### HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION August 2, 2023

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2023-274

**ADDRESS:** 3403 South Flores Street

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 2659 BLK 6 LOT 8 N 8 FT OF 9

**ZONING:** C-CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 5

APPLICANT: Adrián Nájera OWNER: Adrián Nájera

TYPE OF WORK: Historic Landmark Designation

CASE MANAGER: Charles Gentry

**REQUEST:** The applicant is requesting a Historic Landmark Designation for 3403 South Flores Street.

#### **APPLICABLE CITATIONS:**

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-606. - Designation Process for Historic Landmarks.* 

a. Authority. Requests for landmark designation may only be made by or with the concurrence of the property owner or by City Council. Such landmarks shall bear the words "historic, landmark" (HL) in their zoning designation. In instances where a property owner does not consent to the landmark designation, the historic preservation officer shall request a resolution from city council to proceed with the designation process prior to any hearing regarding the designation by the historic and design review commission or zoning commission. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a request for landmark designation may be made and approved by the city council. Additionally, requests for designation by a property owner shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer through the office of historic preservation. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. All buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated by the city council as historic landmarks under any pre-existing ordinance of the City of San Antonio shall be accorded the protection of properties designated historic landmarks under this chapter and shall continue to bear the words "historic, exceptional" (HE) or "historic, significant" (HS) in their zoning designation.

#### b. Initiation.

- 1. Any person, the historic and design review commission, zoning commission, the historic preservation officer, or the city council may initiate a request for review of historic significance or evaluation for eligibility for historic landmark designation. Owner consent to initiate historic landmark designation shall be required unless a city council resolution to proceed with the designation has been approved. Requests for historic landmark designation may be requested by or with verified written consent of a property owner and shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer. Required application materials are listed in section 35-B129 of this chapter. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. Additionally, owners may submit with the application a written description and photographs or other visual material of any buildings or structures that they wish to be considered for designation as non-contributing to the historic landmark.
- 2. Requests made by a person who does not represent the property owner may be made by submitting a Request for Review of Historic Significance. Required application materials are listed in section 35-B129 of this chapter. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. Such request does not initiate the historic designation process or automatically result in interim controls. All applications shall be evaluated by the historic preservation officer and may be referred to the Historic and Design Review Commission for a Finding of Historic Significance in accordance with this section.
- g. **Decision.** A Finding of Historic Significance may be approved by the Historic Preservation Officer or by the historic and design review commission by a majority vote of members present. If approved, the Historic Preservation Officer will seek concurrence from the property owner. Property owners may verify or withdraw consent at any time during the designation process.
  - 1. All requests for a change in zoning to include a historic zoning overlay having either written,

- verified owner consent or resolution by City Council to proceed with the historic landmark designation will be processed in accordance with 35-421.
- 2. If the subject property owner does not consent to the proposed designation, the Historic Preservation Officer shall request City Council resolution to initiate historic landmark designation.
- 3. To designate a historic landmark, the city shall obtain consent to the designation by the owner of the property or approval of designation by three-fourths (¾) vote of the Historic and Design Review Commission recommending the designation and a three-fourths (¾) vote by the City Council. If the property is owned by an organization that is a religious organization under Section 11.20, Tax Code, the property may be designated as a historic landmark only if the organization consents to the designation.
- 4. Upon passage of any ordinance designating a historic landmark, or removing the designation of historic, the city clerk shall send notice of the fact by mail to the owner or owners of affected property.

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-607. – Designation Criteria for Historic Districts and Landmarks.* 

- a. Process for Considering Designation of Historic Districts and Landmarks. Historic districts and landmarks shall be evaluated for designation using the criteria listed in subsection (b). In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the criteria listed. Historic districts shall consist of at least two (2) or more structures within a legally defined boundary that meet at least three (3) of the criteria. Additionally, all designated landmarks and districts shall demonstrate clear delineation of the legal boundaries of such designated resources.
- b. Criteria for Evaluation.
  - 5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;
  - 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;
  - 13. It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic, or cultural motif.

#### **FINDINGS:**

- a. The request for landmark designation was initiated by the property owner.
- b. HISTORIC CONTEXT: The structure at 3403 South Flores Street is a two-story Art Deco style two-part commercial building built c. 1941 and operated as the Liberty Food Store by Pon T. Wong beginning in 1942. Adrián Nájera currently owns the property. It is located in the Lone Star neighborhood of City Council District 5. The property first appears in the 1942-43 city directory as both the Liberty Food Store and residence of Pon Tong Wong (1896-1967) and his wife Lee Shee Wong. Between 1907 and 1949 there were a total of 120 Chinese groceries listed in the City directories. The number of abandoned corner stores is unknown, however, an OHP survey identified at least 42 corner stores that were once owned and operated by a Chinese American. The property at 3403 South Flores was not included in the survey. Born in California, Pon T. Wong was the cousin of another prominent Chinese grocer in San Antonio, Don Wong (1502 South Flores). Pon T. Wong died in San Antonio in 1967, and his residence at the time of his death was listed as 1840 West Laurel. Lee Shee Wong died in 1995, and their son Franklin Wong inherited the property in 1998.
- c. SITE CONTEXT: The subject property is located in the Lone Star neighborhood just west of Mission Concepcion, the Mission Historic District, and the World Heritage Buffer Zone. Situated at the intersection with Glenn Street, the property is part of the South Flores commercial corridor near the confluence of San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River. The 3400 block of South Flores is a mixture of residential and commercial uses, with businesses located on street corners and homes tucked in between. Most structures are single story, built between 1900 and 1940. Architectural styles of the

homes include vernacular, Folk Victorian, and Craftsman. Styles of the commercial structures show influences including Spanish Eclectic and Art Deco.

- d. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION: The structure is an Art Deco concrete block building with a distinctive smooth-faced stone finish and mosaic tile patterns. As a movement, Art Deco symbolized modernism, new wealth, and sophistication, and the style gained traction from the early 1920s and remained popular until the beginning of the Second World War. The primary façade features low-relief decorative panels can be found at entrances, around windows, along roof edges or as string courses. The front entrance doorway is surrounded by two rectangular apron panels with a concave quartercircle bevel on the top corners and an aquamarine glaze. The same bright color is applied to the decorative terracotta frieze moldings below the roof edge and the second story windows. The most distinguishing features of the building include tile work in a high-contrast checkered motif of bold black and vibrant aquamarine pieces. This pattern appears on the base of the front façade below the windows, and wraps around to the first quarter of the right façade. A cantilevered corrugated metal canopy covers the front entrance and walkway, projecting out from the building above the large display windows on the lower floor, and extends around the right façade to cover the lower windows and tile work. The shopfront windows appear as punctured openings, with recessed casements. To maintain a streamlined appearance for the building, the clerestory windows above the canopy are glass blocks arranged in groups of horizontal bands aligned with the doors or windows below. The second floor features three picture windows on the front façade and one above the canopy on the right façade. Between the lower clerestory windows and upper picture windows are string courses of the checkered tiles; the tile pattern above the entrance is a rectangular frame.
- e. 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):
  - **5.** Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;
  - 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; as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;
  - 13. It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic, or cultural motif; as one of a collection of neighborhood Chinese Grocery stores that operated in the early twentieth century in San Antonio.
  - f. The City offers a tax incentive for the substantial rehabilitation of historic properties because historic landmarks possess cultural and historical value and contribute to the overall quality and character of the City and its neighborhoods. If historic designation is approved, rehabilitation and restoration work may be eligible for this incentive. State and Federal tax incentives are also available for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and provide substantial relief for rehabilitation projects.
  - g. If the HDRC approves the Historic Landmark Designation, then the recommendation for designation is submitted to the Zoning Commission. The Zoning Commission will schedule a hearing and then

forward its recommendation to the City Council. City Council has the ultimate authority to approve the historic designation zoning overlay.

h. Per UDC Sec. 35-608, once the Commission makes a recommendation for designation, property owners must receive a written approval (a Certificate of Appropriateness) for any exterior work until the City Council makes their final decision.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of a Historic Landmark Designation of 3403 South Flores Street based on findings a through e.

