



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 490/08

Name and Address of Property: **Fischer Studio Building
1519 Third Avenue**

Legal Description: Lot 6, Block 23, A.A. Denny's Third Addition, less portion for street, to the Town of Seattle, according to the plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 33, in King County, Washington.

At the public meeting held on September 3, 2008, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Fischer Studio Building at 1519 Third Avenue, as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation; and*
- D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction; and*
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fischer Studio Building is directly associated with the initial period between 1902 and 1920 when downtown commercial expansion occurred due to local economic prosperity after the Klondike Gold Rush and in tandem with explosive population growth and suburban residential development. During this era, modern urban architectural scale began with the construction of the earliest steel-frame highrise office buildings and the establishment of a concentration of banking enterprises and department stores along Second Avenue from Cherry Street to Pike Street. The initial regrading of Denny Hill and the commercial redevelopment of the former University Grounds (University/Metropolitan Tract) were major factors that facilitated northward and eastward commercial expansion. In 1914, the owners of the Frederick and Nelson Department Store purchased property with the intention of constructing a large, five-story store building at Fifth Avenue and Pine Street, thus solidifying the location of the future downtown retail core. A significant number of extant commercial properties dating from this era remain

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within the downtown commercial core, including numerous hotels, banks, business blocks and early highrise commercial buildings.

The Fischer Studio Building is a highly unique example of a residential real estate development; its construction was directly influenced by commercial development within the business district during this era. The building was originally planned and designed by Bebb & Mendel as a retail business block in 1912; in 1914-1915 the design was revised by Bebb & Gould and it was expanded in order to create specialized music teaching studios, residential accommodations and a performance space for teachers, their students, and other musicians.

Historic Context

The Fischer Studio Building was initially designed and partially constructed to serve as a business block with ground floor level retail shops and upper floor level office rooms that could also be used as music teaching spaces. Its location in the northward expanding retail district clearly fits within the real estate development trends of the era; however, due the major business tenant – a large retail and wholesale piano store - the design of the building was revised and it was developed for music studio and related housing and performance purposes.

The concept of “apartment house” construction appears to be an early twentieth century phenomena in Seattle. Prior to 1903, buildings that were specifically designed to provide multiple-family housing in Seattle was not formally identified or described as “apartment houses.” During the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, numerous downtown hotel buildings basically functioned for long-term residential purposes and were often identified as “residential hotel” or “lodgings” and “flats.” By 1905, several small apartment buildings had been constructed and were mingled primarily among the older single family residences located uphill and to the NE of the expanding commercial district. Most apartment construction that occurred during this era appears to have been concentrated further uphill along Yesler Way and on First Hill, as well as in the burgeoning suburban neighborhoods of First Hill, Capitol Hill and Queen Anne Hill. As Denny Hill was removed and regraded in phases, small mixed use apartment buildings began to be constructed on the newly regraded lots. By the late 1910s, larger apartment houses had been constructed in the Denny Regrade area to the north of Stewart Street, including some extant examples: the Sheridan Apartments (1914); the Nesika Apartments (Stratford Apartments, 1915); and the Virginian Apartments (1917). During the 1920s, two large apartment hotels were constructed in the expanding commercial district - the Spring Apartment Hotel (Kennedy Hotel/Vintage Park Hotel, 1922, John Graham, Sr. and the Claremont Apartment Hotel (Hotel Andre, 1925, Stuart and Wheatly), but major apartment house construction did not occur. Such real estate development was heavily concentrated in residential neighborhoods, particularly First Hill and Capitol Hill where numerous noteworthy 1920s era apartment houses remain.

Fischer Studio Building History

The Fischer Studio Building is a highly unique example of a residential real estate development; its construction was directly influenced by adjacent commercial development within the downtown business district during this era. Although the building subsequently provided multi-family housing, it was originally planned and designed as a business block for George Fischer in 1912; thus, its initial design was influenced by typical commercial business block development of the era. Shortly after the turn of the century, local economic prosperity generated the earliest

construction of tall, steel-frame buildings at the northern edge of the existing commercial district near Yesler Way. The structural design of these modern buildings allowed for both greater height and greater flexibility of layout and could accommodate a wider variety of commercial tenants. This flexibility in design and use facilitated the subsequent changes in the design of this building, which was initially known as the Fischer Building and then became known as the Fischer Studio Building.

The expansion and northward shift of Seattle's retail core attracted a major piano and music firm to establish its Seattle headquarters in the Fischer Building, which included an elaborately designed and large retail shop with extensive storefront window display spaces. Although the initial 1912 design plans were not fully realized, the newly emerging retail district near Pine Street influenced the relocation of a major music specialty store and in turn this tenant appears to have also influenced the decision to instead finish and fit the upper floor levels for music studio and specialty apartment purposes.

According to an illustrated article published in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* in June of 1912, plans were being prepared by Bebb and Mendel for an eight-story office building with the construction of the first three stories and the basement to be completed first. The article noted that it would be partially constructed so that the major tenant, Kohler and Chase Piano Company, could occupy its new storefront and mezzanine level quarters as soon as possible "before the holidays." An additional five stories were to be added at a later date. At the time, the planned upper floor levels were to be fitted for offices that would house the headquarters for the firm's entire Western Washington wholesale business. Between the construction of the initial three-story portion of the building and the construction of the planned upper floor levels, the concept for the building appears to have changed from a retail business block to a specialized retail and residential building. This programmatic change appears to have been directly related to desires expressed by the major tenant, Kohler and Chase Piano Company, who had reportedly entered into a fifteen-year lease with George W. Fischer.

Kohler and Chase Piano Company was a well-known pioneer San Francisco-based music firm that manufactured and sold pianos and other music-related merchandise. They operated both a retail shop in Seattle and a wholesale business in Western Washington. By 1912, due to the growth and success of the business and a need for larger quarters they chose to relocate from their current store at 1318 Second Avenue between Union and University Streets. The 1910 *Polk's Directory* lists "Kohler and Chase Temple of Music" as a retailer of pianos, organs, and other various musical instruments with Mr. Frank L. Jordon identified as the general manager for the Pacific Northwest. Mr. J.M. Sharp served as the wholesale manager for Western Washington.

The initial design of the "Business Building for Mr. Geo. W. Fischer" was developed by architects Bebb and Mendel and is well-documented in an original twenty-five sheet set of architectural and structural drawings dated August 1912. The building and its foundation were designed as an eight-story structure; however, the focus of the design drawings was on the first three stories given the rush to construction. The plans for the storefront level called for elaborate modern display or "show windows" – such that pedestrians could walk within recessed display areas off the sidewalk. In addition to the extensive display space, the first floor level included three private "piano rooms" and a "music room" and a "shipping room" and it was interconnected by open stairwells to a mezzanine balcony level and a basement retail level. At the basement level the design included various work and demonstration rooms including a

“player piano room” - an “electric piano room” - four “talking machine rooms” and a “record alley.” The mezzanine level included three additional “piano rooms.” The second floor level included sixteen “office rooms” and the third floor level called for fifteen offices; it also included a combined larger space with a “platform” located at the southwest corner – presumably to be used for performance purposes. The original Third Avenue façade was designed and constructed to be entirely clad with variegated ornamental face brick – some laid in a chevron patterns - and five vertical bays of sets of windows separated by brick clad piers and recessed spandrels. The storefront level included a deep recessed entry vestibule with the main store entryway and a show window, two elevators and an open stairwell to the upper floors along the south wall. A glass and iron marquee was also suspended from the building and extended out over the sidewalk.

The Fischer Building had been finished to the third floor level and occupied by Kohler & Chase by the time Carl Gould assumed responsibility for the second phase of design and construction in early 1914. An extensive set of architectural drawings dating from February 1914 through February 1915 reflect the development of the revised design for the five upper floor levels (fourth through eighth floors) and the building façade. The major interior change was the reconfiguration of the initial office room layout to a design that provided for individual studio units and studios with living quarters to include kitchen and bath amenities. Each of the apartment units included a “reception room” or vestibule, a “living” space and a “studio” or teaching space. The other significant interior change was the inclusion of a large decorative concert hall/recital studio with a raised platform that was located at the east end of the seventh and eighth floor levels. The concert hall included an adjacent reception/lounge area at the seventh floor level and an elaborate zinc and amber glass skylight and coffered plaster ceiling and cornice. The second and third floor level remained basically in the original configuration, providing individual offices and music teaching studios without residential or restroom amenities.

However, the most dramatic change to the original design of the building was that the entire east elevation - above the storefront level - was redesigned to exhibit an elaborate three-part vertical block façade composition that incorporated the original fenestration pattern. The new façade used highly distinctive smooth, ivory-colored glazed terra cotta cladding and ornament and exhibited unique Venetian-inspired architectural character. The original architectural drawings also included the design for an ornate electrified sign to be located on the rooftop above the façade (and also facing south) that would identify the building - “Fischer – Studios – Building.” While the sign was not erected, the building then became well-known as the Fischer Studio Building

An undated historic photograph (c.1914) serves to document the construction of the upper floor levels and the transition of the façade design. During the construction of the upper floor levels it appears that the major tenant continued to operate at the storefront level. However, by this time the elaborate storefront and mezzanine level retail spaces were no longer occupied by Kohler and Chase Pianos, but by another established music business, Bush and Lane Piano Company. The *Polk’s Directory* listed Kohler and Chase as the major retail building tenant in 1914, but by 1915, the listing had changed to Bush and Lane Pianos and a large vertical wall-mounted sign for “Bush & Lane Pianos” remained in place during the early stages of the construction process. By 1914, Henry Broderick, Inc. managed the building for Mr. Fischer and would continue to do so for many years thereafter.

Upon the completion of the second phase of construction in 1915 the Fischer Studio Building was recognized as a unique and much-needed addition to the expanding downtown commercial district. An article published in the *Town Crier* in April 1917 described the growing demand for

teaching and studio space in Seattle. Musicians affiliated with local Seattle orchestras who wished to teach part-time as well as so-called “master-artists” who traveled around the region and offered classes for short periods of time - perhaps a few days to a week – needed studio space and living accommodations. Based on these diverse needs and the high demand for limited studio space in the city, the Fischer Studio Building offered a variety of rental options. A shared studio could be rented for one day a week for \$8.50 per month. Full-time teachers could rent an entire studio space exclusively for \$45 to \$50 per month. The fourth through the sixth floor levels included four studios with living quarters and four teaching studios with lockers for individual teacher or part-time tenant storage purposes. The seventh and eighth floor levels each included four studios with living quarters and four teaching studios. Thus, there were a total of 24 units with residential accommodations that could function as both studio apartments and music teaching studios. The typical music studio units only included a reception and teaching room with separate men’s and women’s restrooms down the corridor.

Prior to the expansion of the Fischer Building, the Eilers Building and the Holyoke Building housed music studios and appear to have included many music teachers as tenants. The Fischer Studio Building was widely promoted as the only exclusive studio building west of Chicago and it quickly became a very popular studio location and attracted many of Seattle’s finest music teachers. While *Polk’s Directory* listed only one music teacher at the Fischer Building in 1914, by 1916, at least 51 music teachers were listed at the Fischer Studio Building address. While the great majority of these teachers taught piano, several offered violin and voice lessons and a few specialized in other musical instruments. In addition to the Bush and Lane Pianos store, the building housed the Color Music Co. Inc., a music-related merchandise retailer and music publisher, and Thomas F. Young, who operated a musical instrument manufacture and repair service. These tenants illustrate the concentration and variety of music-related activities that served to solidify the Fischer Studio Building as the premier music teaching and music specialty building in the city.

By 1916, there were thirteen other music-related specialty retailers located near Third Avenue and Pine Street. This suggests that the presence of the Fischer Studio Building may have influenced a subsequent increase in the relocation of other music-related businesses and teaching activities. Furthermore, the specific use of the building as a music teaching facility with studio and residential accommodations may have had enhanced the establishment of a concentration of smaller music-related retail activities in the immediate neighborhood.

In 1918, an interior remodeling project was undertaken that involved alterations to expand the residential amenities of the building. Plans were prepared by Seattle architect George W. Lawton and called for the conversion of some of the studio teaching units that only included reception and teaching rooms to units with private bathrooms. The plans also called for the conversion of some of the studio teaching units on the original second, and third floors and also the fourth floor into larger individual housing units complete with living and dining rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms. These changes must have been due to the initial success and the popularity of the residential aspects of the building.

By 1922, the Fischer Studio Building accommodated at least eighteen piano, voice and violin teachers who appear to have been primarily residential tenants living and working in the building. City directories indicate that a significant number of music teachers also rented offices in nearby office buildings where they taught their students. By 1922, a dancing studio and at least ten music-related businesses, in addition to Bush & Lane Pianos, were located in nearby buildings

along Third Avenue, including the Sherman & Clay Store at Third Avenue near Pine Street. However, by 1933 only a few of these music and music-related businesses appear to have weathered the economic depression, most notably the Sherman & Clay Piano Company. Bush & Lane appears to have lasted until 1929 when the main storefront level was partially remodeled and began to be used by Turrell Shoe Company. Despite poor economic conditions, the Fischer Studio Building appears to have remained very busy with at least thirty-nine music teachers living and or teaching there in 1933. The building appears to have been sold in April 1937 to the 1519 -3rd Avenue Building Company.

In 1938, an illustrated pamphlet was printed to promote the Fischer Studio Building as “Seattle’s Downtown Art Center.” The building was touted for providing space for teaching “in an atmosphere of privacy and refinement” as well as for its modern sound-proof facilities and views of Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains. The pamphlet described the various building accommodations, including: practice and teaching rooms, rented by the hour, half-day, day, week, or month; furnished or unfurnished deluxe studio apartments described as “ideal for a teacher wishing to combine work and home;” ample guest room facilities, available to many noted artists during stays in Seattle; a business office, complete with reception room, full time manager, and building staff; a secretarial telephone service; maid service; and 24-hour elevator service. The pamphlet also promoted the lavish concert hall space, complete with buffet, as well as the Schubert Hall assembly room, said to be ideal for clubs, classes, lectures, or small recitals. In addition to the various building amenities, the pamphlet promoted the outstanding artists, musicians and teachers associated with the Fischer Studio Building and the benefits of hiring private instructors over those of an institution. The professional musicians and artists housed within the building by 1938 included not only music teachers, but also drama and acting teachers, speech coaches, a dance school, an English grammar teacher, and a photographer and filmmaker.

Specific information about the history and use of building during the World War II and post war era has not been uncovered, but it is assumed that it continued to be used for teaching and music-related purposes. Extant historic building fabric indicates that the storefront level may have been modernized and updated in the 1950s; however, this has not been documented. The historic preservation movement that took hold in Seattle in the early 1970s led to upgrades and renovations of many older buildings in the downtown core, including the Fischer Studio Building. In 1974, noted local historic preservation architect Ralph D. Anderson purchased the building for \$230,000 with plans to convert the existing studio spaces and apartments into condominium units for middle-income residents. Anderson was responsible for the design of numerous early renovation and restoration projects in Pioneer Square, most notably the Pioneer Building, the Union Trust Building and the Grand Central Hotel. He saw a unique opportunity with the Fischer Studio Building to not only provide housing at a lower cost, but to also provide a new and appropriate use for a unique downtown commercial building.

Initial renovations brought the building up to modern fire code and safety standards and included the installation of air conditioning. Additional renovations were undertaken in multiple and gradual stages by individual condominium owners. In most cases, several separate former studio apartment units were combined to create larger, multi-bedroom condominium units. Some smaller units were also created by combining adjacent music studio spaces and adding new partitions to create separate living, cooking/dining, bathroom and sleeping spaces. The most notable interior alteration was the conversion of the former recital hall into a single condominium unit with a mezzanine; this became Ralph Anderson’s own unit. During this era extensive

changes appear to have also been made to the storefront level in order to accommodate a variety of tenants including an electronics store and a health club.

George W. Fischer

The Fischer Studio Building was developed by a successful wholesale grocer turned real estate developer and civic promoter, George W. Fischer. Fischer was born in Chicago in 1864. His father was a well-known wholesaler and a partner in the wholesale grocery house of Reid, Murdoch and Fischer. Fischer attended the Harvard School in Chicago and was a graduate of Amherst College after which he began working for his father's Chicago firm where he learned the wholesale grocery business.

George W. Fischer moved to Seattle in 1887, where he and his brother-in-law J.R. MacDonald established the wholesale grocery house of Fischer and MacDonald, the first wholesale grocery business in Washington Territory. Two years later, the disastrous fire of 1889 wiped out Seattle's commercial district including this wholesale business. After the fire business sites were difficult to find and extremely expensive; however, Fischer and MacDonald were able to rent a portion of the pier at the foot of Yesler Way. They paid an exorbitant price of \$1,000 per month; despite this condition they were soon able to rebuild their business into a profitable venture.

In November 1893, MacDonald died and Fischer persuaded his brother Frederick to take over as his partner. Together, they bought MacDonald's interest and the firm became Fischer Brothers. George W. Fischer continued his role as manager of the business based in Seattle, while his brother handled sales around the region. After the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897 the business began to boom. Due to his knowledge of the conditions in Alaska and his personal connections with several important contacts, Fischer was able to secure a significant portion of the gold rush era business. For many years, Fischer Brothers enjoyed extensive patronage from Alaskan merchants and gold seekers; they became well known among Alaskans and established the firm as the foremost wholesale grocery outlet in Seattle.

The business grew and developed not only in Seattle, but throughout Washington and parts of Idaho. The company profited from the "Maximum" brand, which was originated by George Fischer and included various canned goods, fruits, vegetables and packaged goods including coffee. In 1911, due to his high standing among his fellow wholesale grocers, Fischer was elected president of the Western Washington Wholesale Grocers Association, a position he held until his death. It was during this same era that he also began to invest in downtown commercial real estate development. Beyond being a leader in Seattle's commercial life, Fischer also contributed to several charitable activities and promoted social welfare and civic progress. He was an official of the Seattle Social Welfare League and was one of the founders of the St. Nicholas School. George W. Fischer died in 1923.

Bebb and Mendel

The Fischer Studio Building was designed and constructed in two separate design and construction phases. The first phase began in 1912 with the initial construction of the Fischer Building intended for office uses based on a design credited to local architects Bebb and Mendel. Charles Bebb (1856-1942) was educated in London and at a preparatory school in Switzerland before attending the University of Lausanne. He also studied engineering at the School of Mines in London and worked as a railroad engineer in South Africa before moving to the United States.

By 1888, he had been hired by Adler and Sullivan in Chicago and served as the chief superintendent architect on the construction of the Auditorium Theater Building. In 1890, he was sent by Adler and Sullivan to superintend the construction of the Seattle Opera House. The project was never built and late in 1890, Bebb, still in the employ of Adler and Sullivan, returned to Chicago. However, he returned to Seattle in September 1893 and became a designer for the local Denny Clay Company. His work with the Denny Clay Company is credited to the success of the enterprise, which became a leading producer of architectural terra cotta on the West Coast.

By 1898, Bebb had established an independent architectural practice and by 1901, a formal partnership with Louis Leonard Mendel, who had also worked for Adler and Sullivan. The firm of Bebb and Mendel is particularly well known for the design of the Corona Building (1903) and the Hoge Building (1911). The firm was also responsible for the design of the Washington State Pavilion (1909, destroyed) at the Seattle Alaska Yukon Exposition. After the partnership of Bebb and Mendel dissolved in 1914, Bebb formed a successful partnership with Carl F. Gould and Mendel continued to practice independently.

Bebb and Gould

The subsequent second phase of design and construction on the Fischer Studio Building occurred in 1914-15. The architectural plans for this phase were prepared by Bebb and Gould. The project involved an architectural design scheme for housing performing artists, musicians and music teachers in a downtown apartment/studio building, near complimentary retail outlets and performance facilities. The revised design concept provided living, teaching, and performing space for dancers, musicians and vocalists within one building. In addition to living and teaching spaces within individual housing units, the building provided a large performance space and concert hall for recitals typically performed by the building tenants and their pupils. The modifications to the initial design were clearly related to the influence of Carl F. Gould, who joined in partnership with Charles Bebb in 1914. Upon establishing the new firm, Gould continued work on several large projects that Bebb or Mendel had already begun work on, including: buildings and site work at the Chittenden Government Locks; the Fisher Studio Building; the Times Square Building; the Puget Sound News Company.

Carl F. Gould (1873-1939) was born in New York, educated at Harvard and attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1898 to 1903. He served an internship with the well-known New York firm of McKim, Mead and White (1903-05) and then assisted in the preparation of the *Burnham Plan* for the City of San Francisco. When Gould settled in Seattle in 1908 he possessed significantly more formal architectural training and experience than most of his contemporaries. He initially worked with Everett & Baker and in 1909 entered into partnership with Daniel Huntington, the skilled designer of numerous notable public and private projects. The partnership produced apartment and commercial buildings while Gould also practiced independently designing numerous residences and also promoted the *Bogue Plan*. Gould also served as the president of the Fine Arts Society and began lecturing at the University of Washington on domestic design and assumed leadership of the Architectural League of the Pacific Coast. In 1914, he founded the University of Washington, Department of Architecture and continued to head the school until 1926.

With Charles Bebb serving as principal engineer and construction manager, and Carl F. Gould as the principal designer and planner, the two practiced in a flourishing partnership between 1914 until 1924. Bebb & Gould became a leading local firm and flourished with over 200 local

commissions, including schools, churches, hospitals, memorials, large private homes, clubhouses, and numerous commercial buildings executed in a wide range of historic revival and non-traditional modern architectural styles. Bebb and Gould produced several of Seattle's most architecturally distinctive buildings, including: the Times Square Building; Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington; the U.S. Marine Hospital and the original Seattle Art Museum. However, after 1924 Bebb's role in the firm was significantly reduced.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Site, Setting and Urban Context

The Fischer Studio Building is located mid-block on the west side of Third Avenue between Pike and Pine Streets. This unique eight-story retail store and apartment building was constructed in two phases; the first three floors were built in 1912 and the top five stories were added in 1915. Due to its mid-block location and its physical relationship to immediately adjacent buildings, the only prominent exterior elevation is the façade at the east elevation, which is oriented toward Third Avenue.

The Fischer Studio Building is immediately adjacent to historic buildings to the north and to the south. To the south is a retail store housed in the much-altered former Winter Garden Theater (Frank Fowler, 1920) and to the north is the Olympic Tower/United Shopping Tower designed by Henry Bittman and Harold Adams in 1928-31. The upper five stories at the south elevation of the Fischer Studio Building and the upper four stories at its north elevation are visible above the adjacent buildings and portions of each can be viewed from Third Avenue. While the Olympic/United Shopping Tower is twelve stories in height, its southernmost bays are setback at the third story level. A north-south oriented alley bisects the entire block and runs along the west or rear elevation of the Fischer Studio Building. The Haight Building (Stephen A. Jennings, 1910), an early highrise office building, is located across the alley and to the northwest of the Fischer Studio Building. The remainder of the half block at the west side of the alley is occupied by mid-rise commercial buildings and a surface parking lot.

The Fischer Studio Building is located in close proximity to several other historic properties along Third Avenue. To the north of the building at the corner of Pine Street and Third Avenue is the Bon Marche Department Store (John Graham Sr. 1929 & 1953). To the south of the building at the intersection of Pike Street and Third Avenue are three distinctive terra cotta clad buildings; the former F.W. Woolworth Company Store (Harold B Hamphill, 1940); the former Kress Store Building (E.J. Hoffman, 1924); and, the Republic Building/Melborne Tower (Lawton & Moldenhauer, 1927).

As completed in 1915 the Fischer Studio Building provided two retail spaces at the storefront level, a total of 64 small studio and one-bedroom apartments on the upper floor levels and portions of the upper two floor levels included a small concert hall. The building measures 60' x 108' at the base and exhibits an I-shaped plan at the upper floor levels with north and south light wells providing light and ventilation for the residential units. Beginning in 1974 the interior of the upper floor levels including the concert hall was remodeled and adapted in order to create 40 condominium housing units. The building currently houses retail uses at the storefront level and residential throughout the second through the eighth floor levels. The Fischer Studio Building

exhibits a three-part vertical block façade composition, highly distinctive terra cotta cladding and ornament and unique Venetian-inspired architectural character.

Current Exterior Appearance

The steel-reinforced concrete structure includes a concrete foundation and a basement level. The principal Third Avenue elevation above the storefront level is entirely covered with distinctive ivory-color glazed terra cotta cladding and ornament. The division of original interior use (retail storefront, apartment/studio, concert hall) is clearly expressed in the three-part vertical block façade and the corresponding ornamental treatments. The retail storefront level has been entirely remodeled; however the original structural bay spacing remains evident.

Third Avenue Elevation - Facade

The façade is divided into three separate structural bays at the storefront level, two of which are occupied by retail stores; the third and southernmost bay is occupied by a vacant retail display window and serves as the main entry vestibule. The original storefront spaces and recessed entry vestibule included extensive show and display windows at street level and tall vertical windows at the mezzanine loft level. All of the original historic building fabric and the display and mezzanine window features have been removed and replaced with modern storefront window and door assemblies. However, the current main entry vestibule and the current show window-elevator-stairwell configuration along the south wall reflect the original entrance lobby configuration. However, they are now entirely modern in construction material and architectural character

Above the storefront level the façade remains virtually unchanged and intact. The smooth terra cotta clad building shaft accentuates the five floor levels that were historically used entirely for residential and music studio purposes. The shaft is separated from the storefront level by a simple intermediate cornice ornamented with acanthus leaves. A continuous deep terra cotta sill runs below the second floor windows and serves as a base for the enframed window bay feature above. The shaft is dominated by a wide enframed bay of tall and narrow, evenly-spaced rectangular window openings. Within this wide bay are five vertical bays of sets of windows separated by enframed piers and accentuated by recessed spandrels decorated with ribbed terra cotta panels. Original wooden casement sash with full transom windows above appear to remain in place. Terra cotta molding accentuates the edges and top of the shaft and dies into the second floor level sill. Original ornate cast iron/bronze-plated light fixtures/torches (referred to as brazier) rest on projecting plinths that flank the window bay at the second floor level sill line.

The façade at the upper two floor levels (the concert hall level) is separated from the shaft by a simple denticulated intermediate cornice. The upper two floor levels are richly embellished with terra cotta cladding and ornament; given the historic use of the interior space this wall is not penetrated by window openings. Five large rectangular terra cotta panels are adorned with diamond-patterned blind tracery and separated by fluted pilasters that correspond with the enframed bay and window bay spacing below. The end panels are fluted and decorated with chevron patterns. This entire feature is surmounted by a highly decorated cornice and parapet feature adorned with a decorative frieze and corbel table at a moulded cornice. It is capped by an articulated parapet decorated with cresting and acroteria that incorporates eight grotesques. The decorated pilasters and grotesques at this level correspond with the fluted pilasters, enframed

window bay and piers below. The corbel table and the grotesques were designed and constructed to incorporate electric lighting elements.

North and South Elevations

Both the north and south elevations are basically utilitarian in character. The walls are entirely finished with painted concrete plaster; the terra cotta cladding and trim at the adjacent façade is terminated at the common corner. The north and south elevations exhibit no ornament whatsoever. The flush wall surfaces are penetrated by window openings that vary slightly between to the two exterior elevations. The south elevation exhibits original tripartite windows at the east end of the elevation that extend from the fourth through the eighth floor levels. The north elevation does not include this window configuration and is blank at the east end. Typical tripartite and smaller (kitchen) windows are evenly spaced within the lightwell recesses at both elevations. The elevations also vary at the west (alley) ends; the north elevation is blank without any window openings and the south elevation includes some original and altered openings with double-hung sash similar to that on the lower portions of the west (alley) elevation. Significant alterations have been made to the original window openings windows on the west end of the south elevation at the eighth floor level where modern glass doors and balconies have been added. Balconies and doors similar to those on the west elevation are also located at upper floor level west-facing exterior walls within the lightwell recesses.

Alley (West) Elevation

The alley elevation is also very utilitarian in character; like the north and south elevations it is finished with painted concrete plaster and is void of ornament. The first through fifth floor levels appear to retain original double-hung wooden windows set in individual unframed openings. Extensive alterations have been made to the original window openings and windows at the sixth through the eighth floor levels. These units have views over the alley and the buildings to the west; thus, modern doors and transoms and narrow wrought iron balconies have been added. A recessed exit stairwell is located at the center of this elevation and extends from the fourth floor to the roof. This stairwell appears to continue within the interior of the building to the ground level.

Non-Historic Exterior Alterations

The greatest alteration to the exterior of the building has been the removal of all of the original storefront level historic building fabric and the display and mezzanine window features. The current modern storefront window and door assemblies and flat canopy appear to have been constructed since 1970. It is not known what degree of alteration may have occurred prior to this construction. Portions of blue tile and a small plastic “Fischer Studio Building” sign enframed in stainless steel are located at the south end of the storefront and appear to date from the 1950s; thus the storefront may have been modernized and altered during that era. The Fischer Studio Building was remodeled and converted to create 25 condominium units in 1974, at which time the above-noted alterations were made to the window openings and exterior walls at the west elevation and the west ends of the side elevations. The somewhat inconsistent removal and replacement of some window units may be due to the varied condominium ownership. The current modern entry vestibule appears to date from the 1974 conversion era or earlier.

Significant Interior Features and/or Finishes

Reportedly, some original hex-tile flooring in corridors and some portions of classical-inspired wall and ceiling ornament within the former concert hall have survived. However, it is understood that the great majority of the interior of the building has been remodeled and adapted for modern condominium housing purposes and that there are no significant interior finishes, features, or public spaces worthy of consideration for historic preservation purposes.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

The exterior of the building.

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City Historic Preservation Officer

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