



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 10, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-006

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of January 24, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – San Diego Athletic Club**

APPLICANT: Connections Housing Downtown LP represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 1250 6th Avenue, 92101, Downtown, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Review the National Register Nomination for the San Diego Athletic Club

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend the listing of the San Diego Athletic Club to the Office of Historic Preservation. The 12-story free-standing building was designed in the Late Gothic Revival and Art Deco styles with the Ziggurat form by William H. Wheeler, Ilton E. Loveless, and Frank W. Stevenson in 1928. The building is located within the downtown core at the southwest corner of 6th Avenue and A Street.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to the Office of Historic Preservation requirement that the local jurisdiction be provided 60 days to review and comment on a National Register of Historic Places nomination. The San Diego Athletic Club is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance as an excellent example of the Late Gothic Revival and Art Deco architecture in the Ziggurat form and as the only example of this style in the city of San Diego. The City's Historical Resources Board designated the San Diego Athletic Club as a local landmark in 2004 (HRB #685) under Criteria C and D.

ANALYSIS

A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared by Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is significant under National Register Criterion C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under National Historic Register Criterion C as follows.

CRITERION C – Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

The San Diego Athletic Club was envisioned in 1924 to provide a social and athletic facility for the San Diego community. Founded by prominent members of the San Diego business community, the club operated for over four decades and offered a wide range of social functions that facilitated the business and cultural affairs of the City of San Diego. William H. Wheeler, Frank W. Stevenson, and Ilton E. Loveless were hired to design the building in the Late Gothic Revival style. While the design started with the Late Gothic Revival style, it evolved with the rise in popularity of the Art Deco style with Ziggurat detailing. The meddling of the two architectural styles was meant to showcase the past and future of the city. As soon as the club opened, it became a social and athletic club for the city. The club was primarily for men, but also provided facilities for women and families. The club managed to survive the Depression and remained open until the mid-1960s. The economic downturn forced the club to close and the building was sold in 1964.

Constructed in 1928 of board-formed, poured-in-place concrete, it was originally exposed with a smooth finish and unpainted. The east elevation consists of a central tower bay, with the main entrance, and two equally sized adjacent bays. The bays flanking the central tower are four stories while the sixth through twelfth floors are located within the central bay. The central bay steps back on each side at the fifth floor and the eighth floor on all sides creating a ziggurat shape.

The main entrance, in the central tower, features a decorative arch with a pair of wood framed doors. Above the doors is a San Diego Athletic Club shield supported by the figure of a man and woman on either side. The shield has the acronym SDAC below a shovel and pick ax with a bear portrayed at the bottom of the shield. Above the main entrance, spanning the central bay is a faux balcony with trefoils supported by carved pegasus brackets. The balcony is replicated in a smaller format on the 8th floor. Decorative bands or sculpted friezes with variously designed plaques mark the roofline indentations at the fifth, ninth, and twelfth floors. The horizontal decorative band at the fifth floor contains intermittent medallions with a male profile. Beneath the twelfth floor gothic windows are circular designs cast in cement completed with center trefoils. At the parapet, a heavily decorated frieze exhibits variously designed plaques, divided by figureheads in cement. The roof is flat with parapets topped by a decorative design. A metal fire escape is present at the rear of the south elevation serving the sixth through the twelfth floors.

The first floor fenestration originally consisted of twelve relatively small multi-lite windows within the two bays and six similar windows on the north façade. Above the first floor windows on each bay on the east façade are six large arched windows with a repeating pattern on the north façade. The fourth floor features steel casement windows with transoms evenly spaced on both facades. The upper floors repeated the window design with paired windows evenly spaced on each wall plane.

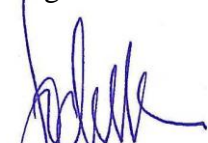
Between in 1969 and 1970, the interior spaces were converted into offices and the exterior was modified. The first floor windows were altered to have one continuous large window connected with the 2nd/3rd floor arched windows; the 2nd floor balcony was removed, the decorative front entrance was eliminated and squared, the windows on the upper stories were replaced with plate glass, and the building's exterior was painted. As part of the current rehabilitation, the owner is proposing to use the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program to restore the front entrance along with the second floor balcony and the balustrade on either side of the main entrance.

The building continues to retain a number of Late Gothic Revival treatments. The decorative Gothic arches in clusters of three on the twelfth floor, the attached shafts at the twelfth floor parapet and between the eighth and ninth floors, vertical moldings at the twelfth floor windows and the original second to third floor windows, rooflines terminated by small pinnacles and castellated battlements at the ninth and twelfth level parapets, and other decorative elements including shields, trefoils and medallions. All of these elements have been incorporated into the dominant Art Deco Ziggurat form.


Despite the modifications that have been made, the building retains a high degree of character-defining exterior features. The Late Gothic Revival treatments and Art Deco style with the Ziggurat form have been retained and were not impacted by the modifications. Staff recommends that the Historical Resources Board forward a positive recommendation to the State Historical Resources Commission.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historic Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for San Diego Athletic Club to be listed on the National Register of Historical Places under Criterion C with a period of significance of 1928.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Assistant Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

jb/cw

Attachment: Applicant's National Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report under separate cover