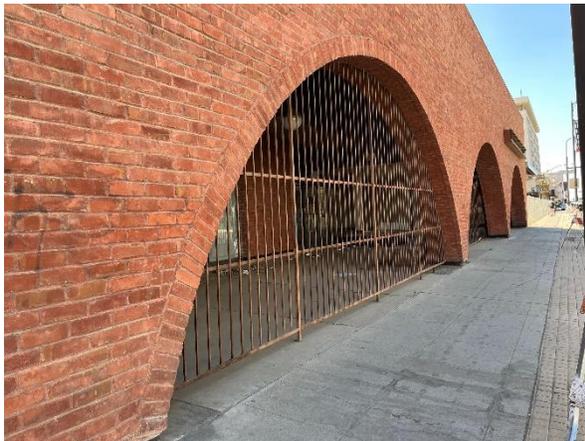


Figure 4. Full-height metal gates at low-arched entrances of primary façade, facing west.



Figure 5. Detail of vented brick screen at the southeast corner of the primary façade, facing southwest.

Southeast Façade

The southeast façade adjoins the commercial property at 923 Van Ness Avenue. The façade is plaster-coated with no openings (Figure 6 and Figure 7).



Figure 6. Northeast portion of the southeast façade, facing west.



Figure 7. South portion of the southeast façade, facing north.

Southwest (Rear) Façade

The southwest (rear) façade of the building faces the alley (Figure 10). It is flat and with brick facing. There are two recessed entrances with metal gates, concrete steps, and four course brick arches above: one large entrance at the south corner of the façade and one small entrance on the west portion of the façade. An additional large, recessed entrance with metal overhead door is situated in an infill portion on the west portion of the façade (Figure 9). One entrance with a metal grille and two course arch above is located near the south corner of the façade. Four additional openings along the façade, three large and one small, are infilled with brick. Near the west corner of the façade, there are also two smaller basement windows at ground level with brick infill (Figure 10). All openings are at regular intervals with two or four course segmental brick arches above. A plaster base is located along the length of the façade.

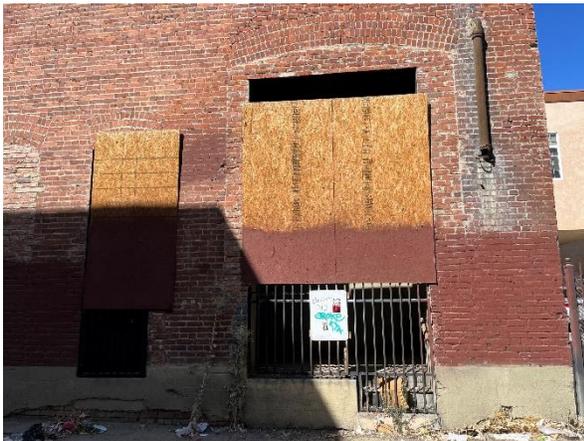


Figure 8. South corner of the southwest (rear) façade, facing northeast. Large, recessed entrance with four course brick arch above (right) and opening with metal grille (right).



Figure 9. West portion of the rear façade, facing east. Small, recessed entrance with metal gate (right) and large, recessed entrance with metal overhead door (left).



**Figure 10. West corner of the rear façade, facing east.
Infill visible, including two smaller basement windows at ground level with brick infill.**

Northwest Façade

The northwest façade of 933 Van Ness Avenue adjoins the vacant property to the northwest (**Figure 11**). The façade is flat with brick facing in varying conditions. Infill is visible along the façade, most notably five previous openings on the north portion.



Figure 11. Northwest façade, facing southeast.

Site Features and Surrounding Context

The building at 933 Van Ness Avenue occupies the entire parcel. A vacant lot adjoins the subject property to the northwest (**Figure 12**). To the southwest of the property, located at 923 Van Ness Avenue, is a small, Spanish Colonial Revival style commercial building with a significant setback from Van Ness Avenue (**Figure 13**). The surrounding site context generally consists of low- to mid-rise commercial buildings (**Figures 14 and 15**).



Figure 12. Vacant lot adjoining 933 Van Ness Avenue (left) and rear alleyway, facing southeast.



Figure 13. Spanish Colonial Revival Style building at 923 Van Ness Avenue, facing southwest.



Figure 14. Building at 915 Van Ness Avenue, facing southwest.



Figure 15. Building at 930-932 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast.

