THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 12, 2007 REPORT NO. HRB-07-016

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 26, 2007

SUBJECT: **ITEM # 8 – Le Moderne Apartment Complex**

APPLICANT: Marie Burke Lia on behalf of the Robert P. Sedlock Jr. and Marilen H. Sedlock Trust, owner and The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, developer

LOCATION: 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Le Moderne Apartment Complex, located at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue, as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Le Moderne Apartment Complex located at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue under HRB Criterion C, as an excellent example of the Art Deco architectural style, evidencing many of the characteristics of the style.

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 resource, located at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue, consists of three Art Deco-style two-story stucco-on-wood frame structures resting on concrete foundations. The three structures, containing 18 one and two-bedroom units and a maids unit, are grouped around a lush tree-filled landscaped court.

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ANALYSIS

A historical report was prepared by Kathleen Crawford. The report proposes designation under HRB Criterion C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C (Architecture) 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 indigenous materials or craftsmanship.*

The Le Moderne Apartment Complex at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue was constructed in the Art Deco architectural style in1930 for the First National Trust and Savings Bank and Ed and Tillie Jacobson as a multi-family residential complex. The contractor and architect have not been identified. There are 18 residential units plus a maid's unit in three irregularly shaped but basically rectangular structures. The largest linear structure is located on the westerly rear property line, and its northern façade faces Nutmeg Street. There are two smaller structures of similar sizes on Sixth Avenue (one of which is located on the corner of Sixth Ave. and Nutmeg Street). There is a small basement under the southwest corner of the rear unit that is used for storage.

The property was identified on the Draft 2007 Uptown Survey as "locally significant both individually and as a contributor to a thematic district *(Court Thematic)* through survey evaluation. For purposes of the Land Development Code 45 year review, this property needs a research report to determine its potential historic significance." The research report is an attachment to this staff report.

The Art Deco style was first evidenced at the Exposition Internationale des Artes Decoratifs et Industrials Modernes in Paris, France in 1925 to celebrate the coming of the machine and technology age. The Le Moderne Apartment Complex is an early and excellent example of this style, with many of the characteristics of the style.

Among the distinctive characteristics of the Art Deco style that are employed in the structures are: smooth stucco wall surfaces; a stylized and geometric vertically pleated chevron patterned horizontal band above the upper level window heads that extends to create a serrated roof parapet profile at the flat roof, emphasizing its height and verticality; vertical pilasters and columns with vertical striations, located at the corners and intermittently throughout the facades; 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 risers that project on the sides of the stair, creating a zigzag motif.

The existing original wood framed windows vary in size, shape and location, but are primarily casements. Doors to the units appear to be original and are wood with small metal grilles. Some of the doors have multi-pane glass.

The interior courtyard and the peripheral planting at the facades facing both Sixth Avenue and Nutmeg Street have trees and other lush landscaping that contribute to the overall character and ambiance of the structures and should be included in the designation, although no individual plant or tree is critical to its character.

There is no on-site parking associated with the subject apartment complex.

As the subject structures are an excellent example of the Art Deco architectural style, evidencing many of the characteristics of the style, staff recommends designation of the Le Moderne Apartment Complex located at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue 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.*

Not applicable. The contractor and architect have not been identified.

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.*

Not applicable. Although identified as a potential contributor to a Court Thematic Historic District, the district does not exist at this time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Le Moderne Apartment Complex at 525-531 Nutmeg Street/2650-2680 Sixth Avenue be designated under HRB Criterion C. 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.

Michael Tudury
Senior Planner/Architect

Cathy Winterrowd
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

MT/cw

Attachment: Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover