



D/DRC Case

1634 Main Street

City Center/Design Development District

TMS: 09014-04-19

DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMISSION
DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT
CONSENT AGENDA
EVALUATION SHEET
Case # 1

ADDRESS: 1634 Main Street

APPLICANT: Belser Five, LLC

TAX MAP REFERENCE: TMS#09014-04-19

USE OF PROPERTY: Office

REVIEW DISTRICT: City Center Design District, Potential Landmark

NATURE OF REQUEST: Request recommendation for landmark designation

FINDINGS/COMMENTS:

This is a c.1870s building with a series of façade changes over the years. Currently a 1980s stucco façade covers a 1937 brick façade that was done as an expansion for the J.C. Penney store. Recent exploratory demolition has revealed that the 1937 façade in the upper floor is likely intact and that the stucco applied over it can be removed without damaging the 1930s cream-colored brick, which has also been painted in some locations. The first story storefront has been removed, but there is potential that the tiled pilasters at both front corners are intact underneath the existing stucco.

This exploratory demolition, combined with historic research on the 1930s appearance of the building, has led the owners to apply for landmark designation, with the intent to return the façade to that era. As a landmark building, any exterior changes for the building that are visible to the public right of way would be reviewed for compliance with the City Ordinance for landmark buildings.

PERTINENT SECTIONS FROM CITY ORDINANCE

Section 17-691(d) Group III consists of structures or sites which round out and extend the material-visual history of Columbia when added to Groups I and II; they evidence one or more of the following criteria for selection:

(1) The site of events, homes of men, etc., that are interesting locally.

This is the site of one of our early chain retail stores and served as the J.C. Penney for several years. The retail chain survived the Crash in 1929 and went on to expand and update their business by the mid-1930s, becoming a staple establishment in downtowns across America. This is an interesting local example of the resilience of a national chain during a time of economic crisis, helmed by James Cash Penney, who believed in a cash-based system instead of relying on credit. The 1937 façade was created by the J.C. Penney company during an extensive renovation that included interior changes, which included moving from an older mezzanine system to filling in much of the missing second floor for retail space.

(2) Somewhat unusual characteristics in architectural design.

The 1937 façade on this building is somewhat unusual in that it employs a variety of ornamental methods of bricklaying and a cream-colored brick. Using header courses in stacked bonds and soldier courses under the concrete bands in the double cornice above the second floor window openings, this restrained and somewhat flat façade is indicative of the era. Slowly emerging from the Great Depression, Columbia's Main Street saw a good deal of commercial upgrades to facades in the late 1930s, including this building, 1637 Main across the street, and the Tapp's Building next door. The streamline architectural motifs of the era and evidenced in these buildings resulted in relatively smooth exteriors with minimal ornamentation, executed in new materials or traditional stucco. The use of brick in a relatively flat façade that strives to ornament through creative patterns in the masonry is unusual for Main Street's central commercial district and sets this building apart from its neighbors.

(3) Belonging to a family or "genera" of buildings recognized locally.

Not applicable.

(4) A mediocre example of a style or type of building which is becoming, or in danger of becoming, extinct locally.

This is a mediocre example because of the alterations to the building since 1937. There are not many examples of this type in the area because the brick detailing on this building is not found on any nearby commercial buildings. If this building were not to become a landmark it has the potential for demolition because this area of Main Street has exploded in terms of economic investment in just the last few years, in part due to the renovations of several historic landmark buildings within the block. The land value may surpass the building value at some point if this were not a landmark.

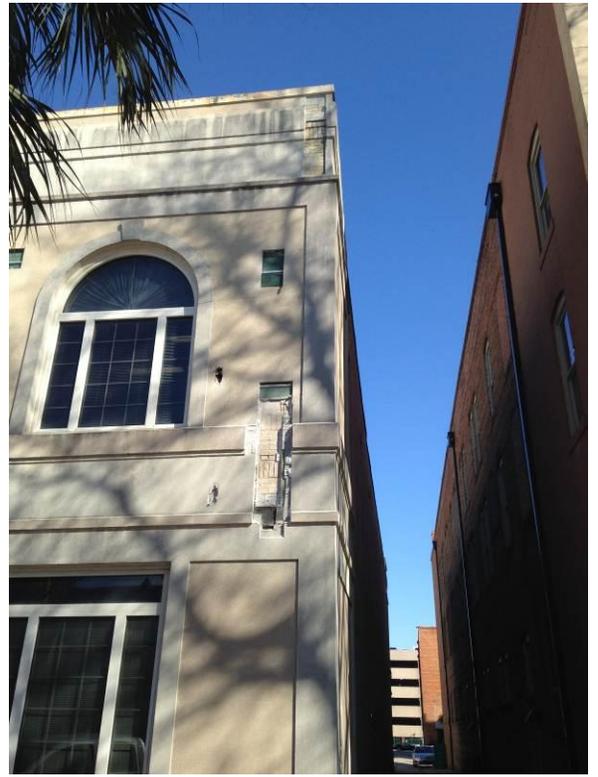
(5) Evidencing one or more of the criteria for Group II, but too decrepit or too destructively modified to constitute a prime historic document.

Not applicable.

If possible, these should be preserved by "adaptive use," although not necessarily on their original sites. Generally, preservation of interiors is not of great importance and controlled remodeling of exteriors is in order.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

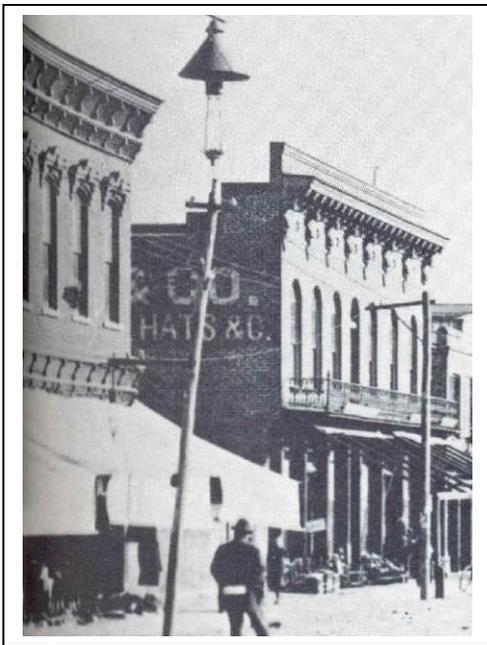
Staff finds that with the removal of the stucco the building meets several criteria for landmark status as outlined in Section 17-691(d) of the City Ordinance and suggests a recommendation for Group III Landmark Designation.



Current images by staff showing exploratory demolition and evidence of intact 1937 facade



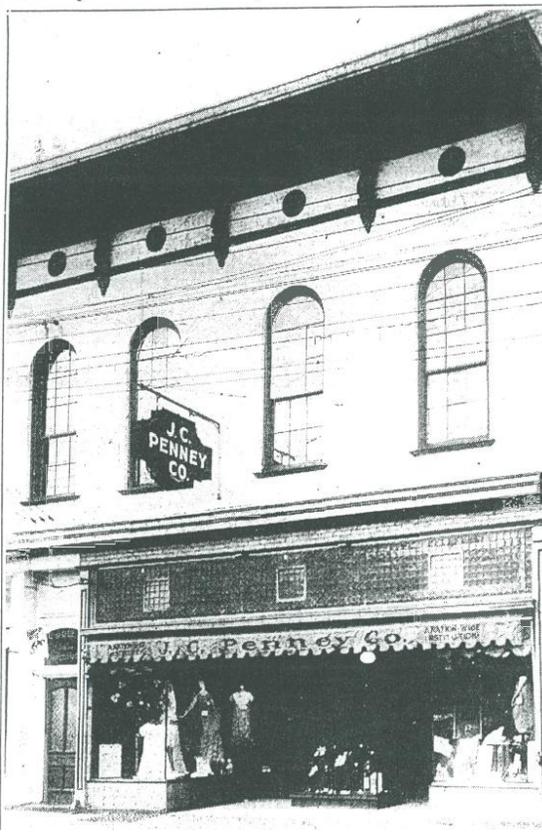
1978 image by Russell Maxey, Richland Library collection, likely shows 1937 storefront configuration



Above: c. 1895 image from Kohn collection, reproduced by Russell Maxey

Right: Image from *The State* newspaper in 1937

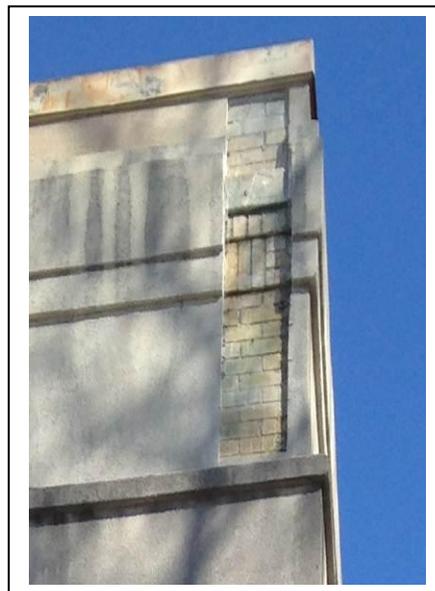
Penney's Before Improvements Were Made



THE STATE: COLUMBIA, S. C., FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 21, 1937

Extensively Remodeled J. C. Penney Store





Undated photo at left is best image of the brick detailing present on the 1937 façade.

Above is a close up showing the area of selective demolition that reveals intact brick coursing near the top of the building.