***B6. Construction History: (continued)**

The building at 933 Van Ness Avenue is the adapted and redesigned first story of the four-story 1912 Sequoia Hotel Building, which was partially demolished in 1962 with the first story retained and redesigned as a four-unit commercial building. Permit and historical image research did not reveal any major alterations to the 1962 commercial building since it was surveyed in 2011.¹

***B10. Significance: (continued)**

Ownership and Occupancy

Research did not yield any information on ownership and occupancy since 2011, at which time Stephen Investments Inc. owned the property. Fink & Skopp Home Furnishing was identified as a previous occupant, though research found that the company operated from 1962 to 2008.² It appears the building has been vacant since that time, or at least since January 2009, the earliest date that Google Street View captured the building.

¹ City of Fresno Planning and Development Department Building Permits; Historic Resources Group, "State of California Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record Forms for 933 Van Ness Avenue," December 13, 2011.

² "Fink & Skopp Home Furnishings," Opencorporates. https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_ca/C0429701

New Formalism Style (1955-1975)

The following information about the New Formalism style is excerpted from HRG's Downtown Fresno (Fulton Corridor) Historic Resources Survey, which provides context for the architectural style of 933 Van Ness Avenue:

Popular in large-scale commercial and civic designs from the late 1950s through the 1970s, the New Formalism [style] was widely seen as a rejection of the sparse steel and glass aesthetic of the period. Largely shaped by the work of Edward Durell Stone, the style is characterized by pronounced columnar supports and large expanses of patterned screens. In opposition to the minimalist approach of the International Style, the New Formalists eagerly referenced and abstracted the classical forms and applied ornamentation of historical styles.

The Fresno County Courthouse, designed by Walter Wagner and Associates and the Crocker Citizens Bank on Fresno Street are examples of the New Formalism style found in Downtown Fresno.

Character-defining features include:

- Symmetrical plan
- Heavy projecting roof slab
- Smooth wall surfaces
- Colonnade of stylized full-height columnar supports
- Repeating arches or rounded openings
- Large screens of perforated cast stone or concrete or metal grilles
- Building set behind a plaza or fountain³

Integrity and Eligibility Update

933 Van Ness Avenue is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) or the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). The building does not appear in the California Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD) as of 2020, indicating that no record of a previous survey or evaluation is on file that is affiliated with the State of California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). In 2011, the property was evaluated by Historic Resources Group in DPR 523A (Primary Record) and DPR 523B (Building, Structure, and Object Record) forms as part of the Downtown Fresno (Fulton Corridor) Historic Resources Survey.

The previous evaluation of 933 Van Ness Avenue found that at the time of evaluation in 2011, the building possessed a good level of integrity associated with its identified significance as a good example of a New Formalist commercial building in downtown Fresno and as a representative work of renowned local architect Robert W. Stevens. HRG therefore found the building eligible for listing as an individual resource on Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources (Status Code 5S3) and the California Register of Historical Resources (State Code 3CS).

This DPR Update finds that the building's integrity is retained because no significant alterations to the building have been made since the previous evaluation was undertaken. Therefore, the property remains an eligible historic resource.

Character Defining Features

Character-defining features of 933 Van Ness Avenue include:

- Rectangular plan with simple, one-story massing
- Brick masonry construction
- Brick faced primary (northeast) façade with varying courses
- Three oversized, low-arched entrances on primary façade
- Decorative, full-height vented brick screen on the southeast portion of the primary façade
- Arcade with steel-framed display windows and hanging globe lights along primary façade

***B12. References: (continued)**

California State Office of Historic Preservation Department of Parks and Recreation. *Technical Assistance Bulletin #8: User's Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historical Resource Inventory Directory*. Sacramento, November 2004.

³ Historic Resources Group, Downtown Fresno (Fulton Corridor) Historic Resources Survey, December 2011 (Revised April 2014), 94-95.

State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____

Page 7 of 7
*Recorded by Page & Turnbull

Resource Name or # 933 Van Ness Avenue
*Date July 27, 2022 Continuation Update

City of Fresno Planning and Development Department Building Permits.

Fink & Skopp Home Furnishings," Opencorporates. https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_ca/C0429701

Google Earth, 2022.

Historic Resources Group, Downtown Fresno (Fulton Corridor) Historic Resources Survey, December 2011 (Revised April 2014).

Historic Resources Group. "State of California Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record Forms for 933 Van Ness Avenue." December 13, 2011.

Planning Resource Associates, Inc. *City of Fresno Mid-Century Modernism Historic Context*. Prepared for the City of Fresno Planning & Development Department, September 2008.