



Staff Report

TO: Clark County Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Sharon Lumbantobing, Planner II
DATE: December 5, 2018
SUBJECT: **HST #2018-00008 RIDGEFIELD CITY HALL: NOMINATION TO THE CLARK COUNTY HERITAGE REGISTER**

I. SUMMARY

The Ridgefield State Bank building (now known as Ridgefield City Hall) is located at 230 Pioneer St (State Route 501), Ridgefield, WA, 98642 (Tax Assessor Parcel # 67890000). The site is being nominated to the Clark County Heritage Register (CCHR).

The Ridgefield State Bank, founded in 1910, was an anchor of early commerce in the town. The Ridgefield State Bank building, built circa 1920, is an L-shaped brick commercial building located at the northwest corner of Pioneer Street (State Route 501) and Third Avenue in the town's primary commercial area, with its main (south) façade facing onto Pioneer. The vernacular Classical Revival building reflects the maturation of the business to the point of requiring a larger building as the sole formal financial institution in town at the time. For many decades, the Ridgefield State Bank building was the site of many different kinds of financial transactions for a broad segment of the local population. The building has been in use as the Ridgefield City Hall since 1975.

The Ridgefield State Bank building is a rare example of formal Classical Revival architecture in Ridgefield. In the state of Washington, the building is one of the rare remaining smaller banks of the era and it has a high level of integrity. The period of significance dates of 1920-1968 represent the time period of construction (1920) and the ownership of the Edward Firstenburg family (1936-1968). Edward Firstenburg was an early bank cashier and later President and owner of the Ridgefield State Bank, who was responsible for the bank's continued growth in the county. Firstenburg's two sons also became President and Vice-President of the bank in the 1980s. The family owned the bank until 2011, making it one of the few banks under family ownership in the nation.

Staff recommends approval of the nomination to the Clark County Heritage Register based upon the criteria in 40.250.030(F), and the Rules and Procedures of the Clark County Historic Preservation Commission.

II. CLARK COUNTY HERITAGE REGISTER AND NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES STATUS

N/A

III. HISTORIC NAME

Ridgefield State Bank

IV. COMMON NAME

Ridgefield City Hall

V. BOARD RESPONSIBILITY

Under Title 40.250.030 (D)(4), the Historic Preservation Commission has the responsibility for hearing and deciding on nominations to the Heritage Register.

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

SITE

The subject building (Ridgefield City Hall/Ridgefield State Bank) is an L-shaped brick commercial building located at the northwest corner of Pioneer Street (State Route 501) and Third Avenue in Ridgefield, Washington. The building is part of downtown Ridgefield's historic core, which is a participant in Washington's Main Street program. In the context of Ridgefield's low-scale commercial core, the brick bank is an imposing building whose single extra-tall story rises above nearby edifices and is notable for its vernacular classical temple front, a unique detail in downtown.

BUILDING

Exterior

The bank's tall concrete foundation, which is scored to look like stone, is slightly taller on the west side because of the slight rise in grade from west to east. The brick of the south (primary), east, and west facades is set in running bond, while the north façade is set in common bond. The symmetrical primary façade has a tall central recessed entrance flanked by large, concrete Doric columns supporting a tall wooden fascia ornamented with a slightly projecting, narrow central band, and a prominent molded cornice above which wraps around to the east facade. The parapeted roofline above the cornice has a very slight peak on the south façade above the entrance, and is capped by a plain narrow band which wraps around the entire building. The peaked portion is outlined with a slightly projecting brick detail formed of headers.

The main entrance is outlined to west and east by brick pilasters which are ornamented with a full-height vertical central rectangular recessed detail outlined with exaggerated mortar and finished with projecting brick décor at the top and bottom. Iron light fixtures with two globe shades each are located about two-thirds of the way up the pilasters. The west pilaster has an enclosed metal public message center readable from the sidewalk. The tall wooden

paired doors of the entrance are inset with large glass panels and are surmounted by a large “City Hall” sign in capital letters. The doors and sign are surrounded and separated by plain wood molding. The brick entryway (originally concrete) is accessed by a single brick step. The brick is continued in a non-original section of sidewalk the same width as the entrance. Large, slightly-recessed metal-frame commercial windows flank the entrance. The windows have sloping sills and are composed of two large central lights bordered by two tall, narrow vertical lights.

