



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

Monday, May 24, 2021

City of San Diego
Chair McCullough, Historical Resources Board & staff
202 C Street
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: May 27, 2021 agenda -Items 5, 6, 7 and 8

Chair McCullough, Board members & staff,

Item 5: 805 West Cedar St – Save Our Heritage Organisation 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.

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 a safe haven 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.

Item 6: 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the rare and early William and Bertha Niemann Homestead significant under Criteria A and B with a 1892 through 1950 period of significance. Additionally, we find it significant under C as a rare and intact remaining building type, from an early agricultural period in San Diego County history, and as a valuable example of craftsmanship.

Associated with one of the pioneering families of Carmel Valley and one of the first homesteads for the region, this is a highly significant and special historical element under Criterion A, for all of San Diego. The evolution of this farmhouse, beginning with its construction in 1892, and various additions, illustrate the early history, building typology and architecture of the region. With a strong level of remaining integrity, this

is quite a rare existent building. Also significant under Criterion B, for William and Bertha Niemann, this early Carmel Valley homestead is where they raised their family and cultivated land, which contributes to the cultural landscape, sense of place and character of the larger region.

Last, SOHO also finds this resource significant under Criterion C as an excellent and rare example of a late 19th century farmhouse, whose method of construction demonstrates the rare craftsmanship of single-wall construction. Beginning in 1892, the evolution of this resource is an important demonstration for how people lived during this period, expanding their house and farmstead as time, resources and people allowed. The changes in material and construction, as this homestead evolved, also speaks to the changes in technology and architecture, which heightens the level of significance for this resource under Criterion C, because it serves as a visible and rare surviving architectural timeline.

Item 7: 3714 Nimitz Blvd. – After a detailed site visit, SOHO disagrees with the staff recommendation and finds this c. 1928 Mission Revival style home and garage significant under Criterion C as an excellent architectural example that warrants historical designation. Features include the symmetrical front façade, parapet with a flat roof, unique porch wing walls, original stucco exterior, researched and appropriate rectangular and arched wood replacement windows, and variegated roof tile. Also, the original garage is also intact and contributes to significance under Criterion C.

- Stucco is original, there is only one layer over a base coat. Stucco texture on porch ceiling matches exactly the wall texture, which appears to have been done in the one application with the walls. Numerous attempts to match original texture for garden walls and repairs could not match the texture perfectly, though the porch ceiling is an exact match and lends credence to it being original.
- Variegated tile roof is appropriate for the period 1929. Naval Training Center, c.1923, has the same tile.
- Lighting globes are not inappropriate, but can't verify the exact age of the globes; however, the electrical and bases appear original with no signs of later installation or later electrical insertion in the walls.
- The wooden replacement windows match the two original side windows in pattern and the five-lite pattern is the only configuration that would yield the horizontal panes that are present in all the original pattern windows on the rest of the house. Original hardware locations confirm that they were replicated in the correct casement window style. The windows are exactly the style I would have recommended for replication for this house.

Item 8: Clairemont Community Plan Update – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the Cultural Resources Sensitivity Map appropriate for the area, but encourages a close communication with the Native American tribes. SOHO also agrees with the draft historical context statement, three identified themes, listing the properties of interest, and strongly supports inclusion of the exclusionary and discriminatory aspects of the Better Homes movement, the Federal Housing Administration, and single-family home ownership practices before and after WWII period. Last, SOHO supports the draft Historic Preservation Element and encourages HP-6, the goal for a historical survey to be prioritized.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,



Bruce Coons
Executive Director
Save Our Heritage Organisation