



October 3, 2017

Richard Barron, President
Cultural Heritage Commission
Attention: Melissa Jones
Office of Historic Resources
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Los Angeles, CA 90012
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Re: Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park, 3700 Wilshire Boulevard

Dear President Barron and Members of the Commission:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, I am writing in support of the nomination to designate Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park at 3700 Wilshire Boulevard a City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. The Conservancy finds the property significant for its design by master architects Gordon Bunshaft and Edward Charles Bassett of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and noted landscape architect Peter Walker of Sasaki, Walker & Associates. Additionally, the property reflects both the postwar development of the Wilshire Center business district as Los Angeles' epicenter for the headquarters of insurance companies and local discourse on the value of community open space during that era of Los Angeles' growth.

The property at 3700 Wilshire Boulevard was developed by Beneficial Standard Life Insurance Company as the company's \$16.7 million international headquarters and completed in 1967. The 11-story Late Modern office tower was designed by the nationally prominent architecture firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill with master architects Gordon Bunshaft and Edward Charles Bassett serving as lead architects. The building's exterior is comprised of modular units of precast shocked concrete finished in granite aggregate.

A unique feature of the property is Liberty Park, an expansive, 2.5 acre designed landscape fronting the office tower containing hardscape and softscape elements and a replica of the Liberty Bell. The sophisticated design features a central grassy expanse with an off-center grove of Canary Island pines framed by a horseshoe-shaped border and linked to the office tower by a plaza featuring patterned paving. Liberty Park was designed by noted landscape architect Peter Walker, of Sasaki, Walker & Associates.

Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park was constructed at the height of Los Angeles' postwar development boom when the Wilshire Center business district was transformed into one of the city's most prominent addresses for corporate headquarters and insurance companies and reflects local discourse on the value of community open space during this era of postwar growth.



The concept of the 315 foot building setback and park as community open space came from Edward D. Mitchell and son and CEO of Beneficial Insurance, Joseph N. Mitchell. At the time of its construction, it was noted in the *Los Angeles Times* as the deepest setback of any major office building in the nation. Beneficial Insurance created Liberty Park as an open space intended to promote the aesthetic and cultural values of the city, and the City of Los Angeles administered protection of that open space through zoning practices (City Planning Case No. 21684 in 1968) in recognition of its benefit to the community.

Accordingly, the Conservancy urges the Commission to vote to take the nomination under consideration for Historic-Cultural Monument status.

Sincerely,



Adrian Scott Fine
Director of Advocacy

cc: Save Liberty Park

