



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 12, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-024

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 26, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM# 7 – Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel**

APPLICANT: Owner represented by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC

LOCATION: 2223 El Cajon Boulevard, 92104, Greater North Park Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Review and make a recommendation on the National Register Nomination of the Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to the Office of Historic Preservation the listing of the Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel a resort hotel, designed by Master Architect Frank L. Hope, Jr. and constructed by San Diego homebuilder Larry Imig. Constructed in 1946 and located along El Cajon Boulevard—Historic Highway 80 and San Diego’s primary east-west auto corridor, the property is recommended for listing under Criterion A for its association with community development patterns of El Cajon Boulevard and as the first Post WWII Suburban Resort Hotel Established in San Diego and under Criterion C as a significant example of Colonial Revival style architect applied to a commercial-hotel property and as a unique example of work by Master Architect Frank L. Hope, Jr.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to the Office of Historic Preservation requirement that the local jurisdiction be provided 60 days to review and comment on a National Register nomination. The Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C as a significant historical resource at the local level for its architecture, designer and period of construction. The building is currently

listed on the San Diego Register and was previously reviewed by the Historical Resources Board on September 22, 1993.

ANALYSIS

A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared by Urbana Preservation and Planning, which concludes that the resource is significant under Criteria A and C. Staff concurs that the structure is a significant historical resource under National Historic Register Criteria A and C, as follows.

CRITERION A - That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Master Architect Frank L. Hope, Jr. designed the Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel in 1943-45 for property owner and local developer Larry Imig. The property's three-year construction campaign is considered one of the few private efforts to have occurred in San Diego during the World War II period when building materials were being diverted for the war effort. At its opening the hotel featured dining, dancing and entertainment, the hotel also featured retail stores and a pool designed to meet Amateur Athletic Union specifications.

By 1947, the hotel planned a 50% expansion and by 1949 the hotel was sold to a syndicate comprised of Joseph Drown, Spearl Ellison and Conrad Hilton. The new owners sought to expand and renovate the hotel to increase profits. Frank L. Hope, Jr. was contracted to prepare designs. By 1950, the property was renamed Hotel Manor which was in use until 1952 when it acquired the name Lafayette Hotel. During the following years the property changed ownership several times and had a number of different occupants including local radio stations, XEMO and KCBQ, as well as headquarters to the San Diego Chargers Football Club.

The Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel serves as an important visual and historic landmark for the El Cajon Boulevard corridor representing the 1940s-1950s period when "The Boulevard" experienced significant growth in the form of low-density auto oriented buildings and uses and was utilized as the highway (Highway 80) for east/west bound motorists. The hotel was one of few large suburban hotels developed in San Diego in the 1940s, and appears to have been the only major private development project undertaken during World War II period when construction materials were diverted for the war effort. The hotel was an entertainment resort destination for San Diegans as well as visitors from across the country. The Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel main building anchors the property and is one of the few large-scale multi-story buildings erected on El Cajon Boulevard. Until 1965 when Interstate 8 was constructed and diverted traffic, the hotel stood as a visible landmark to San Diegans, tourists, and south and eastbound motorists seeking refuge and luxury along "The Boulevard."

CRITERION C – Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

Originally developed as eleven separate buildings and a swimming pool between 1946 and 1959, the historic Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel comprises one city block between El Cajon to the north, Louisiana Street to the east, Howard Avenue to the south, and Mississippi Street to the west. The resort hotel was designed by Master Architect Frank L. Hope Jr. and constructed by San Diego homebuilder Larry Imig. The buildings were constructed in the Colonial Revival style of architecture with neoclassical and modernistic elements influencing the exterior and interior spaces. Currently, there are six extant contributing buildings and the original swimming pool, a contributing structure.

The main hotel building, fronting El Cajon Boulevard, was constructed in 1946 in the Colonial Revival style. The building featured three stories with a penthouse, finished basement and parking garage. The building anchors the entire complex of hotel buildings. The building has a central block with two outer wings on the east and west sides. The main entrance is centrally located and features a Neoclassical tetra-style portico comprised of four full height Doric columns surmounted by a gable pediment which creates a frontispiece to the building's brick and stucco façade front elevation. Fenestration is comprised of ganged single-hung 4/4 wood sash windows flanked by fixed wood shutters that are horizontally aligned around the building perimeter. Under the front entry portico window types are square fixed sixteen-light with a fixed four-lite transom. Brick sills are present at all windows installed along the building's two story brick wall sections; no sills are present at the third story stucco wall sections. Between the second and the third floors is a simple brick belt course. Each corner wing features an entrance to the public spaces that comprise the hotel's ground floor. The entrance to the Red Fox Room is located at the northeast corner and features plaster quoins and dentil cornice. The northwest corner features non-historic metal doors that access the Mississippi Room. Above each corner space is a second level balcony enclosed by a low iron balustrade. A gabled composition shingle roof of moderate pitch covers the building and the fourth floor penthouse projects beyond the north side of the principal roof creating a continuous shed roof dormer. The rear (south) elevation includes two courtyards that are accessible from the hotel lobby and a central concrete terrace that overlooks the pool.

Although some alterations have occurred to the building over time they do not detract from the character-defining features. The modifications have happened mostly to the south elevation and include single story additions for dining and office spaces, an elevated terrace surrounding the pool, and alterations to the third floor roof line. During a 1995 remodel the hotel's historic clock tower was removed.

Two remaining townhomes located at the southwest and southeast corners of the property were constructed in 1946 to provide more privacy for hotel guests. The buildings provide four guest rooms each and feature brick cladding on the 1st floor and stucco on the 2nd. The south wall features a chimney with a single story portion of the building. Immediately adjacent to each one story portion is a two car garage with a side gabled roof. The building also features 1/1 double hung windows.

On the south side of the property, a 36-unit motel building was constructed in 1953, to respond to the increase in motorists using Highway 80. The motel building anchors the south side of the hotel property and provides a modest alternative to the grand hotel building. The building comprised of two elements of two stories each sheathed with stucco and connected via a breezeway. A central modernized tetra-style portico creates the only vertical element of the horizontally composed building. A metal balustrade lines the central staircase and provides access to the second floor. Windows for both buildings are a mixture of 6/6 and 4/4 double hung wood windows.

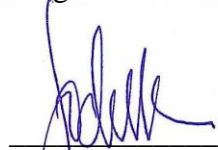
Constructed in 1946 the single story poolside buildings with roof decks the lanai buildings were reconstructed in 1958-59 as part of the hotel's expansion. They were replaced with two L-shaped guest rooms. The buildings are flat roofed two story buildings sheathed with smooth stucco. The first floor provides direct access to the pool via French doors and the second floor features wooden balconies that overlook the pool.

The hotel pool was also completed in 1946 and is considered a contributing element to the hotel. It was completed with a pebblecoat in a rectilinear plan with inlaid contrasting color lane stripes. The pool served as the primary recreational activity of the hotel for guests of the hotel and residents of San Diego.

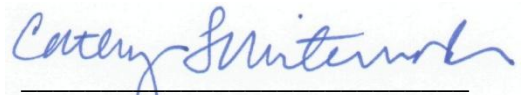
The Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel property retains excellent integrity of setting, location, design, feeling, and association, and although changes have occurred to buildings and the site, the property does retain integrity of materials and workmanship to the 1946-1959 period of significance. The intact Main Hotel Building and the intact townhouse buildings constitute enough of the property for it to be considered a significant example of the Colonial Revival style at a commercial-hotel property type and for representing to work of Master Architect Frank L. Hope, Jr.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historic Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for listing on the National Register of Historical Places the Imig Manor/Lafayette Hotel, with a 1946-59 period of significance.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

Attachment: Applicant's National Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report under separate cover