The full description of the building can be found in the nomination.

Interior

An enclosed wooden vestibule connected to the main entrance provides the primary access via double wooden doors with large glass panels. The interior is largely composed of one large, tall rectangular open space which was originally the banking floor and is now subdivided with office areas delineated simply by desks or by low walls. Much of the original woodwork with classical details and some examples of the original hardware are still extant.

Two large original glass-and-wood walled offices on the south (front) side flank the central front door. A wood and marble service counter near the front entrance was originally set farther to the north and served to separate banking staff from customers but was moved forward in 2013. The wood panel walls and marble base are original; the marble top is not. The original hexagonal tile flooring with square tile border detail is still visible between the vestibule and the service counter.

The north side has an original restroom with an original wooden panel door in the northwest corner, with a bank vault, now used for storage, next to it to the east. An original wooden staircase in the northeast corner leads to a storage area with an original wooden panel door. The ceiling is demarcated with box beams. A central square box beam detail is not original. It represents the location of a large, ornate leaded glass skylight that was removed from the ceiling of the primary banking space circa 1954 and was placed in the new Ridgefield branch building of First Independent Bank.

A full description of the historic and current condition of the building can be found in the nomination.

VII. STAFF REVIEW AND COMMENT

Criteria for Determining Eligibility for Designation in the Clark County Heritage Register:

Clark County Code 40.250.030(f), states:

- “Any building, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for inclusion in the Clark County Heritage Register if it is significantly associated with the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or cultural heritage of the community; if it has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and

association; is at least 50 years old, or is of lesser age-and has exceptional importance”; and

- “The property must meet the above criteria as well as fall into at least one of the categories identified in CCC 40.250.030(f)”.

Findings:

- a. The Ridgefield City Hall building is locally significant as it is a rare example of formal Classical Revival architecture in Ridgefield. In the state of Washington, it is one of the rare remaining smaller banks of the era which has a high level of integrity.
- b. The Ridgefield City Hall Building is the most intact of all remaining older brick commercial buildings in the nearby vicinity and has a high level of integrity, specifically of feeling, design, materials, and workmanship.
- c. The Ridgefield City Hall Building period of significance dates of 1920 – 1968 represent the time period of the building’s construction in 1920 and subsequent ownership by Edward Firstenburg, bank owner and later philanthropist, thus making it over 50 years old.
- d. The site falls into three of the categories identified in CCC 40.250.030(f), which are:
 1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state, or local history.
 2. It embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of design or construction, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
 5. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state, or local history.

The property is locally significant under Criteria 1, 2, and 5 primarily due to:

Criteria 1: As the site of many different kinds of financial transactions for a broad segment of the local population, from holding bank accounts and safe deposit boxes to selling mortgages and insurance, the Ridgefield State Bank was thoroughly integrated into the social history of the town as a locus for economic activities for many decades. The vernacular Classical Revival building, built in 1920, reflects the maturation of the business to the point of requiring a larger building for the sole formal financial institution in town at the time, and was a springboard for the banking career of prominent banker and later philanthropist Edward Firstenburg.

Criteria 2: The building is one of the oldest buildings remaining in Ridgefield’s traditional downtown core, is a rare example of formal Classical Revival architecture in Ridgefield, and is one of the most intact of all remaining smaller banks of the era in Washington State; and

Criteria 5: The building is associated with Edward Firstenburg, an early cashier and later bank owner who oversaw substantial growth of the bank in Clark County.

VIII. STAFF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the nomination of the Ridgefield City Hall meets all four of the criteria. Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the listing of the Ridgefield City Hall building to the Clark County Heritage Register.