



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

COMMISSION ACTION

This is not a Certificate of Appropriateness and cannot be used to acquire permits

July 17, 2024

HDRC CASE NO: 2024-239
ADDRESS: 901 NOGALITOS ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 18 BLK LOT PT OF A6 EXC E IRR 13 FT TRI
APPLICANT: Sona Jeffries/MESBAH HESAM ADIN & JEFFRIES SONA MARIE - 216 County Road 381
OWNER: Hesam Mesbah/MESBAH HESAM ADIN & JEFFRIES SONA MARIE - 302 WALTON AVE

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting Historic Landmark Designation for the property at 901 Nogalitos Street.

FINDINGS:

a. The request for landmark designation was initiated by the property owner.

b. **CASE HISTORY:** A Request for Review of Historic Significance for the gas station structure located at 905 Nogalitos was submitted to OHP by the San Antonio Conservation Society on October 13, 2017. This property was identified through a comprehensive survey of historic gas stations undertaken in 1983 by the San Antonio Conservation Society that was updated and expanded beginning in 2012. HDRC approved a finding of historic significance on August 17, 2016, as the property was included in the 2016 Office of Historic Preservation Gas Station initiative. Although the UDC does allow for designation without owner support, the property was removed from the list due to the property owner's objection to designation prior to the City Council resolution on January 19, 2017, to move the Gas Station initiative forward. The present owner, Hesam Adin Mesbah, was a former employee at this gas station; he owns and operates the sports bar located on this parcel and resides nearby in the Palm Heights neighborhood.

c. **HISTORIC CONTEXT:** The gas station structure at 901 Nogalitos was built in 1935 for the Pure Oil Company. Historic gas stations in San Antonio represent a dominant industry in our regional economy, a nationwide shift in transportation patterns to reliance on a personal automobile, and the growing emphasis on corporate branding through design, with the buildings themselves serving as advertisements for their parent company. Pure Oil Distributing Company out of Delaware operated four stations in San Antonio. This Tudor revival structure had a twin on Buena Vista that was demolished some time before 1984. It is the only remaining Pure Oil Station structure still standing in San Antonio. Nogalitos was part of the Meridian Highway, also called US 81, a historic route connecting San Antonio to Saltillo via Laredo. The Meridian Highway, established in 1911, saw a number of improvements in the 1930s as part of the New Deal, including a nearby railroad underpass, which was completed c. 1936. The gas station's steep pitched roof, gabled ends and twin chimney reflect the standard residential appearance of Pure Oil Stations. Pure Oil architect Carl August Peterson created several variations of an English Cottage style prototype. This particular station appears to be one of the southern style filling stations featuring a gabled port cochere. Six Pure Oil Stations have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Georgia, Illinois, New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. These properties house successful businesses, including cafés and restaurants. While these structures are representative of the development of the property over time, they are determined to be non-contributing to the historic significance of the property.

d. **SITE CONTEXT:** The parcel is located at the southwest corner of Nogalitos and Ralph Streets, a prominent corner on the Nogalitos corridor along San Pedro Creek. Prior to the construction of the gas station, the property was owned by the companies operating the slaughterhouses near the stockyards on the opposite side of San Pedro Creek. Nogalitos Street is part of the historic Meridian Highway which connected San Antonio to Laredo and Saltillo. The site would have been a prime location for roadside establishments capitalizing on auto travel. The corner of Nogalitos and Ralph is located at a bend in the road which makes the gas station structure a highly visible resource in the community, contributing to the overall character of the streetscape of Nogalitos Street. Outside of the site context, the gas station is a unique example of roadside architecture and is contributing to the historic use and period.

There are 4 principal non-residential structures on the parcel including the gas station with the dates of construction ranging from 1935 through 2000. These are noted in the exhibits as buildings 1 through 4. The first structures built on the parcel were several small residences facing Ralph, which were built in the early 1930s. The westernmost house was demolished in 2012 and the remaining two residences were approved for demolition in 2017. After the filling station (building 1) was built in 1935, a restaurant, barber shop and package store were constructed c. 1940 to the south on Nogalitos Street. The package store appears to have been demolished between 1955 and 1960. The restaurant and barber shop have been connected and are in use as a sports bar (building 2). Modifications to these two structures include a change in building footprint and façade arrangement. A tourist court was built c. 1946 in the center of the parcel. It remained in operation through the 1960s and was demolished between 1986 and 1995. An auto repair and welding shop (building 3) was also built c. 1946 addressed as 114 Ralph and has been modified by several additions made over the years. This structure is simple in form and material and does not reflect the character or architectural style of the gas station.

Existing today and in use is a Quonset hut (building 4) housing an auto repair garage that was built c. 1948. It is addressed as 110 Ralph and appears to be of original building form, material and footprint. There are no additional character elements on the structure that demonstrate a relationship with the gas station, and it is not a unique or rare example of this building type. Two small utility buildings were constructed between 1995 and 2002 on the western side of the property near San Pedro Creek and are determined to be non-contributing structures. Accessory to the gas station (building 1) and these two small utility buildings, three other structures (buildings 2-4) remain on the parcel. While these structures are representative of the development of the property over time, they are determined to be non-contributing to the historic significance of the property.

e. **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** Based on the historic significance of the site, the gas station structure is the most significant of the existing buildings and staff finds it to be the only contributing structure on the parcel. The gas station structure was built circa 1936 for the Pure Oil Company. It is designed in the Tudor architectural style with a steeply pitched cross-gabled composition shingle roof on the office structure, faux half-timbering on the front gable of the canopy, and two brick chimneys flanking the north and south elevations with simple chimney pots. The main office features one large storefront window topped with a projecting hipped metal roof and one pedestrian door. A two-car service bay is attached to the south elevation of the main office and features a side-gabled composition shingle roof that is lower than the roofline of the office structure. Both the office and the service bay feature a painted brick exterior finish. The canopy roof is supported by two sets of square posts atop concrete pillars. The original office and canopy form is prominent and intact.

f. **EVALUATION:** In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the 16 criteria listed. The applicant submitted that the property meets the following criteria, consistent with UDC sec. 35-607(b):

6. Its historical, architectural or cultural character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, bridges, acequias, gas stations, transportation shelters, or other commercial structures; this utilitarian structure maintains its historic, architectural, and cultural character as the only example of a Tudor Style Gas Station and the only extant Pure Oil Station remaining in San Antonio.

11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States; this gas station exemplifies the economic heritage of the oil industry that played an important role in the economic growth of the state and the city in the early twentieth century. It also represents a societal shift from older transportation methods to a reliance on personal automobiles.

12. It is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen; as an important example of a Tudor Style gas station featuring a residential appearance with typical Tudor stylistic characteristics including steeply pitched, side gable roof and half timbering on the gabled ends of the building and canopy with few intrusions or modifications.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of a Historic Landmark Designation of 901 Nogalitos Street based on findings a through f.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Approved as submitted.



Shanon Shea Miller
Historic Preservation Officer