CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL 118143

AN ORDINANCE relating to historic preservation, imposing controls upon the RKO Distributing Company Building, a landmark designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board under Chapter 25.12 of the Seattle Municipal Code, and adding it to the Table of Historical Landmarks contained in Chapter 25.32 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, the Landmarks Ordinance, Chapter 25.12 of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), establishes a procedure for the designation and preservation of sites, improvements, and objects having historical, cultural, architectural, engineering, or geographic significance; and

WHEREAS, the Landmarks Preservation Board (Board), after a public meeting on October 6, 2010, voted to approve the nomination of the improvement located at 2312 Second Avenue (which is referred to as the "RKO Distributing Company Building" for the purposes of this ordinance) for designation as a landmark under SMC Chapter 25.12; and

WHEREAS, after a public meeting on December 1, 2010, the Board voted to approve the designation of the RKO Distributing Company Building under SMC Chapter 25.12; and

WHEREAS, on December 21, 2011, the Board and the owner of the designated landmark agreed to controls and incentives; and

WHEREAS, the Board recommends that the City Council enact a designating ordinance approving the controls and incentives; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. DESIGNATION: Pursuant to SMC 25.12.660, the designation by the Landmarks Preservation Board (Board) of the improvement located at 2312 Second Avenue (which is referred to as the "RKO Distributing Company Building" for the purposes of this ordinance) is hereby acknowledged.

A. Legal Description. The RKO Distributing Company Building is located on the property legally described as:

> Lot 3, Block 26, of the Second Addition to that part of the City of Seattle Laid off by A.A. Denny and W.M. Bell (Commonly known as Bell and Denny's 2nd Addition to the City of Seattle), according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 77, Records of King County, Washington;
> Except that portion of said lots condemned for widening 2nd Avenue in King County Superior Court Cause Number 39151 under ordinance No. 9311 of the city of Seattle;
> Situate in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington.

B. Specific Features or Characteristics Designated. Pursuant to SMC 25.12.660.A.2, the following specific features or characteristics of the RKO Distributing Company Building are designated: the exterior of the building.

C. Basis of Designation. The designation was made because the RKO Distributing Company Building is more than 25 years old, has significant character, interest or value as a part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, state or nation, has integrity or the ability to convey its significance, and satisfies the following from SMC 25.12.350: it embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or a method of construction (SMC 25.12.350.D).

D. Section 2. CONTROLS: The following controls are hereby imposed on the features or characteristics of the RKO Distributing Company Building that were designated by the Board for preservation:

A. Certificate of Approval Process.

1. Except as provided in subsection 2.A.2 or subsection 2.B, the owner must obtain a Certificate of Approval issued by the Board pursuant to SMC Chapter 25.12, or the time for denying a Certificate of Approval must have expired, before the owner may make alterations or significant changes to the following specific features or characteristics: the exterior of the building.

2. No Certificate of Approval is required for the following: any in-kind maintenance or repairs of the features or characteristics listed in subsection 2.A.1.

B. City Historic Preservation Officer Approval Process.

1. The City Historic Preservation Officer (CHPO) may review and approve alterations or significant changes to the features or characteristics listed in subsection 2.B.3 according to the following procedure:

   a. The owner shall submit to the CHPO a written request for the alterations or significant changes, including applicable drawings or specifications.

   b. If the CHPO, upon examination of submitted plans and specifications, determines that the alterations or significant changes are consistent with the purposes of SMC Chapter 25.12, the CHPO shall approve the alterations or significant changes without further action by the Board.

   c. If the CHPO does not approve the alterations or significant changes, the owner may submit revised materials to the CHPO, or apply to the Board for a Certificate of Approval under SMC Chapter 25.12.

2. The CHPO shall transmit a written decision on the owner's request to the owner within 14 days of receipt of the request. Failure of the CHPO to timely transmit a written decision constitutes approval of the request.

3. CHPO approval of alterations or significant changes to the features or characteristics listed in subsection 2.A.1 is available for the following:

a. The installation, alteration, or removal of duct conduits, HVAC vents, grilles, fire escapes, pipes, and other similar wiring or mechanical elements necessary for the normal operation of the building.

b. The installation, alteration, or removal of exterior security lighting, video cameras, and security system equipment.

c. The installation, alteration, or removal of signage.

Section 3. INCENTIVES: The following incentives are hereby granted on the features or characteristics of the RKO Distributing Company Building that were designated by the Board for preservation:

A. Uses not otherwise permitted in a zone may be authorized in a designated Landmark by means of an administrative conditional use permit issued pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code Title 23.

B. Special tax valuation for historic preservation may be available under RCW Chapter 84.26 upon application and compliance with the requirements of that statute.

C. Exceptions to certain requirements of the Seattle Building Code, SMC Chapter 22.100, and the Seattle Energy Code, SMC Chapter 22.700, may be authorized pursuant to the applicable provisions thereof.

D. The Owner may be eligible to participate in the City's Landmark Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Bank after obtaining a determination from the City concerning the quantity of unused development rights for the Landmark that are eligible for transfer to receiving properties as Landmark TDR, pursuant to SMC 23.49.014.

Section 4. Enforcement of this ordinance and penalties for its violation are as provided in SMC 25.12.910.

Section 5. The RKO Distributing Company Building is hereby added alphabetically to Section II, Buildings, of the Table of Historical Landmarks contained in SMC Chapter 25.32.

Section 6. The City Clerk is directed to record a certified copy of this ordinance with the King County Director of Records and Elections, deliver two certified copies to the CHPO, and deliver one copy to the Director of the Department of Planning and Development. The CHPO is directed to provide a certified copy of the ordinance to the owner of the landmark.

Section 7. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the ____ day of _____, 2014, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2014.

_____

President _____ of the City Council

Approved by me this ____ day of _____, 2014.

_____

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Filed by me this ____ day of _____, 2014.

_____

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)

Form revised: February 26, 2014

FISCAL NOTE FOR NON-CAPITAL PROJECTS

Department:	Contact Person/Phone:	CBO Analyst/Phone:
Department of Neighborhoods	Sarah Sodt/206-615-1786	Tim Wolfe/206-684-0535

Legislation Title:
AN ORDINANCE relating to historic preservation, imposing controls upon the RKO Distributing Company Building, a landmark designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board under Chapter 25.12 of the Seattle Municipal Code, and adding it to the Table of Historical Landmarks contained in Chapter 25.32 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

Summary of the Legislation:
The attached legislation acknowledges the designation of the RKO Distributing Company Building as a historic landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Board, imposes controls, grants incentives, and adds the RKO Distributing Company Building to the Table of Historical Landmarks contained in SMC Chapter 25.32. The legislation does not have a financial impact.

Background:
The RKO Distributing Company Building was built in 1928 and is located in the Belltown neighborhood. A Controls and Incentives Agreement has been signed by the owner and has been approved by the Landmarks Preservation Board. The controls in the agreement apply to the exterior of the building, but do not apply to any in–kind maintenance or repairs of the designated features.

__X__ **This legislation does not have any financial implications.**

____ **This legislation has financial implications.**

Other Implications:

a) **Does the legislation have indirect financial implications, or long-term implications?**
No.

b) **What is the financial cost of not implementing the legislation?**
None.

c) **Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department?**
No.

d) What are the possible alternatives to the legislation that could achieve the same or similar objectives
None.

