



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 11, 2019

TO: Historical Resources Board and Interested Parties

FROM: Shannon Anthony, Junior Planner, Historical Resources, Development Services Department

SUBJECT: **ITEM 8- Coliseum Athletic Club**

The property was previously docketed for review by the Historical Resources Board on November 16, 2017 and was withdrawn by the property owner at the hearing. At that time staff was recommending designation under Criterion A as a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development. This memo is intended to supplement staff report HRB 17-071 by clarifying the reasoning behind the staff recommendation for Criteria C and D, and correcting an omission in the staff recommendation for Criterion A as it relates to the resource's significant association with the African American community.

The property was identified in the 2004 African American Heritage Study as a contributor to a potential district. The study notes that the building is a representation of a "downtown establishment that was not only open to African-Americans but also helped sustain African American contributions to sports and athletics." The Coliseum staged professional fights with notable African-American boxers including Archie Moore, Ken Norton and Joe Louis. Besides being a venue for professional fights, the Coliseum also served as a club for training and cultivating amateurs.

In the 1860s, post-Civil War, freemen and African Americans journeyed to San Diego to start a new life and find economic gain. By 1890, there were 289 persons listed in the San Diego census as "Colored" or "Negro." Of that total 63 lived in downtown San Diego. The void left by Native Americans, who were relocated to reservations, for cheap and unskilled labor was partially filled by African Americans. People were also relocating to the city for the construction of the California Southern Railroad. Once here, a number of migrants created temporary settlements such as Squattersville at Kettner and D (Broadway) Street. The largest concentration of African Americans was located between Ash and Market Streets with 8th Avenue at the east with State Street at the west. At this time, many African Americans lived either at their place of business, rented properties downtown, or lived on their employer's property.

As the African American community began to grow, several Black owned or managed businesses developed to serve the African American community, and in some cases the larger white population. The businesses that served both communities were generally limited to service related enterprises such as

tonsonial, boot black, restaurant and drayage businesses. With the economic improvement, some African Americans began to move out of the downtown area to more expensive areas such as Logan Heights.

In the early 1900s a new wave of African Americans came to southern California. Many were fleeing the increasing racial tensions of the south and the failing southern cotton economy and looking for jobs with the railway. Many new arrivals took positions as domestic and transportation workers. The period of 1920 to 1940 saw a large increase in the African American population in San Diego from 1,200 to 4,400. By 1920, restrictive covenants led to a shift in residential settlement from the center to the southeast area of downtown. With the onset of the Great Depression, overt racism and segregation took hold of southern California and many Blacks continued the migration out of downtown to southeastern San Diego. Despite the healthy migration to southern California in the years leading up to 1940, the downtown area contained fewer than 2% of the population. The downtown area remained a place for entertainment and dining, but the lack of residential opportunities pushed many African Americans to the east. With the start of World War II, the state's African American population increased by 272% with San Diego a recipient of a large portion of the influx. Many of the migrants were employed in jobs related to the wartime effort. After the war, the population continued to increase and by 1960 African Americans had grown to 6.8% of San Diego's population with up to 80% living in the East Village and Southeast San Diego.

When the African American Heritage Study was completed in 2004, it identified 16 extant properties in the downtown area and a further 21 properties that are no longer extant. Of the 16 properties noted in the survey, six of the properties were designated as part of the Gaslamp Historic District; one property was designated as part of the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District; two properties were designated individually for their African American association (The Clermont/Coast Hotel, 501 7th Avenue, HRB Site #509 and the Carter Hotel, 1401 J Street, HRB Site #632); and one property, the Lillian Grant Properties, at 1431-1437 J Street was designated in 2002 and partially overturned by the City Council in 2002. The site remained designated under HRB Criterion A and the houses were demolished in late 2004. The Western Hotel/ Star Hotel located at 522 7th Avenue was brought before the Historic Resources Board and not designated in 2015 and was demolished shortly after. In 2018, the Latonia Hotel located at 919-929 Island Avenue was brought before the Historic Resources Board and was not designated, The Coliseum Athletic Club is the one of four remaining structures in the downtown area identified for its association with the African American community.

