



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 8, 2016 REPORT NO. HRB-16-060

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of September 20, 2016

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Gateway Travelodge Motel**

APPLICANT: TRI-LIN L B LLC represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard, San Ysidro Community, Council District 8

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Gateway Travelodge Motel located at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Gateway Travelodge Motel located at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1956 under HRB Criterion A. The designation excludes the 1975 second story addition over the office at the south end of the property. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is a special element of San Ysidro's historical and economic development and retains integrity to the 1956 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource embodies the character defining features of a motel from the late Border Town period of San Ysidro (1916-1956), is one of a finite and limited number of identified motels remaining which reflect the international trade and auto-related cross-border tourism of San Ysidro's early development history, 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 one and two-story motel built in 1956 in the Modern Contemporary style on the east side of East San Ysidro Boulevard, immediately north of the US-Mexico international border in the Township 19 South, Range 1 West, San Bernardino Meridian of the San Ysidro Community.

The building is located on APN 667-020-64-00. The property was identified in the 2011 San Ysidro Historic Context Statement and Survey Report and given a Status Code of 3CS, "Appears eligible for California Register as an individual property through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Gateway Travelodge Motel, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the historical name established by the original owner, subsequent owners, or community.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Kathleen Crawford of the Office of Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds the resource is significant under HRB Criterion A. 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 2011 *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* prepared by Page & Turnbull is organized chronologically with sections that correspond to major periods in San Ysidro's history. These periods are the Rancho Period and Early Border History (1822-1908); An Agricultural Community (1909-1964); Development of a Border Town (1916-1956); and Annexation to City of San Diego (1957-present). Page & Turnbull documented a total of 444 properties as part of a reconnaissance level survey of the San Ysidro Community. Of the 444 properties surveyed, 12 were identified as potentially significant at an individual level, and 62 properties were identified as contributors to a potential historic district.

The history of San Ysidro up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the Pre-History and Spanish Period (pre-1800-1822), the Rancho Period and Early Border History period (1822-1908), and the early focus on building an agricultural community and the development of the Little Landers colony, is all well documented and summarized in the *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* and in the applicant's historic report. The decline of the agricultural community of Little Landers brought a new focus on border activity, entertainment, tourism, and civic development within the Border Town period (1916-1956). In the 1920s and 1930s development in San Ysidro was influenced greatly by an increase in gambling and entertainment establishments taking root in Mexico. In response to the Progressive Movement and Prohibition, many promoters of gaming, liquor sales, and prostitution moved their businesses south of the border and with them came many American tourists to the region. Continued increase in tourists and residents relating to activity around the U.S.-Mexico border brought increased commercial development particularly along San Ysidro Boulevard. Beginning about 1933, this initial surge in border traffic slowed considerably with the end of Prohibition, and through the Great Depression and World War II.

After World War II, border activity was revitalized as San Ysidro continued to evolve as a destination for tourists heading to Tijuana to enjoy horseracing, gambling, and other entertainment attractions. Hotels, motels, restaurants, and other businesses sprang up along San Ysidro Boulevard, and border

traffic increased relating to tourism and commercial interests. Adding further to the increased border traffic in San Ysidro, agricultural activity in the area continued as the Bracero Program (1942-1964) allowed Mexicans to temporarily work in the US on farms and ranches. In 1951, Highway 101 was replaced by "Highway 5" (now Interstate 5), which continued to bring more tourists to the border region, but also resulted in the demolition of many businesses to make way for the new highway. Hotels and motels from the Border Town period (1916-1956) were generally designed to accommodate automobile traffic, often resembled bungalow courts, and featured detached units arranged around a courtyard or open space. Some motels were constructed as two-story buildings with exterior hallways to access individual rooms.

The subject resource at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard was the single motel among the only 12 resources identified as potentially significant at an individual level in the San Ysidro Historic Survey. The preparers of the *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* placed a photograph of the subject property within the section of the Context discussing hotels and motels from the Annexation to City of San Diego period (1957-present) of San Ysidro's history, even though the subject property's date of construction (1956) places it within the Border Town period (1916-1956). The placement of the subject property's photograph within the incorrect period appears to have been an error due primarily to the property's exact date of construction being unknown to the authors at that time. Page & Turnbull notes in the *Historic Survey Report* that where exact dates of construction were not known, construction dates included in the survey were based upon visual estimates. Table 1 of the Survey Results calls out the subject property as having a built date of circa 1950s, and the photo caption of the subject property placed within the Context Statement dates the property as circa 1960s. A construction date of 1956 correctly places the subject property within the Border Town period (1916-1956).