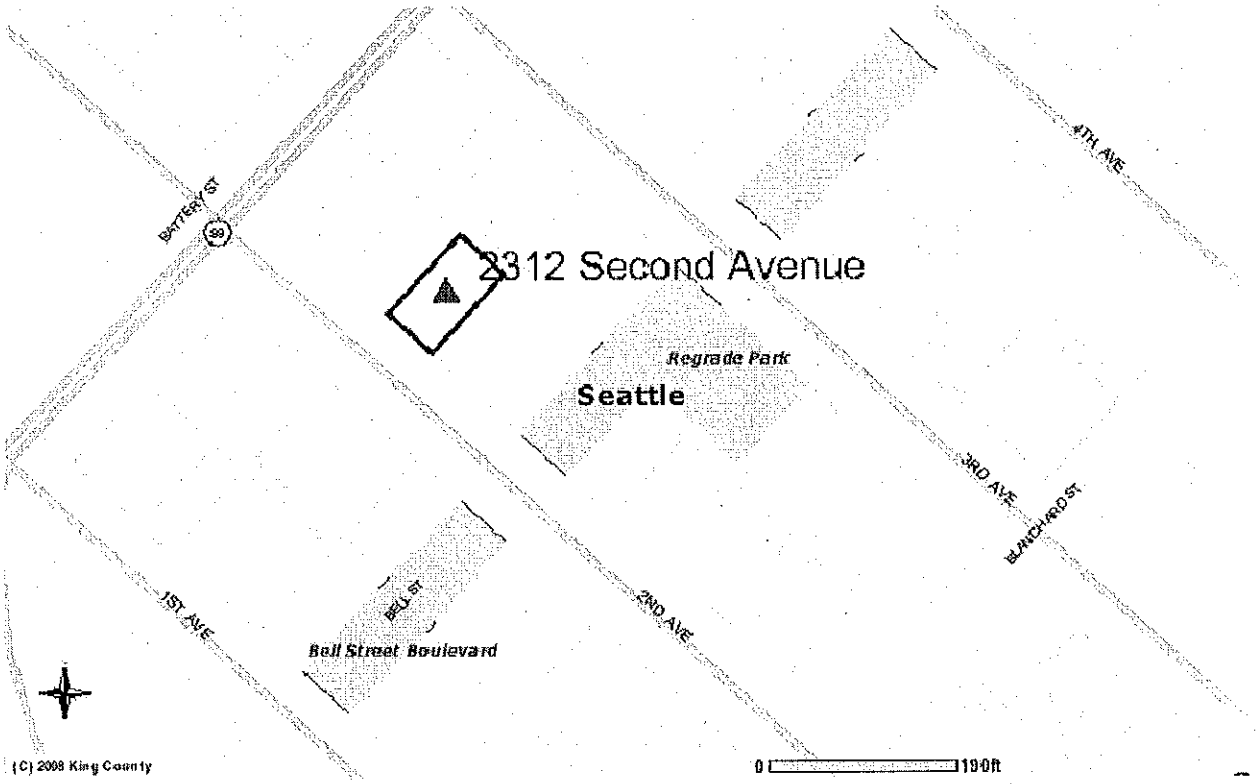
e) Is a public hearing required for this legislation?
No.

f) Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required for this legislation?
No.

g) Does this legislation affect a piece of property?
Yes.

h) Other Issues:

List attachments to the fiscal note below:
Exhibit A – Vicinity map of the RKO Distributing Company Building



Note: This map is intended for illustrative or informational purposes only and is not intended to modify anything in the legislation.

City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray
Mayor

June 17, 2014

Honorable Tim Burgess
President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Council President Burgess:

I am pleased to transmit the attached proposed Council Bill that designates the RKO Distributing Company Building as a historic landmark, imposes controls, grants incentives and adds the RKO Distributing Company Building to the Table of Historical Landmarks in the Seattle Municipal Code.

A Controls and Incentives Agreement has been signed by the owner and has been approved by the Landmarks Preservation Board. The controls in the agreement apply to the exterior of the building, but do not apply to any in-kind maintenance or repairs of the designated features.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Sarah Sodt, Department of Neighborhoods, at 206-615-1786.

Sincerely,

Edward B. Murray
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council

Office of the Mayor
Seattle City Hall, 7th Floor
600 Fourth Avenue
PO Box 94749
Seattle, Washington 98124-4749

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Hearing Impaired use the Washington Relay Service (7-1-1)
www.seattle.gov/mayor

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 536/10

Name and Address of Property: **RKO Distributing Company Building**
2312 Second Avenue

Legal Description: Lot 3, Block 26, of the Second Addition to that part of the City of Seattle Laid off by A.A. Denny and W.M. Bell (Commonly known as Bell and Denny's 2nd Addition to the City of Seattle), according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 77, Records of King County, Washington;

Except that portion of said lots condemned for widening 2nd Avenue in King County Superior Court Cause Number 39151 under ordinance No. 9311 of the city of Seattle;

Situate in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington.

At the public meeting held on December 1, 2010, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the RKO Distributing Company Building at 2312 Second Avenue as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Setting

This former film exchange building is on a 6,615 square foot lot in the middle of the block on the east of Second Avenue, between Bell and Battery streets. This stretch of Second Avenue has been improved with numerous evergreen and deciduous street trees, curb bulbs with shrubs and various art works scattered along the sidewalk. However, the buildings here retain much of their pre-World War II character and scale. Lining this block of Second Avenue are one-to-two story buildings from the Film Row of the 1920s-30s. Adjacent to the north is the B. F. Shearer Building (now the Rendezvous), which has an altered exterior but retains its original scale. The same is true of the Suyama Peterson Deguchi studio, an altered

garage. Adjacent to the RKO building on the south is a vacant lot that was site of a 1920s garage, demolished following a fire; the site is slated for redevelopment.

Across the street toward the northeast are two stylish buildings with a high degree of integrity: the Mediterranean-inspired William Tell Hotel (1925) and the Art Deco MGM/Loew's film exchange (1936). Both are City landmarks. The block to the north has the full-block six-story Belltown Court condominium, which replaced the original Film Exchange Building in 1992. Across Second Avenue from that is the Lexington-Concord Apartments from 1923. The block to the south, across Bell Street, has some of Belltown's oldest buildings, including two on the corner from 1907 and a pre-regrade hybrid from c. 1890.

Exterior description
This building is of masonry construction, which was typical for film exchange buildings for safety reasons. From the front it appears to have only one story, but a partial second story is visible on the rear. It has a total of 9,030 gross square feet.

The two storefronts have original display windows. Above each one are three twelve-light transom windows with operable wood sash, separated by turned wood muntins. Above the transoms are three rows of Batchelder tiles. The bulkheads below the windows are also clad with Batchelder tile, with field tiles in muted shades of brown and green. The decorative tiles are in eight groups of four, flanking each doorway and at the ends. The patterns include Viking ships, dragons, lovebirds and various stylized flower patterns.

Each entry is flanked by cast stone pilasters 15 inches wide, extending about a foot above the transoms. Similar pilasters, 30 inches wide, mark the ends of each storefront. The pilasters are Art Deco in style, with a distinctive setback shape and a stylized decorative motif. The stores have newer steel entry doors, the only apparent alteration on the façade. Two small signs hanging perpendicular to the building announce the names of the galleries.

The rear (east) façade on an alley is two stories clad with concrete. There are four doors, one of solid wood and the others with glazed upper panels. The two doors to the south are each flanked by two nine-light industrial steel sash windows; toward the north are 12-light sash. The second story has five small windows, one with the original three-light steel sash and the others with newer sliding windows. The two fire escapes are accessed by narrow 10-light steel sash windows. Extensive metal work, made by the resident blacksmiths, decorates the facade and the roofline, made in the blacksmith shop. The south façade, which adjoined another building until its recent demolition, is covered with unpainted horizontal wood boards.

Interior Description
The original plan section shows that the building has one story in the front, rising to two stories about halfway back. Two stories are clearly visible on the alley elevation. (The adjacent Rendezvous/B. F. Shearer Building, with the same original owner and architect, is similar in plan.) The plan indicates that the film storage vaults and the film examination room (for quality control) were at the rear of the first story, with the film exhibition room (to

screen films for theater representatives) was above on the second floor. The middle section of the first floor was the poster room, where the film advertising posters were stored and packed for distribution. The basement, under the rear third of the building, had storage areas and two darkrooms at the rear next to the alley.

The front part of the building, now occupied by two art galleries, is basically a large open space divided by partial walls that do not reach the ceiling. The rear part of the building contains a blacksmith's forge, and the original film vaults may still exist in this area.

Building Alterations
The exterior of the building appears to be highly intact, but the following interior alterations have been identified:

- In 1951 (permit #408132) interior alterations were made for the Paramount Film Distribution Company, including improvements to the branch manager's office and construction of a new film vault. The plans called for covering the front transom windows with Masonite, but it is not known whether that was done (McClelland and Osterman, architects).
- In 1979 (permits #586122 & 585562) interior alterations and mechanical improvements were made for Camera Craft Inc. The company used the old film vaults as dark rooms.
- In 1991(permit #659148) the partial second story in the rear was improved for living quarters, with a dormer/skylight on the roof (not easily visible).
- In 1979 and 2001 (permit #722510) HVAC and mechanical system improvements were made.
- In recent years the stucco above the display windows has been painted and new doors installed.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Neighborhood Context
This building was one of the cornerstones of Seattle's "Film Row" from its construction in 1928 until the industry's departure in the 1970s. During this period Belltown was the center of the film industry in the Pacific Northwest. Seattle was a major film center, with more than fifty theaters in the 1920-40s. All the major studios and many smaller ones had distribution centers, called film exchanges, in Belltown. Films were shipped by rail from Los Angeles, and were shipped from here to more than 400 local theaters in Washington, Alaska, Idaho and Montana by truck, ship, rail or auto. Each distributor had salesmen who would preview the films and go on the road to describe the new releases to theater owners. Many theater owners and managers came here themselves to view the films and select the ones they wanted to feature.

About thirty cities across the country had film exchanges. They were usually concentrated in a specific neighborhood both for convenience in marketing and for safety reasons. Early film was made of nitrocellulose, a highly flammable product that required special storage and

handling. The film exchange buildings included special vaults to store the film safely. They often had small theaters to screen the films, as well as office, storage and other support areas.

In the early 20th century, Seattle was an active theater town, with numerous vaudeville theaters and regular touring productions. However, as early as 1908 the public had become fascinated with film. Vaudeville houses added film shorts to their programs and gradually the film portion became longer than the live production.[1] The industry grew quickly to meet the public demand for entertainment. The first identified film exchange in Seattle was built in 1909, when the Morton Film Exchange advertised the "Latest and Best Selection of All the Well-Known Producers of licensed Motion Pictures." They also offered old-fashioned magic lantern slides. By 1915 Seattle city directories listed 25 companies under "Moving Picture Machines and Supplies." About twenty of these companies were "exchanges" or brokers who purchased films and then rented them on a weekly basis to theaters. This system allowed theater owners to meet the public's craving for variety with new pictures every week without the prohibitive cost of buying the films. These early companies were scattered in several downtown buildings, with the largest number in the Joshua Green Building at 1425 Fourth Avenue and in the 1200 block of Third Avenue.

By 1920, there were 27 listings, with 21 distributors and six supply companies. By this time they had become concentrated, with 22 of the 27 located in the vicinity of 3rd Avenue and Lenora Street. The 2000 block of Third Avenue was the heart of the city's first "Film Row," with many famous names including Fox, Goldwyn, Pathé and United Artists. The Pathé Exchange building, built in 1923, remains today at 2025 Third Avenue and is the oldest local film exchange building.

Film Row moved northward in 1928 when two film exchange buildings were constructed, encompassing the entire block between First and Second avenues and Battery and Wall streets (now the location of Belltown Court condominium). These buildings housed Columbia, Warner Brothers, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, United Artists and many others. Other distributors had their own buildings in the immediate vicinity, as did numerous support businesses such as theater equipment dealers, concessions representatives and poster companies. This extreme concentration allowed out-of-town managers to take care of all their theater-related business conveniently. It was a big business; in 1952 the payroll on Film Row alone was estimated at more than $1,000,000, not including profits from theaters, equipment or advertising.

Changes in transportation, technology and marketing rendered film exchanges of this type obsolete by the 1960s. Modern film did not require special handling and transportation and distribution systems were much more efficient. Universal Studios was the last film business in the Film Exchange Building, leaving in 1980.

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[1] Eric L. Flom, "The Theatrical History of Seattle to 1930," in *More Voices, New Stories: King County, Washington's First 150 Years*, Mary C. Wright (ed.), Seattle: Pacific Northwest Historians Guild, 2002, pp. 128-130.

The Denny Regrade

The Denny Regrade itself is also an important part of the neighborhood context. This stretch of Second Avenue was leveled during the second phase of the Denny Regrade. Denny Hill rose steeply north of Pine Street between Second and Fifth Avenues, with a steep bluff from Second Avenue to Elliott Bay. With the economic growth following the discovery of gold in the Klondike in 1897, the business district expanded to the north, and many saw Denny Hill as a significant barrier to further progress. City Engineer Reginald H. Thomson envisioned leveling the hill, using hydraulic jets to sluice the earth into Elliott Bay.

The first regrade in the area was in 1898, lowering First Avenue between Pike Street and Denny Way by 17 feet. The second phase occurred between 1908 and 1911, when 27 blocks between Second and Fifth Avenues, from Pine to Cedar streets, were sluiced away. The largest excavation was along Blanchard Street, which was lowered by 107 feet at Fourth Avenue. This was the largest such operation in the world up to that time, moving six million cubic yards of dirt. The regrade opened up access to Belltown, Queen Anne and Lake Union, greatly enhancing property values. The city regraded only the streets, with owners of individual lots required to hire their own contractors to level their property. Thus many pinnacles of land remained even into the 1920s. The embankment along Fifth Avenue remained for more than twenty years.

The third and final regrading phase began in 1928 and was completed in December 1930. This phase extended from Fifth Avenue to Westlake Avenue, between Virginia and Harrison streets. In volume it was about two-thirds the size of the second phase, removing 4,233,000 cubic yards of dirt on a conveyor belt to barges on Elliott Bay (Phelps, historylink.org). Because the third regrade was completed as the country was entering a major depression, the expected development did not occur. For decades the area east of Fifth Avenue contained primarily car dealerships, parking lots, motels and other low-density uses and even now, 75 years later, it has seen less development than surrounding areas.

Building History

This building was designed in 1928 by Earl Morrison for owner Edmond N. Canedy, as a film exchange (permit #283570). This was the same year that two teamed up on the adjacent B. F. Shearer building adjacent to the north.

Canedy (1867-1950) was a contractor and real estate investor without any known connection with the film industry. He had come to Seattle from Pennsylvania in 1890, and owned and operated a number of shingle mills in Whatcom and Snohomish counties. He then established a contracting business in Seattle, which he ran until his retirement in 1941. He built many homes and commercial buildings in Queen Anne and north Seattle. He died in 1950 at the age of 82.[2]

This building has had two distinct types of uses over its history. From its construction until the 1950s it was used a film exchange by several distribution companies. For the past

[2] "E. N. Canedy, Pioneer Mill Operator, Dies," *Seattle Times*, April 20, 1950, p. 22.

decades it has been the home of numerous art studios and galleries. The two storefronts now house two galleries (Roq la Rue and BLVD). In the rear is Black Dog Forge, a collective of four blacksmiths with an entry off of the alley (2318 Second Avenue). The second story contains a small number of dwelling units.

The major original tenant was the local office of the RKO Distributing Company, which distributed films from the RKO studio throughout the Northwest. Other film distribution companies located here at various times included 20th Century Fox Film Corporation (1930s), Gaumont British Picture Corporation of America (1930s) and Eagle Lion Films, Inc. (1940s). About 1951 Paramount Pictures moved here because their own building at First Avenue and Battery Street (now the Catholic Seaman's Club) was acquired by the City of Seattle for construction of the Battery Street Tunnel.

RKO Pictures

During the period that RKO Pictures occupied this building the company was a significant contributor to the entertainment and culture of people throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The company distributed such notable films as *King Kong* (1933), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), The *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939), *Top Hat* (1935), and *Citizen Kane* (1941) and Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1953). Many of its films set new standards in color (Technicolor), sound technology, special effects and set design.

RKO Radio Pictures, Inc. (previously Radio Pictures Inc.) was one of the Big Five studios of Hollywood's Golden Age. Like every large movie studio, its corporate history is very complex. It was formed in 1928 by the merger of the Keith-Albee-Orpheum theater chain and the Film Booking Offices of America, owned by Joseph P. Kennedy, under the control of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). The purpose of the acquisition was to market sound movies using the new technology owned by RCA. In 1931 Pathé, one of the oldest production and distribution companies, merged into RKO.

Under the studio system, film actors were under contract to a specific company for a period of years, and the studio's reputation was built on the stars in its "stable." RKO was best known for the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals and early films by Katherine Hepburn, Robert Mitchum and Cary Grant. Directors under contract at various times included George Cukor. It also made two of the industry's most famous films—*King Kong* and *Citizen Kane*. The company was hit hard by the Depression and was in receivership from 1933 until 1940. From 1936 until 1954 RKO was also the distribution arm for Walt Disney. In 1948 RKO was taken over by Howard Hughes, who essentially drove it into bankruptcy and sold it to the General Tire and Rubber Company in 1955. The original RKO Pictures firm was dissolved in 1959, although the name survives in RKO Pictures LLC, an independent production company.

The Architect: Earl W. Morrison

This is a small work by a well-known local architect, Earl W. Morrison. Morrison (d. 1955) practiced in Spokane before moving to Seattle in 1926. This is one of the earlier designs in a career that spanned nearly thirty years. Morrison appears to have been the architect most connected to the Seattle film industry, as he also designed the two large film exchange

buildings (now demolished) nearby at the northwest corner of Second and Battery streets. Another of his designs, the B. F. Shearer Company building (now the Rendezvous) directly north of this building has an intact screening room, now called the Jewel Box Theater. However, Morrison is best known for his high-rise buildings, especially apartments. His major works include the Textile (now Olympic) Tower (1930), Olive Tower Apartments (1928), 1223 Spring Street Apartments (1929), the Gainsborough (1930) and the Nettleton (now 1000 8th Avenue Apartments, 1949).

Batchelder Tiles

While ceramic art tiles are common on fireplaces of pre-World War II Seattle residences, they are seldom found on the exteriors of commercial buildings. The RKO building is clad largely with tiles that appear to have been made by the Ernest Batchelder Company of Los Angeles, arguably the most prominent California tilemaker of the Arts & Crafts era.

The overall appearance, patterns and colors seen on the RKO Building are typical of Batchelder's products. The tiles began with a sculpted model for each pattern, which was used to make a mold. Clay was pressed by hand into the mold, then removed, dried, fired, colored and fired once again. Stylized flowers, birds, sailing ships, medieval scenes and heraldic patterns were the most popular patterns, although the company later developed Mayan and Art Deco-influenced designs. The colors were muted natural shades of brown, green and blue, with a matte finish rather than the brightly-colored glazed tiles many connect with California.

Trained in art education in Massachusetts, Ernest Batchelder (1876-1957) moved to Pasadena, California in 1901 to teach at Throop Polytechnic Institute. The school (which later evolved into the California Institute of Technology) emphasized hands-on training in craft and design. Over the following years Batchelder became very involved with the Arts and Crafts movement both nationally and internationally, founding a craft school in Minneapolis and working and studying in England and France. He wrote design articles and a book that became an important art education textbook in high schools.[3]

In 1910 he established a tile workshop and kiln in the backyard of his house in Pasadena. In 1920 he moved to a factory in Los Angeles with eleven kilns. During the 1920s he advertised nationally and had showrooms in major American cities. Fireplace surrounds were a specialty, but the company also made drinking fountains, garden fountains, bathroom tiles and other items. Most elaborate were the large commercial installations, including the large lobbies of the Fine Arts Building in Los Angeles and Vancouver's Marine Building (with an elaborate marine theme) and the entire interior of the chapel at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota.[4] The drastic decline in construction during the Depression brought an end to the business in 1932. He turned to making pottery tableware, until 1949. He died in 1957.

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[3] Anne Stewart O'Donnell, "Ernest Batchelder Teacher and Tilemaker," *Style 1900*, Summer/Fall 2008, pp. 44-51.

[4] Robert Winter, *Batchelder Tilemaker*, Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 1999.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=RKO_pictures

Museum of History and Industry, Digital Photo Collection, http://www.seattlehistory.org/mohai.

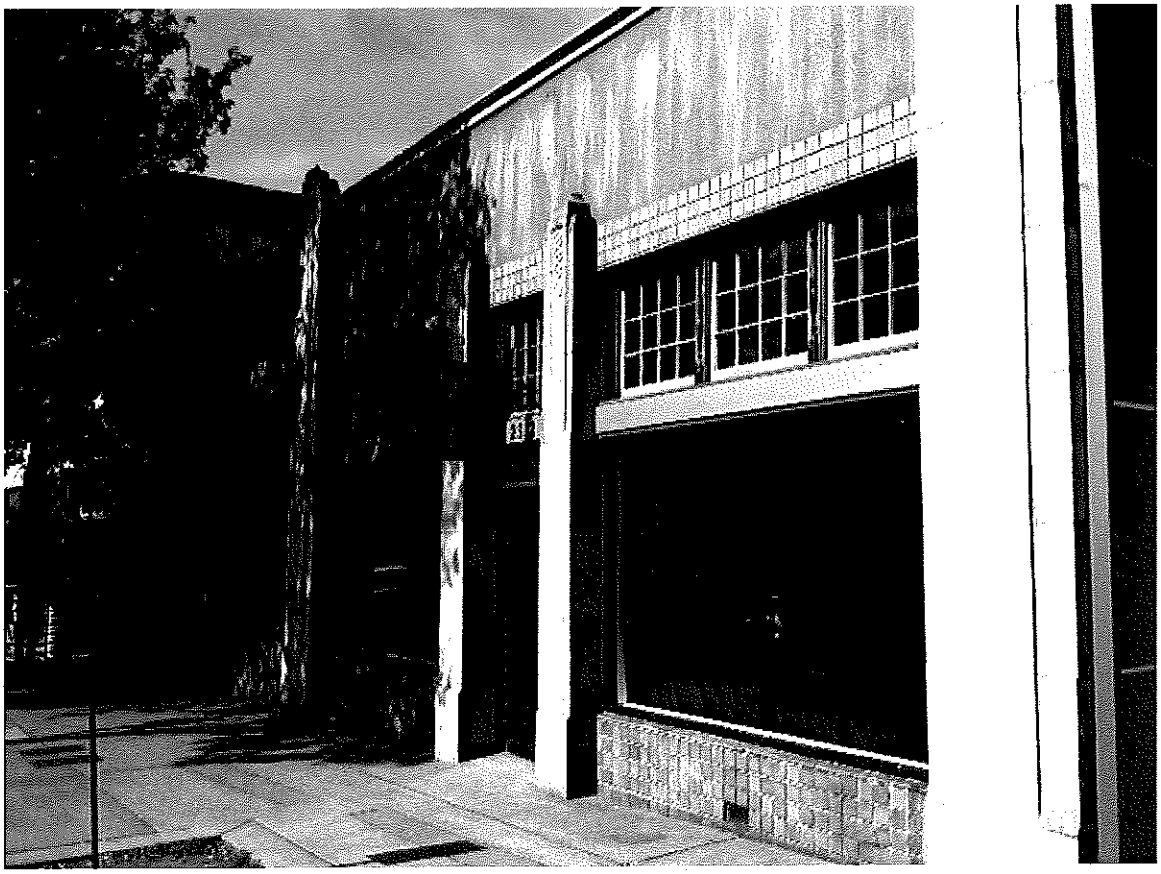
The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

The exterior of the building.

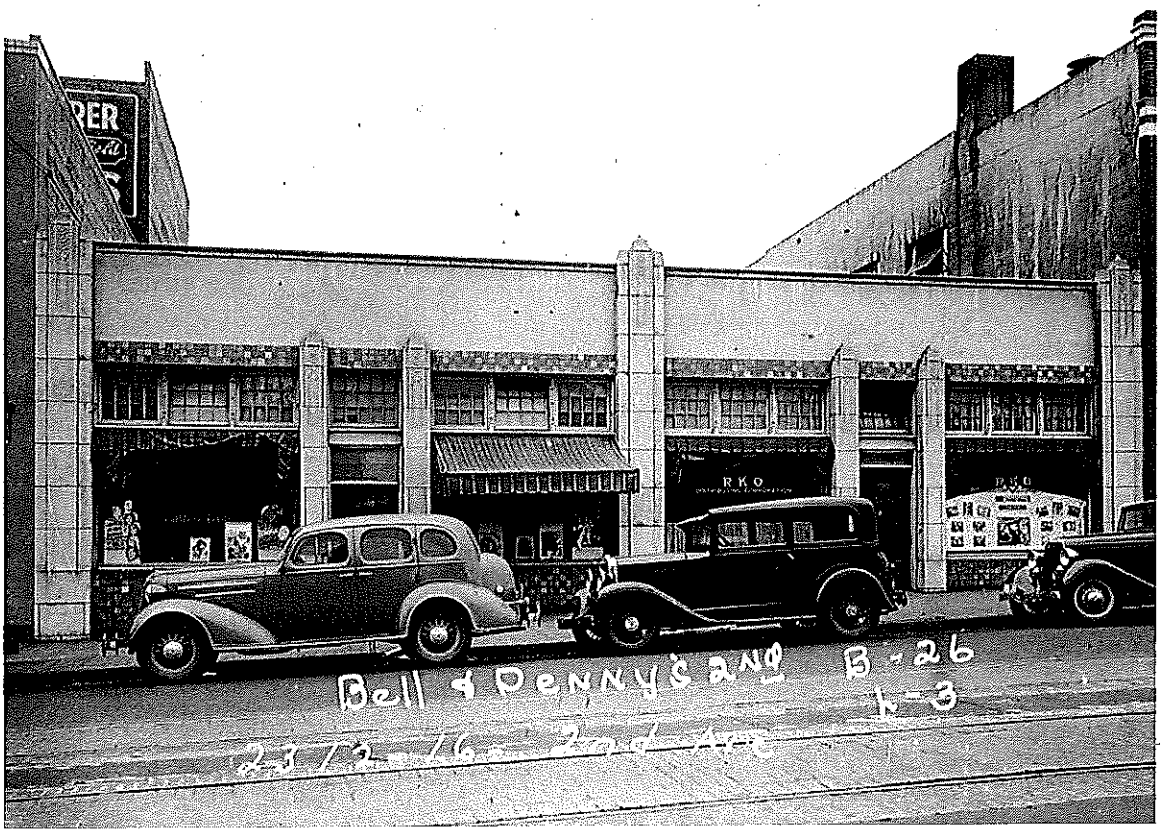
Issued: December 10, 2010

Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Frank Butler
Vernon Abelsen, LPB
Stella Chao, DON
Diane Sugimura, DPD
Cheryl Mosteller, DPD
Ken Mar, DPD



RKO Distributing Company Building, 2312 Second Avenue, current



RKO Distributing Company Building, 2312 Second Avenue, c . 19XX