Even though the original building on the site, built in 1924, was destroyed by a fire in 1938, the Coliseum Athletic Club was rebuilt that same year and continued to be an entertainment and training venue open to African-Americans. The subject resource, 1485 E Street, is one of the finite number of resources directly associated with the African American legacy in the downtown core; the property exemplifies a special element of the development of San Diego.

The applicants Historical Resource Research Report concludes that the resource is not significant under HRB Criteria C and D; and staff concurs.

The 1924 Coliseum Athletic Club was designed by Master Architect John Siebert in the Spanish Eclectic Style. In 1938, the 1924 Coliseum Athletic Club was destroyed by a fire and rebuilt later that year. The new 1938 Coliseum Athletic Club was also designed by Siebert but was more utilitarian in style and with minimal decorative detail. Although, the 1938 Coliseum Athletic Club features some of the character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style, including the decorative grill-work and stucco cladding, the property no longer retains integrity as it relates to Criterion C. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under Criterion C.

Master Architect John Siebert was established as a Master Architect in 2000 with the designation of HRB Site #412. John Siebert was born in 1864 in Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1873 at the age of nine. Arriving in San Diego in 1909, Siebert became founding member of the San Diego Architectural Association. He designed the U.S. Navy radio towers in Chollas Heights and contributed to the design and construction of the Naval Destroyer Base, Fuel Depot, Air Station, and Marine Base. He also devoted much of his time to establish and improve the City of San Diego's uniform building code. John Siebert died at the age of 84 in 1948.

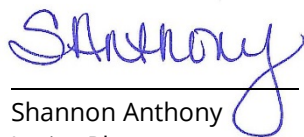
Properties built by Seibert on the San Diego Register include:

- HRB Site# 189 - Eagles Hall, 733 8th Avenue
- HRB Site # 412 - Veteran's War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Drive

The applicant has not provided enough information to determine if this property is a notable work of Master Architect John Siebert to support designation under D. If the property owner wishes to return to the Historic Resources Board with additional analysis at a future date to support designation under HRB Criterion D, they may do so.

In conclusion, staff continues to recommend designation of the Coliseum Athletic Club located at 1485 E Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1924 to 1979 under HRB Criterion A. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

- 1) The resource is a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development and retains integrity to the 1924-1979 period of significance. Specifically, the resource served as the third boxing athletic club built in San Diego and the city's only dedicated boxing venue from 1938-1979.
- 2) The resource reflects a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development and retains integrity. Specifically, the property, which operated as an entertainment and training venue from 1924-1979 was not only open to African-Americans, it also provided resources to promote and cultivate African-American Athletes in San Diego and retains integrity for that association.


Shannon Anthony
Junior Planner


Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Staff Report HRB 17-071 dated November 2, 2017
3. Applicant's Historic Report (under separate cover)

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 7/25/2019

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/25/2019, to consider the historical designation of the **Coliseum Athletic Club** (owned by S D Coliseum M Q LLC <LF> 1401-85 E LP, 16960 Mesamint Street, San Diego, CA 92127) located at **1485 E Street, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **534-354-05-00 and 534-354-06-00**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 4 LEASE PER DOC16-0453633 IN LOTS 1 THRU 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 Coliseum Athletic Club on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development and retains integrity to the 1924-1979 period of significance. Specifically, the resource served as the 3rd boxing athletic club built in San Diego and served as the city's only dedicated boxing venue from 1938-1979. 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 A as a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural and social development and retains integrity. Specifically, the property, which operated as an entertainment and training venue from 1924-1979 was not only open to African-Americans, it also provided resources to promote and cultivate African-American Athletes in San Diego 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 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:

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 2, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-071

HEARING DATE: November 16, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Coliseum Athletic Club**

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

APPLICANT: SD Coliseum MQ, LLC <LF> Navarra 1401-85 E Street-LP represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 1485 E Street, 92101, Downtown Community, Council District 3
APNs 534-354-05 and 534-354-06

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Coliseum Athletic Club located at 1485 E Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Coliseum Athletic Club located at 1485 E Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1924 to 1979 under HRB Criterion A. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development and retains integrity to the 1924-1979 period of significance. Specifically, the resource served as the third boxing athletic club built in San Diego and the city's only dedicated boxing venue from 1938-1979.

