



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 10, 2019 REPORT NO. HRB-19-001

HEARING DATE: January 24, 2019

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 - The Latonia Hotel**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: E V Project LLC represented by Brian F. Smith and Associates

LOCATION: 919-929 Island Avenue, Downtown Community, Council District 3
APN 535-126-0200

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Latonia Hotel located at 919-929 Island Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Latonia Hotel located at 919-929 Island Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1940-1949 under HRB Criterion A. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource reflects a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development and retains integrity. Specifically, the property, which operated as a segregated hotel from 1940-1949, represents the history of segregation in San Diego and the entrepreneurial efforts of San Diego's African American community, and retains integrity for that association.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The resource is a two-story, commercial structure constructed circa 1913 out of reinforced concrete.

The property was identified in the [2004 African American Heritage Study](#) and noted as a contributor to a potential thematic historic district.

The historic name of the resource, the Latonia Hotel, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the historical name as established by the owners during its period of significance.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by Brian F. Smith and Associates, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion A and staff concurs. The report also states that only the property is significant and not the structure; however, staff disagrees and concludes that the entire property, including the structure is significant. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.

The property was identified in the 2004 African American Heritage Study as a contributor to a potential district. The study notes that the building is a "standing representation of the reality of segregation in twentieth-century San Diego." The entire building served as an acetylene and electric welding operation until 1925 when the second floor opened as the Latonia Hotel. In 1940 an African American woman named Sarah "Minnie" Mananquil maintained the hotel as a Black-only establishment until her death in 1944. As evident by directory listings, the property functioned as a "hotel for colored people" until at least 1949 if not later.

In the 1860s, post-Civil War, freemen and African Americans journeyed to San Diego to start a new life and find economic gain. By 1890, there were 289 persons listed in the San Diego census as "Colored" or "Negro." Of that total 63 lived in downtown San Diego. The void left by Native Americans, who were relocated to reservations, for cheap and unskilled labor was partially filled by African Americans. People were also relocating to the city for the construction of the California Southern Railroad. Once here, a number of migrants created temporary settlements such as Squattersville at Kettner and D (Broadway) Street. The largest concentration of African Americans was located between Ash and Market Streets with 8th Avenue at the east with State Street at the west. At this time, many African Americans lived either at their place of business, rented properties downtown, or lived on their employer's property.

As the African American community began to grow, several Black owned or managed businesses developed to serve the African American community, and in some cases the larger white population. The businesses that served both communities were generally limited to service related enterprises such as tonsorial, boot black, restaurant and drayage businesses. With the economic improvement, some African Americans began to move out of the downtown area to more expensive areas such as Logan Heights.

In the early 1900s a new wave of African Americans came to southern California. Many were fleeing the increasing racial tensions of the south and the failing southern cotton economy and looking for jobs with the railway. Many new arrivals took positions as domestic and transportation workers. The period of 1920 to 1940 saw a large increase in the African American population in San Diego

from 1,200 to 4,400. By 1920, restrictive covenants led to a shift in residential settlement from the center to the southeast area of downtown. With the onset of the Great Depression, overt racism and segregation took hold of southern California and many Blacks continued the migration out of downtown to southeastern San Diego. Despite the healthy migration to southern California in the years leading up to 1940, the downtown area contained fewer than 2% of the population. The downtown area remained a place for entertainment and dining, but the lack of residential opportunities pushed many African Americans to the east. With the start of World War II, the state's African American population increased by 272% with San Diego a recipient of a large portion of the influx. Many of the migrants were employed in jobs related to the wartime effort. After the war, the population continued to increase and by 1960 African Americans had grown to 6.8% of San Diego's population with up to 80% living in the East Village and Southeast San Diego.

When the African American Heritage Study was completed in 2004, it identified 16 extant buildings in the downtown area and a further 21 properties that are no longer extant. Of the 16 properties noted in the survey, six of the properties were previously identified and designated as part of the Gaslamp Historic District; one property was identified and designated as part of the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District; two of the properties were designated individually for their African American association (The Clermont/Coast Hotel, 501 7th Avenue, HRB Site #509 and the Carter Hotel, 1401 J Street, HRB Site #632); and one property the Lillian Grant Properties at 1431-1437 J Street was designated in 2002 and partially overturned by the City Council in 2002. The site remained designated under HRB Criterion A and the houses were demolished in late 2004. The Western Hotel/ Star Hotel located at 522 7th Avenue was brought before the Historic Resources Board and not designated in 2015 and was demolished shortly after. The Latonia is the only resource of the five remaining structures in the downtown area that operated as a hotel.

The resource has had several modifications since its construction in 1913. Close examination of aerial photos reveals that the air shaft on the eastern façade of the building was infilled sometime before 1950. The storefronts on the street façade were replaced with roll top doors post 1950. Evidence of the frames of the original wooden storefronts can still be seen on the structure. A security door was added to the arched entryway at an unknown date. Windows and doors on the south and west facades were removed or replaced at unknown dates and a second-floor deck was added to the rear of the property in 2004. These modifications do not significantly impact integrity of location, setting, feeling and association which are the important aspects of integrity for properties significant under Criterion A for historical, cultural and social development.

Although there have been modifications to the property since its 1940-1949 period of significance, the modifications are not significant enough that the property would not be recognizable as the Latonia Hotel by its patrons. The subject resource, 919-929 Island Avenue, is one of the finite number of resources directly associated with the African American legacy in the downtown core and the property exemplifies a special element of the development of San Diego. The entire property, including the structure which served as the hotel and retains integrity, is significant under Criterion A.

Significance Statement: The resource reflects a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development and retains integrity to its 1940-1949 period of significance. Specifically, the property represents the history of segregation in San Diego and the entrepreneurial efforts of San Diego's African American community and retains integrity for that association. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

CRITERION B - *Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 919-929 Island Avenue did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Minnie Mananquil, a woman of color, ran the Latonia Hotel; however, a person cannot be considered historically significant simply by virtue of position/title, race, gender or ethnicity. More information would need to be provided to determine if Minnie's achievements surpassed her peers enough for her to be considered significant to the history of San Diego. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion B.

CRITERION C - *Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.*

The subject resource is a two-story, commercial structure constructed in 1913 in the two-part commercial block style. The building is generally rectangular in plan with a flat roof and a one story, partial width bump out at the rear. The first floor of the primary façade features exposed concrete while the second floor is covered in stucco. Most of the structure's architectural features are located on the front façade, including an elaborated arched entryway flanked by two metal rollup garage doors with transoms. The garage doors are located within the openings of former storefronts. The second floor features four one over one double hung replacement windows.

Two-part commercial block style was prevalent in the United States from the 1850's to the 1950's but its origins can be traced to Roman antiquity. This form is the most common type of compositions for small and moderate sized commercial buildings throughout the country. The two-part division of the exterior of these structures reflects the uses of the interior spaces. Typically, the street level was used as a public space, such as retail store or office, while the upper floors were used as private spaces such as hotel rooms or a meeting hall. The division of these two spaces is clearly differentiated on the outside of the building typically by a belt course or change in building material. Two-part commercial block structures can be found in the core of small cities and towns as well as many neighborhood commercial areas. Two-part commercial block style buildings are typically two to four stories in height with a flat roof, contain large display windows on the street level and a belt course between the first and second floors.

While the structure features some of the character defining features of the two-part commercial block style, including a two-story form with flat roof and an exterior articulation of the public and private spaces in the form of a change in exterior cladding, the property no longer retains integrity as it relates to Criterion C. As described above in the discussion of Criterion A, the property has had several modifications, including the replacement of the original storefronts with garage doors, that significantly impair integrity of design, workmanship and materials. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

CRITERION D - *Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

Research into the construction of the property at 919-929 Island Avenue failed to conclusively identify a builder, designer or architect. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion D.

CRITERION E - *Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 919-929 Island Avenue has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - *Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

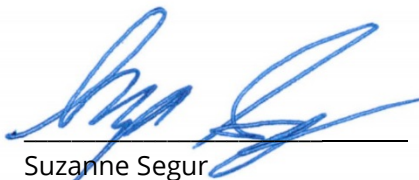
The property at 919-929 Island Avenue is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Latonia Hotel located at 919-929 Island Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1940-1949 under HRB Criterion A as a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development.



Suzanne Segur
Associate Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison

SS/ks

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 1/24/2019

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/24/2019, to consider the historical designation of the **Latonia Hotel** (owned by E V Project LLC, 321 7th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101) located at **919-929 Island Ave, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **535-126-02-00**, further described as BLK 109 POR in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Latonia Hotel on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development and retains integrity. Specifically, the property, which operated as a segregated hotel from 1940-1949, represents the history of segregation in San Diego and the entrepreneurial efforts of San Diego's African American community, and retains integrity for that association. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
JEREMY JUNG,
Deputy City Attorney