

JOHN COOPER
MAYOR



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
Telephone: (615) 862-7970
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION
202 6th Avenue North
June 17, 2020

Application: Historic Landmark Recommendations for 202 6th Avenue North

Map and Parcel Number: 09306102600

Council Districts: 19

Applicant: Kathryn Withers

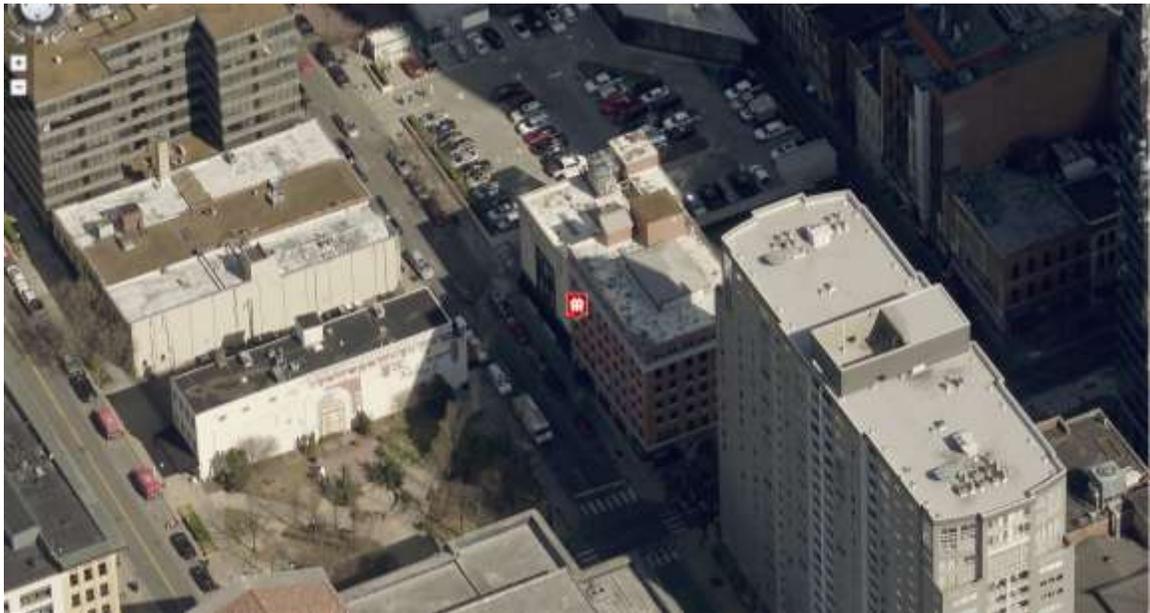
Project Lead: Melissa Baldock, melissa.baldock@nashville.gov, 615-862-7970

<p>Description of Project: The applicant is requesting a Historic Landmark for 202 6th Avenue North.</p> <p>Recommendation Summary: Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building is listed in in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building to the Fifth Avenue Historic District, and therefore meets the requirements of section 17.36.120. for a landmark overlay.</p>	<p>Attachments: A: Public Comment</p>
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Area Map



Aerials



Applicable Ordinances:

17.40.410 Powers and duties.

A. Creation of Historic Overlay Districts. The historic zoning commission shall review applications calling for the designation of historic overlay districts according to the standards contained in Chapter 17.36, Article III, referring written recommendations to the metropolitan council. Establishment of an historic overlay district on the official zoning map shall be in accordance with Section 18.02 of the Metropolitan Charter and Article III of this chapter.

B. Establishment of Design Review Guidelines. The historic zoning commission shall adopt design guidelines for each historic overlay district and apply those guidelines when considering preservation permit applications. Design guidelines relating to the construction, alteration, addition and repair to, and relocation and demolition of structures and other improvements shall be consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. A public hearing following the applicable public notice requirements of Article XV of this chapter shall precede the adoption of all design review guidelines by the historic zoning commission. Testimony and evidence material to the type of historic overlay under consideration may be considered by the commission in its deliberations.

17.36.110 Historic overlay districts established.

The following classifications of historic overlay districts are made a part of this title, each classification having separate and unique regulations and guidelines established according to the provisions of Chapter 17.40, Article IX.