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 building is located in the downtown core.

The property is identified in the 1988 Historic Site Inventory of the Centre City East for Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) and determined eligible for listing. The property is also listed in the CCDC Downtown San Diego African-American Heritage Study. The property was determined significant for its association with the contributions and experiences of African-Americans in downtown San Diego between 1860 and 1960.

The historic name of the resource, the Coliseum Athletic Club has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the building when it was originally constructed.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott Moomjian which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion A and Staff concurs. 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.

Constructed originally in 1924 in the Spanish Eclectic style, the Coliseum Athletic Club served as a sports venue for the downtown area and the East Village the decades before the advent of televised sporting events. The subject property was one of a number of different clubs, both amateur and professional, built to promote boxing as a sport. When originally constructed the building was designed in a detailed manner with corner hipped roof towers, an articulated parapet, clay tile and arched openings. The 1930s were considered the "golden era" of boxing in San Diego. Boxing was the only professional spectator sport in town until the late 1960s when Harry William Lane moved his ball club to town.

The Coliseum featured the first ten round boxing match in the state in January 1925. At its opening, the Coliseum was in direct competition with Dreamland Athletic Club, a facility also built to promote boxing. While Dreamland showcased matches on Wednesday nights, the Coliseum provided entertainment on Friday nights. The growing metropolis was unable to sustain two clubs and Dreamland eventually closed its doors leaving the Coliseum to provide entertainment. The Coliseum continued to be popular as a venue and expanded in 1927 to accommodate the crowds.

On April 5, 1938, the building was substantially damaged by a fire that gutted the arena and left very little of the original building in place. The owners commenced rebuilding the structure which was complete by September of the same year. During the reconstruction, matches were played at Lane Field. The new building was more utilitarian in nature and similar to the boxy appearance found on the building today. It featured a square shaped building, with an arched wooden truss roof and gabled center section and skylights, five windows at the upper north elevation and decorative grilles at the northeast and northwest elevations.

The first fight at the newly rebuilt arena was between famed local Archie Moore and Johnny "Bandit" Romero. Between 1938 and 1950, the Coliseum regularly hosted Rusty Payne, "Irish" Spud Murphy and Archie Moore. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Coliseum was closed for extended periods of time. With the advent of televised boxing matches, the Coliseum found it difficult to compete for audiences. Promoters worked to stage weekly matches to keep boxing at the Coliseum relevant. The last match held at the property was in December 1979 between "Irish" Spud Murphy and Dave Madrid.

In the 1980s, the building was purchased by the Navarra family and used as a storage facility for their local furniture business, Jerome's. The interior seats were removed and the lower level spectator area was in-filled.

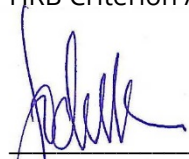
Significance Statement: The resource is a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development and retains integrity to the 1924-1979. Specifically, the resource served as the third boxing athletic club built in San Diego and served as the city's only dedicated boxing venue from 1938-1979. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

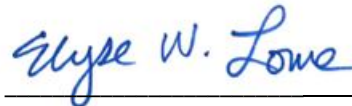
Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility 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 Coliseum Athletic Club located at 1485 E Street be designated with a period of significance of 1924-1979 under HRB Criterion A as a special element of downtown and the East Village's sporting venue.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Elyse W. Lowe
Deputy Director
Development Services Department

JB/el

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/16/2017

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/16/2017, to consider the historical designation of the **Coliseum Athletic Club** (owned by SD Coliseum MQ, LLC <LF> Navarra 1401-85 E Street-LP, 9404 Genesee Avenue, Suite 330, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **1485 E Street, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **534-354-05-00 and 534-354-06-00**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 4 LEASE PER DOC 16-0453633 IN LOTS 1 THRU 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 Coliseum Athletic Club on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A. Specifically, the resource is a special element of the downtown and East Village's sporting venue development and retains integrity to the 1924-1979 period of significance. Specifically, the resource served as the third boxing athletic club built in San Diego and the city's only dedicated boxing venue from 1938-1979. 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: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney