



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 8, 2019 REPORT NO. HRB-19-049

HEARING DATE: November 21, 2019

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11- The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage**

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

APPLICANT: Cisterra Partners LLC; represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 660 10th Ave and 659 9th Ave., Downtown Community, Council District 3
APN 535-136-0100

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage located at 660 10th Avenue and 659 9th Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage located at 660 10th Avenue and 659 9th Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1932 and 1932-1956 under HRB Criteria A and C. The designation includes the 1946 addition constructed within the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is a special element of the City's economic development, revealing the increasing importance of the automobile as America's favored method of private transportation from 1900-1956, and retains integrity to its 1932-1956 period of significance. Specifically, the resource which was constructed in 1932 for use as a garage, continues to convey the significant character defining features of automobile-related development as identified in the East Village Historical Context Statement, including a single story, warehouse-like massing; limited ornamentation, raised vertical projections and numerous garage doors.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Art Deco style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1932 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits smooth wall surfaces, a flat roof, vertical projections above the roofline, fluted pilasters, geometric detailing and metal windows.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The subject resource is a one-story commercial building constructed as a garage in 1932 and currently functioning as a furniture warehouse.

The property was identified in the 2005 East Village Combined Historical Property Survey Report and given a Status Code of 5S2, "Individual property that is eligible for local listing or designation."

The historic name of the resource, the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company who constructed the building to use as a garage. The building is also referenced in the historical documentation as the Southern California Telephone Company Garage; however, the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company is listed on the deed from the date of construction.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C and staff concurs.

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 subject resource was constructed in 1932 by the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company for use as a garage. City directories confirm that the building continuously functioned as a garage until 1984.

The Historic Context Statement prepared in conjunction with the 2005 East Village Combined Historical Property Survey Report discusses commercial and industrial development in the East Village Community, and identifies automobile-related properties as a significant theme in the development of East Village and the City of San Diego as a whole. Relevant excerpts of the Context are summarized below.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, middle class suburbanites became increasingly frustrated with the crowds, slow service and high fares of the streetcars. The automobile provided an excellent alternative. Before long, the automobile became the primary mode of transportation in the United States, rendering carriages and streetcars obsolete. By the 1920s, independent repair garages specifically serving the automobile had replaced earlier horsebased businesses. Buildings designed with the auto in mind started replacing older building forms. Gas stations, repair shops and auto dealerships – building types that didn't exist 20 years before – became increasingly common, especially along major arterial roadways. A review of the 1920-1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps shows a significant increase in auto-related industry in the East Village.

As the auto increased in popularity, changes were made in the way they were merchandised. By

the 1920s, architects were being hired to create buildings specifically designed for the requirements of retail auto sales. Most buildings consisted of two or more levels housing the company's sales floor, inventory and service areas. Architectural styling and ornamentation was concentrated on the showroom portion, particularly around formal entrances. Large expanses of plate glass windows were the dominant feature of the primary facade. High ceilings, waiting rooms and decorative floors distinguished interior showroom spaces. The interiors of the services areas were characterized by bare concrete floors, exposed walls and roof trusses and skylights. Independent garages offering service became common in the 1920s. These buildings were very simple affairs, often little more than a shell to protect the mechanics and vehicles from the elements. Typically single story buildings, they were constructed of inexpensive materials and had limited ornamentation. They are easily identified by the numerous garage doors and warehouse-like massing. Most had unfinished interiors exemplified by concrete floors, exposed interior walls and roof trusses. Most had electric lights to supplement skylights; however they usually didn't have power or heat. Exteriors were simple: decoration was limited to little more than a parapet to hide the gable roof. Most of the garages in East Village maintained a simple Mission Revival style, which was easily accomplished through the application of a curved or stepped parapet, a coat of stucco, and decorative tiling.

The features noted above are found in the subject building, which was constructed for use as a garage by contactors Kier and Young for the Southern California Telephone Company. These features include a single story, warehouse-like massing; limited ornamentation; and numerous garage doors. The building does not reflect the simplified Mission Revival style noted in the context; however, the simplified Art Deco style with raised vertical projections is appropriate for the 1932 date of construction.

In regard to the significance of the automobile-related properties theme to the development of East Village and the City as a whole, the Context Statement concludes, "although auto-related properties were once widespread, relatively few remain. Many have been demolished to make way for new development while others suffer from years of neglect. This property type offers insight into the introduction of what was a new mode of transportation in the early Twentieth Century. It also serves as evidence of the important role retail automobile sales businesses played in the economic development of San Diego. Independent garages supplied the maintenance and repair needs of motorists and represent a new business type that grew out of the introduction of the automobile. Both property types are significant in revealing the increasing importance of the automobile as America's favored method of private transportation from 1900 to 1956. Those remaining auto-related buildings are the remnants of a commercial landscape reflective of the City of San Diego in the first decades of the Twentieth Century and are worthy of designation under HRB Criterion A."

The Context Statement narrative identified five buildings that are eligible for designation under this theme, including "three auto showrooms (J. F. McKnight Cadillac & Studebaker, G. M. Truck Sales & Service and the Ford Motor Building) and two garages (Maryland Hotel Garage and the subject resource identified as the Southern California Telephone Company Garage)." Additionally, the number of eligible resources that reflect this significant theme has diminished since the Survey was prepared in 2005. Of the five buildings listed above, only two remain – G. M. Truck Sales & Service, which occupied a portion of the building at 1508-1544 E Street, and the subject resource. The J.F. McKnight Cadillac & Studebaker Building, located at 1531-1541 Broadway, was destroyed by fire several years ago; the Ford Motor Building located at 1015-1025 12th Avenue was demolished in 2010; and the designation of the Maryland Hotel Garage located at 741 F Street was overturned by

the City Council in 2012. Although the subject building has undergone several modifications (as detailed in the discussion of Criterion C below), the building continues to convey the key characteristics of automobile-related development in East Village as identified in the East Village Survey and is one of only two existing automobile-related properties identified as historically significant.

Significance Statement: As described in the East Village Historical Context Statement, the building is a special element of the City's economic development, revealing the increasing importance of the automobile as America's favored method of private transportation from 1900-1956, and retains integrity to its 1932-1956 period of significance. Specifically, the resource, which was constructed in 1932 for use as a garage, continues to convey the significant character defining features of automobile-related development, including a single story, warehouse-like massing; limited ornamentation, raised vertical projections and numerous garage doors. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

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 one-story commercial building constructed in 1932 in the Art Deco style. Originally constructed as a garage, the concrete building spans the length of G Street between 9th and 10th Avenues. The long facades are interrupted with a series of raised parapets that extend above the flat roof. The parapets are flanked with fluted pilasters and these sections of the façade exhibit simple geometric patterns integrated into the exterior surface which emphasize the verticality of the building. A rhythmic pattern of evenly spaced individual metal casement windows are present on the G Street and 9th Avenue facades. On the 10th Avenue façade, the metal awning windows are stacked in pairs of two. Garage doors are present on both the 9th and 10th Avenue elevations. A small, one-story addition is located on 9th Avenue and exhibits similar architectural characteristics as the main building. Although simplistic in design, the building is a good example of the Art Deco style for downtown San Diego.

Several modifications have been made to the building since its construction in 1932. An addition was added on the 9th Avenue façade in 1946. This addition is not as tall as the original building and clearly distinguishable from the earlier construction. In 1969 the wooden entrance doors were replaced with metal doors and frames. Also, the building was damaged by fire in 1982 and the roof trusses and ceilings were reconstructed. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

The Art Deco style was first evidenced at the Exposition Internationale de Artes Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, France in 1925 to celebrate the coming of the machine and technology age. Among the distinctive characteristics of the Art Deco style that are employed in the structures are: smooth stucco wall surfaces; vertical pilasters and columns with vertical striations, located at the corners and intermittently throughout the façades; stylized keystone elements between the vertical columns and pilasters; projecting porches with vertical chevron ornamentation and Art Deco design balustrades; and concrete stairs with Art Deco design metal railings, as well as articulated treads and riser that project on the sides of the stair, creating a zigzag motif.

Significance Statement: The building continues to convey the historic significance of the Art Deco style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including smooth wall surfaces, a flat roof, vertical projections above the roofline, fluted pilasters, geometric detailing and metal windows. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject resource under HRB Criterion C.

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 Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage located at 660 10th Avenue and 659 9th Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1932-1956 under HRB Criterion A as a resource that reflects a special element of the City's economic development, revealing the increasing importance of the automobile as America's favored method of private transportation; and with a period of significance of 1932 under HRB Criterion C as an example of the Art Deco style. The designation includes the 1946 addition constructed within the period of significance.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/21/2019

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/21/2019, to consider the historical designation of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage (owned by 4 Lee Tenth LLC c/o Farkas Store Fixtures, 660 10th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101) located at **660 10th Avenue and 659 9th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **535-136-00-00**, further described as BLK 83 LOT K LOTS A THRU C&L& 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 Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Garage on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a special element of the City's economic development, revealing the increasing importance of the automobile as America's favored method of private transportation from 1900-1956, and retains integrity to its 1932-1956 period of significance. Specifically, the resource which was constructed in 1932 for use as a garage, continues to convey the significant character defining features of automobile-related development as identified in the East Village Historical Context Statement, including a single story, warehouse-like massing; limited ornamentation, raised vertical projections and numerous garage doors. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C through the retention of character defining features of the Art Deco style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1932 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits smooth wall surfaces, a flat roof, vertical projections above the roofline, fluted pilasters, geometric detailing and metal windows. 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 designation shall include the 1946 addition constructed within the period of significance.

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:

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

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