C. Historic Landmark (HL) District. The boundaries shall be shown on the zoning map or on special overlays thereto that are made a part of this zoning code and noted by name on such maps, in which no structure shall be constructed, altered, repaired, relocated or demolished in whole or in part unless the action complies with the requirements set forth in this title.

17.36.120 Historic districts defined.

B. Historic Landmark. An historic landmark is defined as a building, structure, site or object, its appurtenances and the property it is located on, of high historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological importance; whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality and character of Nashville and Davidson County; and that meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historic landmark is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic value;
4. It has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in history or prehistory;
- or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Background: 202 6th Avenue North was constructed between 1935 and 1936 for the Rich, Schwartz & Joseph store, a ready-to-wear shop exclusively for women (Figure 1). During the late nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century, this part of downtown Nashville around Church Street and 5th and 6th Avenues North was the city’s epicenter of shopping and commerce. 202 6th Avenue North is a part of the vibrant retail history of downtown Nashville.



Figure 1. 202 6th Avenue North

Julius Rich and Leo Schwartz first opened their Rich and Schwartz store in 1902 at 227-229 Sumner Avenue (now 5th Avenue North (Figure 2). They offered ready-to-wear clothing for women and children, and swore to offer the same price to everyone. By September 1903, the store was known as Rich, Schwartz & Joseph (Figure 3).



Figure 2. *Tennessean* advertisement from January 19, 1902, announcing the new Rich & Schwartz store on 5th Avenue North.



Figure 3. *Nashville American* advertisement from September 6, 1903. The store is called “Rich, Schwartz & Joseph” here.

The store prospered in the early decades of the twentieth century. A *Tennessean* article from 1926 describes how the store started with two saleswomen, a bookkeeper, and a porter in 1902, and by 1926 had over 75 employees. By the 1930s, the store was in need of a larger and more modern building. In 1935, construction began on a new building at 202 6th Avenue North. The department store did not own the lot; it had been purchased in 1938 by Howell Campbell. Campbell was best known for his candy businesses. In 1901, he founded the Anchor Candy Company, later reorganized as the Standard Candy Company, and he was the creator of Nashville’s famous Goo Goo Cluster. He seems to have bought the building as an investment, leasing it to Rich, Schwartz & Joseph in 1935. Campbell’s heirs held onto the property for nearly half a century, selling it in 1984.

A November 1935 *Nashville Banner* article described the construction of the new four-story building. The article credits architects Marr and Holman as the designers. Lead by

Thomas Marr and Joseph Holman, well-known in Tennessee, was responsible for the post office building on 9th and Broadway (now the Frist Art Museum), the Tennessee Supreme Court building, and the Noel Hotel on 4th Avenue North, among many other buildings. The *Banner* article states that the building will be “ultra modern in its every appointment.” The article elaborates that “the front will be constructed along lines that will maintain the refinement of the business...Plans for an attractive, yet simple and not gaudy front, are being made.” The building featured such modern conveniences as indirect lighting and air conditioning. (Figure 4).



Figure 4. This architect’s rendering of the building appeared in the *Tennessean* on July 5, 1936.

Constructed of stone and marble, the façade has all the hallmarks of the Art Deco style, including sleek lines, pilasters with exaggerated acanthus leaf tops, and horizontal metal windows filling a large rectangular opening. The National Register nomination for the Fifth Avenue Historic District states that the central window has sections “separated by a copper pilaster topped with an ornamental copper urn.” At the top are three copper medallions, and a copper cornice separates the ground floor storefront from the upper floors (Figures 5 & 6). The storefront is not original. While the front façade was constructed of stone to give a grand appearance, the left side façade and rear façade was constructed of plain red brick, a far cheaper building material. These facades are now exposed in a way they were not originally due to demolition. Both the left side and the rear façade currently contain recent murals (Figures 7 & 8).



Figure 5. The copper details of 202 6th Avenue North



Figure 6. The storefront is not original but the metal band with small medallions is original.

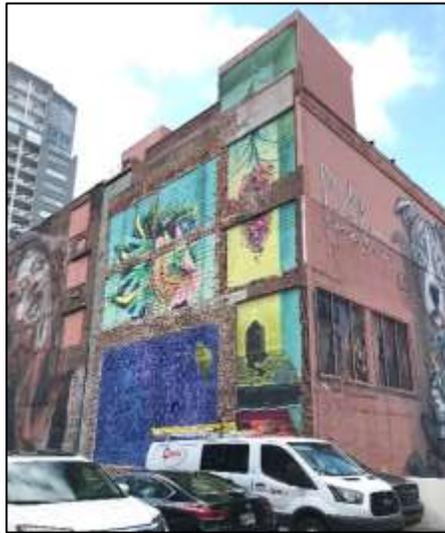


Figure 7 (left) is the left side façade, and Figure 8 (right) is the rear façade. Both have recent murals.

Rich, Schwartz & Joseph opened its doors in August 1936. The first three floors were dedicated to shopping, while the top fourth floor housed the offices of the company (Figures 9 & 10). The company continued to operate out of its 6th Avenue location for almost the next two decades.

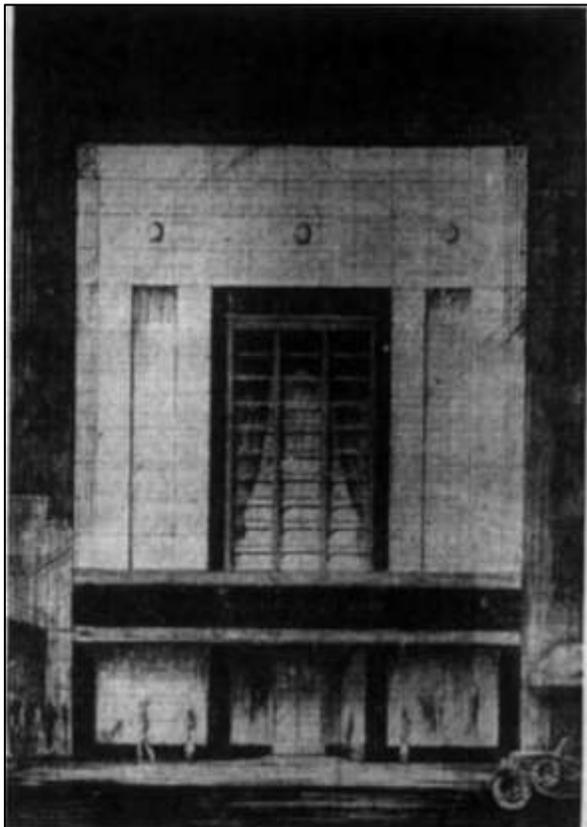


Figure 9. Rendering from a *Nashville Banner* advertisement from August 16, 1936 around the time the building opened.

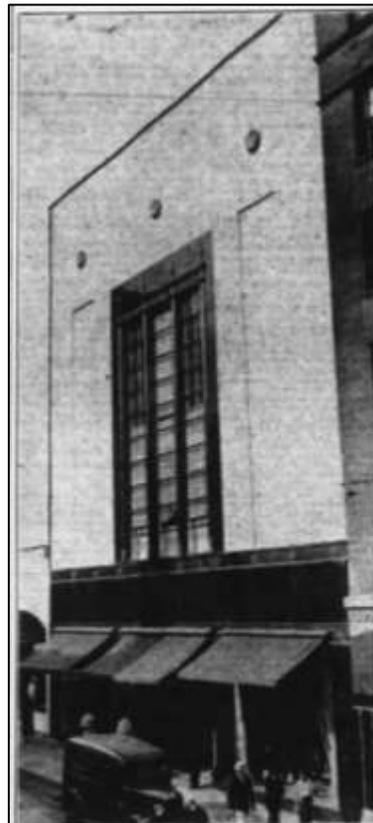


Figure 10. Photo from the *Tennessean*, September 11, 1936. The caption notes, “In show window design, interior arrangement and exterior architecture it is perhaps one of the most striking stores in Nashville.”

