



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 12, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-010

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of January 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Portuguese Chapel of San Diego**

APPLICANT: United Portuguese S.E.S., Inc.

LOCATION: 2822 Avenida de Portugal*, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
(*Identified in the Nomination as 2818 Avenida de Portugal)

DESCRIPTION: Review the National Register Nomination of the Portuguese Chapel of San Diego located at 2822 Avenida de Portugal.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommended that the Historic Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the Portuguese Chapel of San Diego to be listed on the National Register of Historical Places under Criterion C and Criterion Consideration A per the nomination, with the following amendments: revise the period of significance from 1922-1949 to simply 1922 consistent with the statement of significance; and revise the resource location information to include the correct address of 2822 Avenida de Portugal, and the Assessor's Parcel Number of 531-351-03-00.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to a request from the State Office of Historic Preservation to review and comment on this National Register nomination. The Portuguese Chapel of San Diego is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, and Criteria Consideration A as a significant historical resource at the local level for high architectural significance as a rare example of the Portuguese chapel building type. The subject property is not currently listed on the San Diego Register.

It should be noted that the address of the subject property indicated in the applicant's nomination, 2818 Avenida de Portugal, is incorrect. The United Portuguese SES owns two parcels which comprise the entire property – a small parcel containing the chapel itself and small portions of other buildings, and a much larger parcel surrounding the west and north sides of the smaller parcel which contains the majority of the structures on the property and a large parking lot. Figure 5 in Section 8 of the applicant's nomination clearly shows the boundary and limits of the nomination as the smaller

parcel containing the chapel. According City records, this smaller parcel, identified as APN 531-351-03-00 is in fact addressed at 2822 Avenida de Portugal. The address 2818 Avenida de Portugal used in the applicant's nomination is assigned to the larger, adjacent parcel identified as APN 531-351-04-00 (Attachment 1). It is highly recommended that the nomination be revised to include the correct address and preferably the APN as well, to ensure that the correct parcel is designated and regulated, since all National Register Listed properties are regulated by the City of San Diego.

ANALYSIS

A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared by Geri Lauriano and Amie Hayes, which concludes that the resource is significant under National Register Criterion C and Criteria Consideration A. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under National Historic Register Criterion C and Criteria Consideration A as follows.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION C - Embodies 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.

Constructed in 1922 as a traditional Portuguese chapel building type similar to those found on the Azores Islands off the coast of Portugal, the subject resource exhibits a very small, rectangular footprint, symmetrical primary façade, raised red brick foundation, and redwood clapboard exterior cladding. The building's façade is characterized by a false front-like structure identified as a triune pediment in the applicant's report. A gabled roof form of asphalt shingle is present behind the triune pediment, and features deep eave overhang with exposed rafter tails. The singular entrance to the building is at the front through a centered pair of arched doors flanked by two stained-glass windows featuring a crown motif. These two front stained-glass windows are topped by arched transoms of stained-glass. This type of arched stained-glass window is repeated again on either side of the chapel. At the top of the building are three triangular finials constructed of metal-framed stained-glass. A Latin cross is positioned atop the center of the façade.

Moving to the interior of the building, a gated rail and wooden altar mark the chancel at the rear of the chapel. An arched ceiling, wainscoting along the walls and the three alcoves centered at the rear wall are features which mimic tuna boat chapels of the 1920s – appealing to those involved in San Diego's early tuna fishing industry, who largely consisted of San Diego's early Portuguese community. Many of San Diego's early Portuguese tuna fishermen were directly involved in the construction of the chapel. Finally, in keeping with the chapel's intended purpose to house the Crown during the Festa celebrations, there are no pews installed in the building.

Modifications to the building are rather limited and do not significantly impair the building's character defining features or overall integrity. Above the entry doors is a recreation of the original crown motif seen in historic photos, over a crossing of the American and Portuguese flags and flanked by "U.P.A.", or United Portuguese Association, and "S.E.S.", or Sociedade Espirito Santo. The only other alteration noted in the report is the replacement of the original wood entry steps and landing with concrete sometime during the 1940s. These steps were later covered in tile. Overall, these modifications do not significantly impair the building's ability to convey its historic significance.

In regard to the building's period of significance, the applicant's nomination identifies a period of significance as 1922-1949, marked by the completion of the building and the construction of the present UPSES Hall next door to the subject property. The applicant has presented only a nomination for the property's National Register designation under Criterion C. Staff finds this proposed "end date" for the period of significance inappropriate for a property built and completed in 1922. The period of significance for a resource must reflect why the resource is significant. In this case, the building is being evaluated for significance under Criterion C as a good example of the traditional Portuguese chapel building type, and the construction of a different building has no bearing on the original construction of the subject building. A building potentially eligible under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a building type will achieve significance through high integrity of original materials and design from the original date of construction. Therefore, staff recommends a period of significance of 1922 when the building was originally constructed.

The subject resource is an excellent example of the Portuguese chapel building type with an Azores Island-inspired design exhibited primarily through its modest massing and triune pediment with a gable roof form. The chapel is also consistent with this building type with its three bays along the primary façade, lack of pews on the interior, arched windows and doors, and use of stained-glass in both the windows and atop the pediment. The subject property is the only known and best example of this building type in Southern California. Modeled after the traditional Festa chapels on the Azores Islands, the building provides an authentic quality for the annual Feast of the Holy Spirit celebrations in San Diego.


CRITERIA CONSIDERATION A – owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

The subject resource was constructed as a traditional Portuguese chapel in 1922. The building is owned and operated by the United Portuguese Sociedade do Espirito Santo (UPSES), a religious entity. The chapel was built in the traditional style of those found on the Azores Islands off the coast of Portugal. Each year in Portuguese communities, particularly those with Azorean backgrounds, chapels like the subject resource play a critical role in Festa celebrations, or Feast of the Holy Spirit. Chapels like these are intended to house the Crown (or Coroa) during the annual Festa, which is a religious celebration to commemorate the Sainted Queen Isabel and her selflessness. The building's continued use as a focal point of the traditional annual Feast of the Holy Spirit – understood to be the longest running ethnic celebration in San Diego – demonstrates the recognized significance of the building to San Diego's Portuguese community.

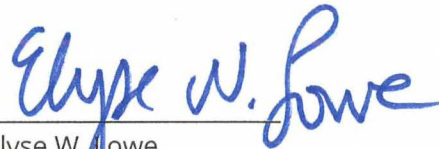
The Portuguese Chapel of San Diego, although owned by a religious-based entity and used for religious purposes, meets the requirements for Criteria Consideration A as a property deriving its primary significance from its architectural distinction embodying a significant example of the Portuguese chapel building type. The building is a rare and architecturally significant resource exemplifying the Portuguese chapel building type of Azores-inspired design with its modest massing, triune pediment, gabled roof, stained-glass windows and decorative features, and an interior devoid of pews. These architectural characteristics make the chapel a critical center of the traditional Festa activities. The resource derives its primary significance from its architectural distinction, meeting the requirements of Criteria Consideration A, and is therefore eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historic Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the Portuguese Chapel of San Diego to be listed on the National Register of Historical Places under Criterion C and Criterion Consideration A per the nomination, with the following amendments: revise the period of significance from 1922-1949 to simply 1922 consistent with the statement of significance; and revise the resource location information to include the correct address of 2822 Avenida de Portugal, and the Assessor's Parcel Number of 531-351-03-00.



