



Save Our Heritage Organisation
Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

Friday, March 18, 2022

Historical Resources Board
City of San Diego
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: March 24, 2022 agenda, Items 1 & 2: 1620 Union St. and 805 W. Cedar St.

Chair McCullough, Board members and staff,

Item 1: 1620 Union Street Site Development Permit – Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) supports the staff recommendation for the Historical Resources Board to recommend the Planning Commission adopt the mitigation measures and findings associated with the Site Development Permit for 1620 Union Street. Presented at SOHO's July 29, 2021 Preservation Action Committee, the relocation of this resource was supported due to cumulative changes in the historic context along Union Street in Little Italy and an appropriate and intact historic context at the proposed relocation site, 2642-2648 Newton Avenue in Barrio Logan. This c.1888 Queen Anne style cottage remains intact on its original site, however, various other resources that contribute to the historic context along this streetscape have been demolished and substantially altered. As a result, this modest cottage is now in stark contrast to its predominately contemporary surroundings. The proposed relocation site, currently a vacant lot in Barrio Logan, has a context similar to what once existed along Union Street and is composed of various other modest single-family homes. While not the original location, the Newton Avenue streetscape is contextual and appropriate for the period and style of this resource. In addition, relocation will support the resource's continued existence as it will not be demolished, but instead restored. SOHO supports the mitigation measures proposed and the incorporation of affordable housing as part of the project at both the original and proposed relocation site.

Item 2: 805 West Cedar St/Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna at 805 W. Cedar Street highly significant under Criteria A and B, as an important gathering place for LGBT persons, as an associated business that played a significant role in the social life of the LGBT community, and for Frank Stiriti, owner of the Vulcan and co-founder of the GSDBA. This is a unique and rare property for San Diego and should be designated by the Historical Resources Board. In addition, any future project or proposed building modification should be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Significant under Criterion A, 805 W Cedar Street is identified in the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement as the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna, from 1976 through 2013, which served an important social function to the community and an educational conduit by dispensing HIV/AIDS information. Serving as one of seven bathhouses in San Diego during the 1970s, it provided sanctuary for gay men, reflecting a unique aspect of the city's historical, cultural and social development. Specifically, from 1974 through 1988, the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna provided a safe haven for gay men to socialize and engage in sexual activity at a time when homosexuality was illegal (until 1976) and condemned. The

historical integrity of 805 W. Cedar remains intact and, today, the building is identifiable by the LGBTQ community, closely resembling the resource as it stood in 2013 (upon its closure).

Also significant under Criterion B, Frank Stiriti established this bathhouse to provide a safe space for gay men and to employ gay men. Importantly identified within the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement, Stiriti owned the Vulcan and played an important role in the local LGBTQ community. He was a co-founder of the Gay San Diego Business Association (GSDBA) and honored by the Center's Wall of Honor in 2008 in addition to other community roles.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amie Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Amie Hayes
Senior Historic Resources Specialist