In 1955, Rich, Schwartz & Joseph vacated its downtown location and moved to the Midtown area along West End Avenue. Still under the ownership of the Campbells, Nashville's famed Harveys Department store took over the building at 202 6th Avenue North for its men's department. Harveys had opened in 1942 at 518 5th Avenue North, and had expanded to the former Wilcox building at the northeast corner of 6th Avenue North and Church Street in 1942. Founded by Fred Harvey, a former executive at Marshall Fields department store in Chicago, Harveys quickly grew in the post-World War II period to be one of Nashville's largest department stores, gradually taking over several buildings along Church Street and Fifth and Sixth Avenues (Figures 11-13). Harveys flourished in the next several decades, boasting several carousel horses and elaborate holiday displays.

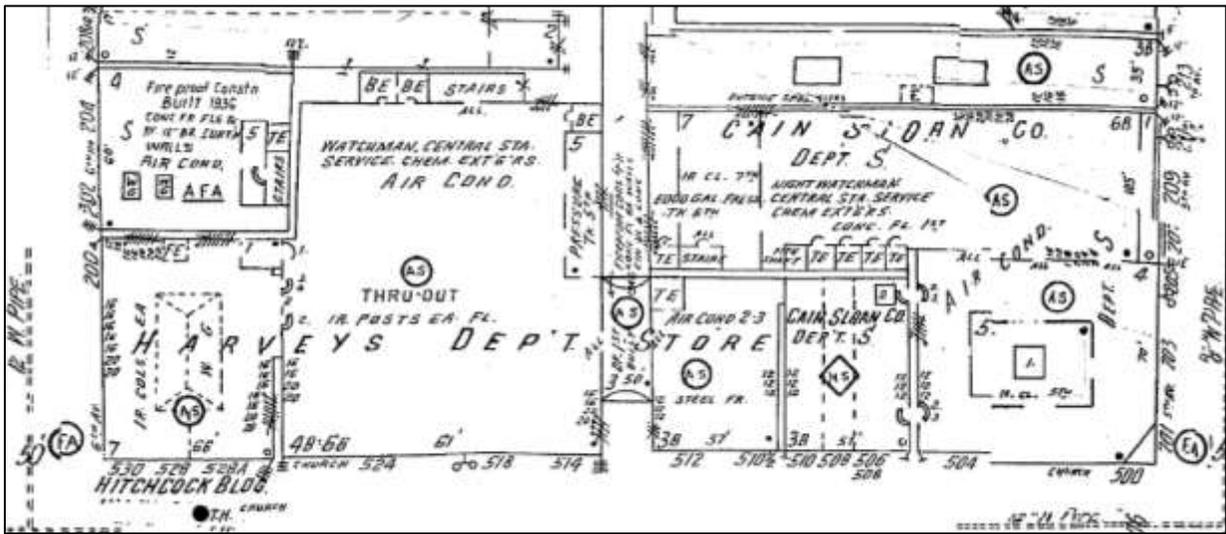


Figure 11. 1951 Sanborn maps shows that Harvey's had not yet expanded to 202 Sixth Avenue North.

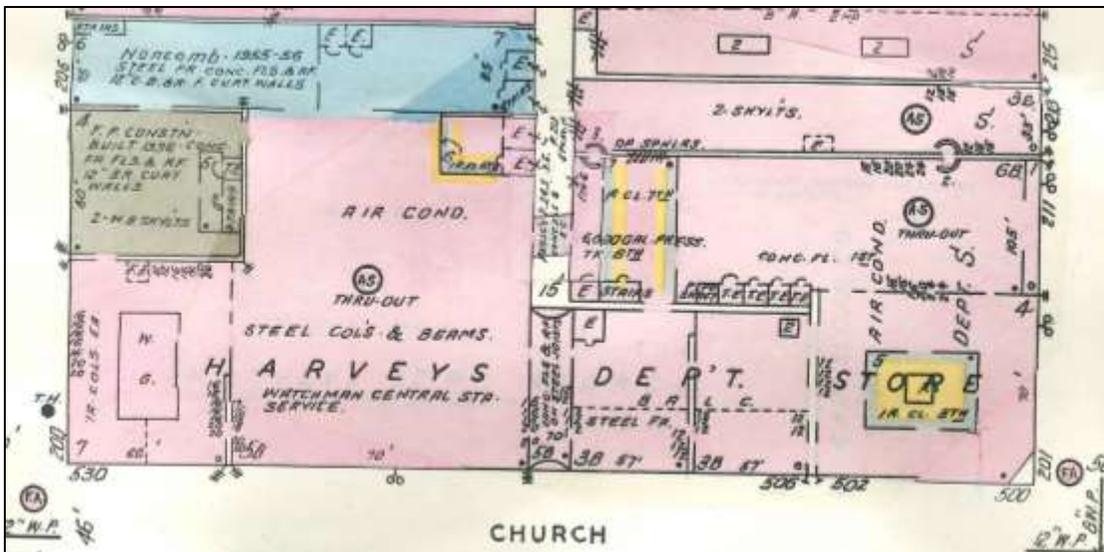


Figure 12. The 1957 Sanborn Map shows how Harveys had expanded to 202 Sixth Avenue North.



Figure 13. c. 1957 photo of 202 6th Avenue North when it was part of Harveys. Photo from <https://nashvillehistory.blogspot.com/2016/09/hitchcock-building.html?m=1>

Harveys played a role in the Civil Rights movement in Nashville. In 1959, James Lawson and other representatives from the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC), a local organization affiliated with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, met with Fred Harvey and his competitor, John Sloan of Sloan's department store, to discuss integrating the stores' lunch counters. Both refused the request, stating that integration would cause them to lose business. Although the large-scale Nashville sit ins would not take place until February 1960, on November 28, 1959, Harveys was the first site to be used as a test case for sit ins. The African American diners were refused service at the Harvey's lunch counter, but were reportedly treated politely. The incident was not reported in the newspapers, and has been described as low-key and a way to "sense the mood and degree of resistance" before the larger sit in demonstrations.

After the larger sit ins demonstrations occurred in February 1960, Harveys was still hesitant to integrate its lunch counter, publicly stating that integration would hurt business. However, within a few months, Harveys and other lunch counters downtown began to integrate their establishments.

As the twentieth century progressed, and Harveys suburban stores became more popular, its downtown location began to suffer. In 1977, Fred Harvey announced that he would reduce the size of his downtown store, and by 1978, Harveys had vacated 202 Sixth Avenue North. Sam Small Jewelry Company, a business originally opened in 1909 at 200 Sixth Avenue North, and St. Mary's bookshop then leased space in the building. Harvey's lasted just a few years later downtown, closing its downtown location entirely in early 1984. 202 Sixth Avenue North was sold later that year to "Sixth and Church Limited," a conglomeration of several parties. The new owner of the building retained the lease with Sam Small Jewelry, who continued to operate there until at least 1990. Although the storefront has been altered, today, 202 Church's architectural features on the front façade remain remarkably intact.

Analysis and Findings:

202 Sixth Avenue North is significant for its Art Deco commercial architecture. It is also significant for its connection to the development of Nashville in the early- to mid-twentieth century, particularly with its association to the Rich, Schwartz & Joseph and later Harvey's stores. Its survival into the twentieth-first century is remarkable given the changes to downtown Nashville over the last one hundred years.

In 1983, the structure was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Fifth Avenue Historic District. Changes to the building since that time have not altered its contributory status. The structure therefore meets the requirements of Section 17.36.120 for a landmark overlay.

No exterior alterations are currently planned.

Recommendation: Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building is listed in in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building to the Fifth Avenue Historic District, and therefore meets the requirements of section 17.36.120. for a landmark overlay.

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC COMMENT

From: Paula Middlebrooks <pklarson@hotmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 4:35 PM

To: Zeigler, Robin (Historical Commission) <Robin.Zeigler@nashville.gov>

Subject: comment on Historic Landmark Overlay for 202 6th Ave N and 530 Church St

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Hello Robin,

I won't be able to attend the public hearing on June 17th, so I wanted to submit a written comment. My comment is that I support the proposed Historic Landmark Overlays and adopting the existing design guidelines for 202 6th Ave N and 530 Church St.

As a neighbor, who lives just a block from this building, I see it often and am heartened it will keep its historic character and continue to contribute to the historic nature of downtown Nashville that is too rapidly being lost.

Thank you.

Paula Middlebrooks
239 5th Avenue North, #301
Nashville, TN 37219