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CP/ks/el

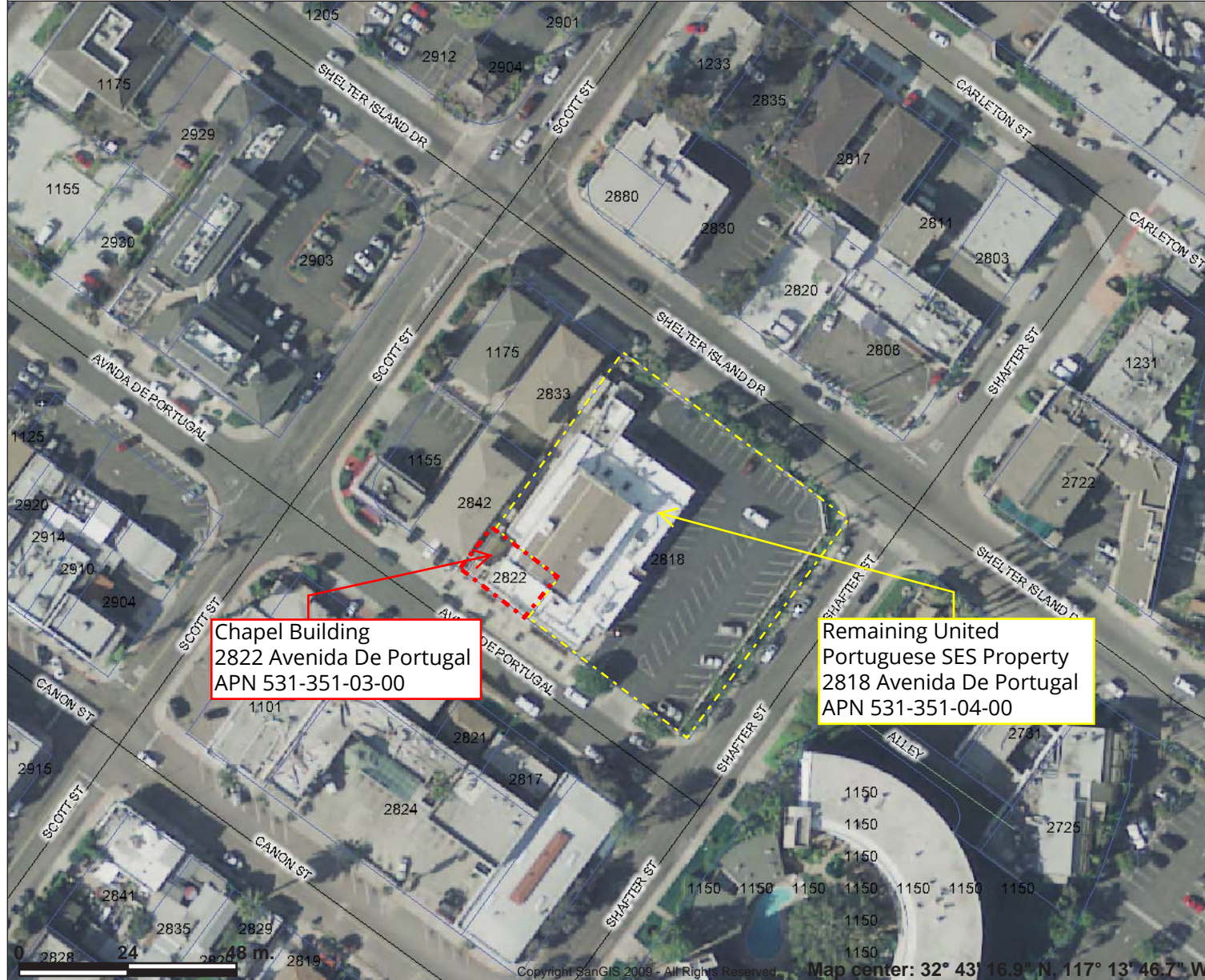
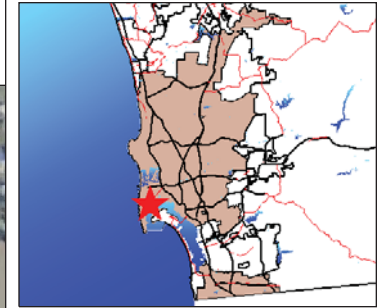
Attachments:

1. Map Showing Parcel Lines and Addresses
2. Applicant's National Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report under separate cover



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Portuguese Chapel Property



Legend

- Highways
- Freeway Ramps
- Freeways
- Roads**
- Arterial
- Local
- Unpaved
- Private
- Alley
- Humped
- Parcel Ownership
- Water Bodies
- Ocean

DRAFT

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Scale: 1:1,336

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