



CITY OF KETCHUM

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IN RE:)
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491 E Sun Valley Road) KETCHUM CITY COUNCIL
Ketchum Historic Listing) FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND
Date: August 13, 2026) DECISION
)
File Number: P26-022)

PROJECT: 491 E Sun Valley Road Ketchum Historic Listing
APPLICATION TYPE: Designation of a Historic Building/Site
FILE NUMBER: P26-022
PROPERTY OWNER: City of Ketchum
REPRESENTATIVE: Historic Preservation Commission
LOCATION: 491 E Sun Valley Road
ZONING: Community Core Subdistrict 1 – Retail Core (CC-1)

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

The Planning and Building Department received the application for Designation of a Historic Building/Site on May 8, 2026, and the application was deemed complete on May 8, 2026. City Departments reviewed the application, and the application was scheduled for a public hearing with the Historic Preservation Commission following one round of review. Public notice was published in the Idaho Mountain Express, sent to adjoining 300' property owners, posted on site, and posted on the City's website on May 13, 2026. A public hearing was conducted on June 2, 2026 where the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the application and recommended approval of the application unanimously 4-0 (one seat was vacant) and on July 7, 2026 Findings of Fact were approved. Ketchum City Council held a public hearing on July 23, 2026 where the City Council reviewed the application and recommended approval of the application unanimously. Public notice was published in the Idaho Mountain Express on July 1, 2026, sent to adjoining 300' property owners July 1, 2026 , posted on site on July 16, 2026, and posted on the City's website on July 8, 2026.

BACKGROUND

The City-owned structure, which is currently leased to Starbucks, was approved to be added to the City of Ketchum Historic Building List. The building was identified as a strong candidate in the most recent Post-WWII Reconnaissance Survey because of its architectural integrity, alpine design, and association with prominent Idaho architect Neil Smull of Boise.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Pursuant to Ketchum Municipal Code (KMC) 16.07.060.F – Designation of a Historic Building/Site, an applicant seeking to designate a historic building/site must file an application with the City and receive a recommendation from The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) through a public hearing procedure subject to KMC 16.07.020.E. Per KMC 16.07.060.F.1.b, “The HPC shall have the authority to add or remove structures from the historic building/site list using the criteria below to determine if a structure should be added or removed from the historic building/site list.” Staff reviewed the alteration request for compliance with the criteria below and found the application in conformance with the standards.

The City Council having reviewed the entire project record, provided notice, and conducted the required public hearing, does hereby make and set forth these Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Decision as follows:

16.07.060.F.2.c.(1) – General Criteria:

(A) Historic buildings must be at least 50 years old. A historic building may be exempt from the age standard if it is found to be exceptionally important in other significant criteria.

Findings: The Ketchum - Sun Valley Branch of the Bank of Idaho was constructed in 1966 at 491 E. Sun Valley Road.

(B) All buildings and sites must retain their physical integrity as determined by the following criteria. However, a site need not meet all of the following criteria:

- i. Shows character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of Ketchum, the region, state, or nation;
- ii. Retains a significant amount of the original design features, materials, character or feeling of the past;
- iii. Is in the original location or same historic context after having been moved;
- iv. Has been accurately reconstructed or restored based on documentation.

Findings: The Bank of Idaho (1966) is a custom-designed building that reflects a site-specific architectural response to Ketchum, ID. Its design embodies a regional architectural approach prevalent during that era, emphasizing community identity through alpine architecture characteristics, including steeply pitched roofs, dormers, and a natural material palette. Today the architectural language contributes to both the historic and contemporary identity of Ketchum as a small mountain town.

The building was designed by the distinguished architect Neil H. Smull of Boise, ID. Smull served as Principal Architect at CSHQA for 25 years, leading projects across the United States. He was a registered architect through the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and also held licensure as a landscape architect with the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in Idaho. In recognition of his contributions to the profession, Smull was elevated to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) in 1993 and was awarded the AIA Idaho Gold Medal in Architecture in 2001 during the Chapter’s 50th anniversary.

More recently, the building represents a successful example of adaptive reuse through a renovation led by Ketchum-based architect Susan Desko. In 2011, Desko led a local design-build team in transforming the former bank into a vibrant community space, incorporating a visitor center and coffee shop. The project introduced new programmatic life while maintaining the original alpine architectural concept established by Smull. The redesign received national recognition with a Chicago Athenaeum Award in 2012. Architect Susan Desko is also a well prominent architect in the state of Idaho, who was the 2025 Silver Medal recipient through the AIA College of Fellows Western Mountain Region.

The structure is a good example of intact Contemporary architecture that is eligible for historic preservation. The building remains in its original location. It retains materials that reflect Ketchum's 1960s alpine character, including Idaho stone, a cedar shake roof, dark wood, and glass.

16.07.060.F.2.c.(2) – Additional Criteria:

In addition to a. above, historic buildings or sites shall meet one or more of the following criteria, (A), (B) or (C):

(A) Architectural

- i. Exemplifies specific elements of a recognized architectural style or period or a style particularly associated with Ketchum neighborhoods;
- ii. Example of the work of an architect or builder who is recognized for expertise nationally, state-wide, regionally, or locally;
- iii. Demonstrates superior craftsmanship or high artistic value;
- iv. Represents an innovation in construction, materials, or design;
- v. Pattern or grouping of elements that enhance the identity of the community;
- vi. Significant historic remodel contributing to Ketchum's identity.

Findings: The Bank of Idaho (1966) is a custom-designed building that reflects a site-specific architectural response to Ketchum, ID. Its design embodies a regional architectural approach prevalent during that era, emphasizing community identity through alpine architecture characteristics, including steeply pitched roofs, dormers, and a natural material palette. Today the architectural language contributes to both the historic and contemporary identity of Ketchum as a small mountain town.

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programmatic life while maintaining the original alpine architectural concept established by Smull. The redesign received national recognition with a Chicago Athenaeum Award in 2012. Architect Susan Desko is also a well prominent architect in the state of Idaho, who was the 2025 Silver Medal recipient through the AIA College of Fellows Western Mountain Region.

The building meets the architectural criteria A through its design, its association with notable architects, and its continued contribution to Ketchum's identity. Its cedar shakes, dark wood, glass, and pronounced roof forms reflect mid-1960s design and are intentionally selected to complement Ketchum's alpine character. The original building was designed by Neil Smull, a regionally and nationally recognized architect. Later redesigns were completed by Susan Desko, a prominent local architect with regional and national recognition. The multiple roof configurations and custom design distinguish both the original building and the later renovations, and the remodel has helped anchor Ketchum Town Square.

(B) Social/Historic

- i. Site of historic event;
- ii. Exemplifies cultural, political, ethnic, economic, or social heritage of the community through the built environment or with people associated with an era of history;
- iii. Associated with a notable person or the work of a notable person;
- iv. Is valued by the Ketchum community as an established or familiar visual or cultural feature due to its architectural history, siting, massing, scale, cultural characteristics, or heritage such that its removal would be irreparable loss to the setting.

Findings: The Bank of Idaho (1966) is a recognizable building within Ketchum, ID, that functions as a visual and cultural landmark. Its current use as a Visitor Center and Starbucks coffee shop establishes the property as an active community / cultural hub, for both residents and visitors. This programmatic evolution was intentional per Architect Susan Desko's (2011) design concept and reinforces the buildings key role within Ketchum's Community Core. From a land use and urban design perspective, the building's massing, scale, and architectural character (designed by architect Neil H. Smull) are distinctive and not replicated within recent development trends in Ketchum. These characteristics contribute meaningfully to the established 'small mountain town' streetscape and the broader character of the area. Given these considerations, removal of the building would constitute an irreversible loss to Ketchum's built environment, diminishing both visual and cultural identity of the Community Core.

The structure also meets Social/Historic Criteria B because it reflects mid-1960s mountain-town architecture, retains a historic building scale, and is located beside the City Town Square, an important community gathering place.

(C) Geographic/Natural Features

- i. Enhances sense of identity of the community;
- ii. Is an established and familiar natural setting or visual feature of the community

Findings: The Bank of Idaho (1966) is located at the prominent intersection of Sun Valley Road and East Avenue. The building shares its block with the active Ketchum

Town Square, establishing a strong connection to the surrounding community. Its placement and design within Ketchum's Community Core contributes to a highly recognizable and iconic perspective, particularly in relation to the Baldy Mountain backdrop, which is frequently captured to represent the identity of the City of Ketchum. Criteria C is also met. The structure occupies a prominent downtown location, and its scale and materials contribute to the character of the main square. Together, these features make it an iconic and historic wayfinding landmark for residents and visitors.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The City of Ketchum is a municipal corporation established in accordance with Article XII of the Constitution of the State of Idaho and Title 50 Idaho Code and is required and has exercised its authority pursuant to the Local Land Use Planning Act codified at Chapter 65 of Title 67 Idaho Code and pursuant to Chapters 3, 9 and 13 of Title 50 Idaho Code to enact the ordinances and regulations, which ordinances are codified in the Ketchum City Code ("KMC") and are identified in the Findings of Fact and which are herein restated as Conclusions of Law by this reference and which city ordinances govern the applicant's application.
2. The Ketchum Historic Commission has authority to hear the applicant's Historic Alteration per Ketchum Municipal Code 16.07.060.F.
3. The City of Ketchum Planning Department provided notice for the review of this application in accordance with Ketchum Municipal Code 16.07.020.E.6
4. The Designation of a Historic Building/Site Application is governed under Ketchum Municipal 16.07.060.F

DECISION

THEREFORE, the Ketchum City Council **recommends approval** of designating 491 E Sun Valley Road to Ketchum's Historic Building Site list, Application File No. P26-022, this Thursday, August 13, 2026.

Findings of Fact **adopted** this 13th day of August 2026.

Pete Prekeges, Mayor
City of Ketchum Historic Preservation Commission