The *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* identifies character defining features of hotels and motels of the Border Town period. The subject property retains all of these character defining features as follows:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard or old Highway 101 (Beyer Boulevard)
- Spanish Eclectic, Modern or vernacular style
- May be set back behind a parking lot
- Wood-frame construction
- One story or two stories in height
- Wood or stucco cladding
- Gable or hip roof
- Wood or aluminum-sash windows

The *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* states that hotels and motels from the Border Town period may be significant for their association with tourism through San Ysidro on the way to Tijuana, and for their representation of the growth of automobile-based culture.

The applicant's report asserts that the subject property's present state of poor condition is due primarily to the 1967 construction of Interstate 5 impacting flow of vehicular traffic along this particular stretch of East San Ysidro Boulevard. The report identifies this surrounding change as a direct impact to the building's integrity and viability as a motel business. Staff has reviewed historic aerial photos available from [www.historicaerials.com](http://www.historicaerials.com) dating from 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971, and 1981. These aerial photos show no discernible change in cross-border traffic routes between 1964 and

1971, and that primary cross-border traffic continued to flow directly past the subject property until the southernmost section of Interstate 805 was constructed in conjunction with a realignment of the Interstate 5 border crossing sometime after 1971. An outline of historic events provided in a previous San Ysidro Historic Survey prepared by Roth and Associates in 1989 identifies 1975 as the year when the I-805 arrived in San Ysidro and resulted in considerable disruption of the existing street system and demolition of a large portion of older residential and commercial properties.

The *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* states that “a hotel or motel significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling and association.” The reorientation of the border crossing sometime after 1971 may have resulted in reduced vehicular traffic near the property and contributed to a decline in business for the motel. At best, this has merely impacted the building’s integrity of setting. There is no significant impact to integrity of location, design, feeling and association, and the building’s continued use as a successful motel business is not required as an aspect of integrity, provided that the change in use did not result in the loss of physical character defining elements or features. The building remains located along East San Ysidro Boulevard, very close to the international border, retains all the character defining features of a Border Town period motel, and continues to convey its design and feeling of a mid-century modern motel. Therefore, the building remains eligible under HRB Criterion A.

The applicant’s Historic Report and the *San Ysidro Historic Context Statement* both discuss two additional motels dating from the Border Town Period (1916-1956), namely the El Toreador Motel (HRB Site #236) built in 1948 and the Holiday Lodge Motel from circa 1940s. The El Toreador Motel is designated for its architectural significance as an example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and for its association with San Ysidro’s history as a border town catering to tourists. Neither the Holiday Lodge Motel nor the Flamingo Motel (noted in the applicant’s Addendum to the report) was identified in the Historic Context Statement or Survey as potentially significant individual properties or as contributors to a potential district. The applicant’s Addendum to the Historic Report provides additional city directory research showing that between 9 and 13 other motels operated in the San Ysidro area between 1958 and 1973. Additional research and analysis of these motels and their current status has not been provided, and none of these other motels were identified in the 2011 historic survey.

As stated previously, the San Ysidro Historic Survey conducted by Page & Turnbull in 2011 surveyed 444 properties built prior to 1970 and identified only 12 properties as individually eligible for designation, and 62 as contributors to a potential historic district. Of the 12 individually eligible properties, the only motel from the Border Town period identified in the survey was the subject property at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard. The 1989 San Ysidro Historic Survey evaluated 128 structures and of those, only one motel (the El Toreador) was identified. The history of the San Ysidro Community in general and as a border town catering to tourists and ever-increasing auto-related cross-border traffic remains under-represented, with a very low concentration of built environment resources currently designated or determined potentially eligible for historic designation. Presently, there are only three historically designated resources on the local register. These include the El Toreador Motel (HRB Site #236), the San Ysidro Free Public Library (HRB Site #451), and the Harry Rundell and Amanda Rundell House (HRB Site #820).

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains all the character defining features of a Border Town period motel as identified in the 2011 San Ysidro Historic Context Statement. The property

retains integrity of location, design, feeling and association, and is able to convey its significance as a mid-century modern motel located on the border reflecting auto-related cross-border tourism. Given the motel's scarcity as a rare and finite resource type within the Border Town period context of San Ysidro's history, staff finds that the subject building reflects a special element of San Ysidro's historical and economic development. 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 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for 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 one and two-story motel built in 1956 in the Modern Contemporary style of architecture. As is typical with motels of the period, the building is located along a main boulevard through town for greatest visibility, and situated around and set back behind a main parking lot for ease of use by motorists. The building is of standard wood frame construction on a concrete foundation and features a long, angular plan form. The motel's main office is located at the south end of the property, with the rest of the building dedicated to 34 first and second floor motel room units accessed by covered, exterior corridors. The building exhibits a very low-sloped, hipped roof form with deep overhangs, and is clad primarily in a smooth stucco finish. The broad, horizontal façade is accented by two vertical projections marked by exterior stone cladding. Fenestration throughout consists of aluminum frame and sash windows.

The Modern Contemporary style was ubiquitous in San Diego during the 1950s and 1960s as a style for commercial buildings and streetscapes. These buildings display many of the same design features as Contemporary style homes, such as angular massing, varied materials use, and unusual roof forms, especially on freestanding commercial buildings. Signage for street front commercial buildings in the Contemporary style was generally large, with bold free-standing letters attached to building façades that were frequently lighted in order to attract passing motorists. For Contemporary buildings with private parking lots such as grocery stores, signage was frequently taller and rose above the building itself, serving as a beacon in large parking areas.

The adopted *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* lists primary character defining features of the Contemporary style as strong roof forms including flat, gabled, shed, or butterfly, typically with deep overhangs; large windows, often aluminum framed; and non-traditional exterior finishes including vertical wood siding, concrete block, stucco, flagstone and mullion-free glass. The style is characterized secondarily by angular massing; sun shades, screens or shadow block accents; attached garages or carports for homes; split-level design, especially on sloped residential sites; horizontally oriented commercial buildings; distinctive triangular, parabolic, or arched forms; "eyebrow" overhangs on commercial buildings; and integrated, stylized signage on commercial buildings.

The building has been subject to a few alterations which marginally impact its integrity of materials and design. Two vertically oriented, two-story projections along the primary elevation were originally clad only in stucco as shown in historic photos and received new stone cladding at an unknown date. In addition, the Travelodge sign has been removed and the originally solid second story balustrade along the exterior corridor has been replaced with a more open metal railing. In 1975, a second story addition was added over the motel office at the south end of the structure. Finally, the motel's pool, originally located at the center of the main parking lot, was removed sometime in the last 20 to 25 years.

Overall, the alterations do not significantly affect essential physical features critical to the building's conveyance of the Modern Contemporary style. Impacts to composition, massing, scale, or decorative elements is minimal. However, the subject resource is a minimal example of the Modern Contemporary style of architecture for commercial buildings. Of the primary character defining features listed in the *Modernism Historic Context Statement*, the building retains a strong hipped roof form with deep overhangs; however, the exterior finishes are primarily only of stucco and there is a conspicuous lack of extensive glazing. Remaining secondary features are limited chiefly to horizontal orientation and angular massing. As a commercial motel minimally expressive of the Modern Contemporary style of architecture, 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.*

The subject property at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard was built by Travelodge Construction Corporation, and research failed to conclusively identify a designer or architect. Travelodge Construction Corporation has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate it as such at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard 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 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Gateway Travelodge Motel located at 701 East San Ysidro Boulevard be designated with a period of significance of 1956 under HRB Criterion A as a resource that reflects a special element of San Ysidro's historical and economic development related to international trade and auto-related cross-border tourism. The designation excludes the 1975 second story addition over the office at the south end of the property. 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.



Camille Pekarek  
Associate Planner



Kelley Stanco  
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

CP/ks

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
3. Applicant's Addendum to the Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 9/20/2016

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/20/2016, to consider the historical designation of the **Gateway Travelodge Motel** (owned by TRI-LIN L B LLC, 55 E Huntington Drive #300, Arcadia, CA 91006) located at **701 East San Ysidro Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92173**, APN: **667-020-64-00**, further described as SEC 6-19-1W LOT 6 (EX-DOC81-150805) DOC65-50611 IN 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 Gateway Travelodge Motel on the following finding:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of San Ysidro's historical and economic development and retains integrity to the 1956 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource embodies the character defining features of a motel from the late Border Town period of San Ysidro (1916-1956), is one of a finite and limited number of identified motels remaining which reflect the international trade and auto-related cross-border tourism of San Ysidro's early development history, 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 designation shall exclude the 1975 second story addition over the office at the south end of the property.

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
COURTNEY ANN COYLE, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
CORRINE NEUFFER,  
Deputy City Attorney