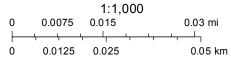
# City of San Antonio One Stop



July 27, 2023

## drawGraphics\_poly

User drawn polygons





### **Statement of Significance**

**Property Address:** 3403 South Flores Street

### 1. Application Details

Applicant: Adrián Nájera

Type: Landmark Designation Request

Date Received: 12 April 2023

### 2. Findings

The structure at 3403 South Flores Street is a two-story Art Deco style two-part commercial building built c. 1941 and operated as the Liberty Food Store by Pon T. Wong beginning in 1942. Adrián Nájera currently owns the property. It is located in the Lone Star neighborhood of City Council District 5. The property first appears in the 1942-43 city directory as both the Liberty Food Store and residence of Pon Tong Wong (1896-1967) and his wife Lee Shee Wong.

The Office of Historic Preservation has undertaken a survey of Chinese Grocery Stores in San Antonio. San Antonio's older neighborhoods are littered with small corner stores. The early twentieth century was a period of intense growth in the city, and open air markets were still in use. With the introduction of streetcar lines, groceries moved into the early suburbs. These new residential areas began to sprout all around downtown with small grocery stores, first as additions to homes and later in more permanent structures. The neighborhood corner grocery store played a significant role in early suburban development and remained an integral part of the neighborhood fabric through the 1950s.

Between 1907 and 1949 there were a total of 120 Chinese groceries listed in the City directories. The number of abandoned corner stores is unknown, however, this survey identified 42 corner stores that were once owned and operated by a Chinese American. Due to the previously mentioned facts about the grocery store the Period of Significance for Chinese Grocery Stores in San Antonio's original city limits is 1900 to 1950. The property at 3403 South Flores was not included in the survey.

Born in California, Pon T. Wong was the cousin of another prominent Chinese grocer in San Antonio, Don Wong (1502 South Flores). Pon, who also went by Paul, was one of the first Chinese Americans to be inducted into the American military. After training at Kelly in 1918, he served with the 51<sup>st</sup> Balloon Company. Pon T. Wong died in San Antonio in 1967, and his residence at the time of his death was listed as 1840 West Laurel. Lee Shee Wong died in 1995, and their son Franklin Wong inherited the property in 1998.

The subject property is located in the Lone Star neighborhood just west of Mission Concepcion, the Mission Historic District, and the World Heritage Buffer Zone. Situated at the intersection with Glenn Street, the property is part of the South Flores commercial corridor near the confluence of San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River. The 3400 block of South Flores is a mixture of residential and commercial uses, with businesses located on street corners and homes tucked in between. Most structures are single story, built between 1900 and 1940. Architectural styles of the homes include

100 W. HOUSTON ST, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78205



vernacular, Folk Victorian, and Craftsman. Styles of the commercial structures show influences including Spanish Eclectic and Art Deco.

#### 3. Architectural Description

The structure is an Art Deco concrete block building with a distinctive smooth-faced stone finish and mosaic tile patterns. As a movement, Art Deco symbolized modernism, new wealth, and sophistication, and the style gained traction from the early 1920s and remained popular until the beginning of the Second World War.

The primary façade features low-relief decorative panels that can be found at entrances, around windows, along roof edges or as string courses. The front entrance doorway is surrounded by two rectangular apron panels with a concave quarter-circle bevel on the top corners and an aquamarine glaze. The same bright color is applied to the decorative terracotta frieze moldings below the roof edge and the second story windows.

The most distinguishing features of the building include tile work in a high-contrast checkered motif of bold black and vibrant aquamarine pieces. This pattern appears on the base of the front façade below the windows, and wraps around to the first quarter of the right façade. A cantilevered corrugated metal canopy covers the front entrance and walkway, projecting out from the building above the large display windows on the lower floor, and extends around the right façade to cover the lower windows and tile work.

The shopfront windows appear as punctured openings, with recessed casements. To maintain a streamlined appearance for the building, the clerestory windows above the canopy are glass blocks arranged in groups of horizontal bands aligned with the doors and windows below. The second floor features three picture windows on the front façade and one above the canopy on the right façade. Between the lower clerestory windows and upper picture windows are string courses of the checkered tiles; the tile pattern above the entrance is a rectangular frame. One over one wood windows in singles and pairs are located on the second floor on both side elevations.

Character-defining features of 3403 South Flores Street include:

- Mosaic tile work and decorative panels
- Frieze moldings below the roof edge and upper windows
- Large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows
- Sidewalk canopy

#### 4. Landmark Criteria

The property meets six criteria under UDC 35-607(b):

• 5: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;

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- 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; as an Art Deco style two-part block commercial building with character-defining features including the mosaic tile work and decorative panels, frieze moldings, large display windows, picture windows, and clerestory windows, and a sidewalk canopy;
- 13: It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif; as one of a collection of neighborhood Chinese Grocery stores that operated in the early twentieth century in San Antonio.

#### 5. Staff Recommendation

A property must meet at least three of the 16 criteria used to evaluate eligibility for landmark designation, and this assessment determines that 3403 South Flores Street meets this threshold. Further research may reveal additional significance associated with this property.























1. San Antonio Light (July 26, 1942), pp. 73-74





To Our Friends and Customers LIBERTY FOOD STORE

3463 S. FLORES

L-45211

2. San Antonio Express (January 01, 1952), p. 12

## Miss Mildred Fong Becomes Bride Of Franklin J. Wong in Rites Here

Laurel Heights Methodist stephanotis sprigs. Joseph Eng gave the bride in marriage.

Church was the scene Sunday afternoon for the marriage of Miss Mildred Fong, daughter of Mrs. Way Thyn Fong of Shreveport, La, and Frankin J Wong, son of Mr. and Mrs. Pon T. Ng, and Joseph Edwin Eng was winders with the science of this city. Wong of this city-

The bridal gown was of satin carried two white orchids with

Teen-Agers Make Plans For Tea

Howard Wong attended the and lace and with it she wore a bridegroom as best man, and lace cap attached to a fingerup groomsmen were Texas Wong, veil of French silk illusion. She Nam Lew and Albert Lew Sory. Nann Lew and Albert Lew. Serving as ashers were Bill Ng and Howle Wong.

Following the reception in the church parlor, the couple left for a wedding trip to the North-west Pacific. The bride is a graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School and the bridegroom was graduated from San Antonio Tech High School.

3. San Antonio Express (August 22, 1950), p. 9.



## Mable Wong Becomes Bride of Nann W. Lew

Sunday afternoon in the First Baptist Church.

Nuptial music for the double-Robert Caruer, soloist.

gown and a fingertip veil was of

illusion. Miss Mildred Wu was maid of honor and bridesmaids were Misses Landon Wong, Frances Gee and Lily Lee. Flower girls were the bride's nieces, Cheryl Christene Leung, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Leung, and Evelyn Valerie Ng. daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sing Ng.

Miss Mable Wong, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pon T. Wong, was groomsmen were Steven Lew, married to Nann Wing Lew, son Albert Lew and Howard M. Wong. Rings No and Haward M. Wong, Binge Ng and Howard Wong ushered.

The reception after the wedring ceremony was presented by ding was in the Manor Tea Room. Assisting in serving were The bride wore a white satin Mesdames Sam Ng and Sing Ng, sister of the bride, and Miss Mary Jo Eng. Mrs. John Leung, sister of the bride, presided at the bride's book.

After a trip to Oregon and California, the newlyweds will be at home at 323 Aransas St.

Murray's English Toffee Ice Cream-a true Candy flavor. Murray's, 1812 Fred. Rd.--(Adv.)

4. San Antonio Express (September 04, 1950), p. 10

## Pon T. Wong

Pon T. Wong, 70, of 3403 S. Flores, died in a local hospital Monday. A native of Fort Jones, Calif., be was a member of the Chinese Free Masons and the American Legion Post No. 420. Services will be at 2:30 p.m. Thursday in Porter Loring Chapel with burial in Mission Burial Park.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Lee Shee Wong; son, Franklin James; daughters, Mrs. John Leung, Mrs. Sing Gum Ng, Mrs. Nann W. Lew, all of San Antonio; brothers, James T., Jack T., both of Vallejo, Calif.; sister, Mrs. Wing Tom, Sacramento, Calif.; grandchildren,

5. San Antonio Express (February 15, 1967), p. 36

