



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 17, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-015

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 25, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Kenneth Denton Commercial Building**

APPLICANT: Winema Cichan LLC represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 1868-1890 Grand Avenue, Pacific Beach Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Kenneth Denton Commercial Building located at 1868-1890 Grand Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Kenneth Denton Commercial Building located at 1868-1890 Grand Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1959 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of a Modern Contemporary style commercial building and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits an original L-shaped footprint with multiple retail units; projecting flat roof with angled fascia; large aluminum framed windows and doors; and extensive stone veneer cladding.

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 property is a Modern Contemporary style commercial building constructed in 1959 and located at the northwest corner of Grand Avenue and Lamont Street in the Pacific Beach Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Kenneth Denton Commercial Building, has been identified consistent with section 6 of the Board's adopted naming policy for individually designated

historical sites and reflects the name of Kenneth Denton, who had the resource constructed as a commercial building.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource technical 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 that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

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 property was constructed in 1959 as a Modern Contemporary style commercial building with multiple retail units and a small parking lot in front. The building is L-shaped; of wood frame construction on a concrete foundation; and is clad in stone veneer, stucco and concrete block. The flat roof is a dominating feature and wraps around the ends of the building as it projects far out over the front façade. The substantial roof fascia is angled and acts as the building's marquee for presenting signage to motorists and pedestrians. Each of the retail units is provided with aluminum doors and windows and a great deal of plate glass for purposes of attracting customers. Two of the south-facing retail units have installed window-mounted air conditioning units in existing window openings. The parcel adjacent and to the west of the resource is under the same ownership and provides additional parking for tenants and customers. A billboard sits between the building and this parking lot – its extreme height makes it visible from great distances but it is not the primary focus when in the immediate vicinity of the resource. Staff also feels it prudent to note that the architect and builder of the subject building were R.J. Platt and Greer Construction respectively. Neither party is identified in the Modernism Context Statement as contributors to the Contemporary style.

The historical report cites the removal of a secondary entrance door at the south end of the Lamont Street façade as a modification to the original structure. Staff's on-site investigation and discussion with the owner confirm that this modification did not occur and that there was no door originally at that location. However, the owner did indicate that the door located on the scored concrete bay along the Lamont Street elevation is not the original door, and replaced the original full glass door. The subject building has therefore incurred no significant modifications and retains excellent integrity as it relates to the 1959 date of construction and period of significance.

The subject property is most closely associated with the Modern Contemporary sub-style as it is described in the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*. The 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 facades 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 subject building exhibits all of the primary and most of the secondary character defining features of a Contemporary style commercial building.

The subject building’s relative simplicity and its limited execution bring further light to the resource’s historical context of Modern Contemporary style commercial buildings constructed in abundance in the 1950s and 1960s. The austere quality of the subject building’s architectural features exemplifies the nature of commercial building at that time and the fast-paced economic environment that prompted it. The subject property is in good condition and retains excellent integrity as it relates to the 1959 period of significance. This high degree of integrity is especially noteworthy, given the propensity for modification and improvements in such commercial buildings. Examples typically seen by staff exhibit poor integrity through alteration of all or part of the building. Furthermore, the Modernism Context Statement recommends that clusters of Contemporary style commercial areas be considered for potential designation as districts. Although not located in a potential district, the high level of integrity of the subject building; its expression of all primary and most secondary Contemporary style character defining features; and its effective solitude as a Contemporary style commercial building in its area of Pacific Beach all make it highly eligible for individual designation.

The subject building continues to convey the historic significance of the Modern Contemporary style for commercial buildings by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including the horizontal orientation, the projecting flat roof form, the angled roof fascia, the large aluminum framed windows and doors, and the distinctive stone veneer cladding. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.


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 Kenneth Denton Commercial Building located at 1868-1890 Grand Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1959 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive

characteristics of Modern Contemporary style commercial buildings. 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
Planning Intern



Cathy Winterrowd
Assistant Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/ks/cw

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 4/25/2013

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/25/2013, to consider the historical designation of the **Kenneth Denton Commercial Building** (owned by Winema Cichan LLC, 6130 Soledad Mountain Road, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **1866-1890 Grand Avenue, San Diego, CA 92109**, APN: **424-032-11-00**, further described as BLK 238 LOTS 21 & 22 /EXC N 50 FT/ 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 Kenneth Denton Commercial Building on the following finding:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of a Modern Contemporary style commercial building and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1959 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits an original L-shaped footprint with multiple retail units; projecting flat roof with angled fascia; large aluminum framed windows and doors; and extensive stone veneer cladding 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: _____
JOHN LEMMO, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney