

**HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW
COMMISSION
August 3, 2022**

HDRC CASE NO: 2021-334
ADDRESS: 503 Urban Loop
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 13420 BLK LOT 4
ZONING: D
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
APPLICANT: Conservation Society of San Antonio, Westside Preservation Alliance, Esperanza Peace and Justice Center
OWNER: DPMILLER INVESTMENTS LLC
TYPE OF WORK: Request for Review of Historic Significance
CASE MANAGER: Amy Fulkerson

REQUEST:

A request for review by the HDRC regarding eligibility of the property located at 503 Urban Loop for landmark designation.

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. 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 zoning commission hearing. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a request for landmark designation may be made and approved by the city council. To the extent that this subsection conflicts with any other provisions of this chapter, this paragraph shall control except for buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated as local landmarks or districts, National Register landmarks or districts, state historic landmarks or sites, or state archaeological landmarks or sites. Additionally, requests for designation 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. **Designation of Historic Landmarks.**
 1. **Initiation.** Any person, the historic and design review commission, zoning commission, the historic preservation officer, or the city council may initiate a historic landmark designation by filing an application with the historic preservation officer. Requests for designation shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. Owner consent for historic landmark designation shall be required unless a city council resolution to proceed with the designation has been approved. 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. **Decision.** The historic preservation officer shall refer a completed application for historic landmark designation to the historic and design review commission. Property owners of proposed historic landmarks shall be notified of the historic and design review commission hearing by the historic preservation officer by mail prior to a historic and design review commission hearing for historic landmark designation. Notice to property owners shall state the place, date, time and purpose of the historic and design review commission hearing. The historic preservation officer shall also send notice of the meeting to any registered neighborhood associations located within the proposed district boundary. The historic and design review commission shall make and forward its recommendation to the zoning commission within forty-five (45) days from the date of submittal of the designation request by the historic preservation officer. Upon submittal of the historic and

design review commission's recommendation, the proposed historic district or landmark designation shall be submitted to the zoning commission for its review recommendations along with its finding of historic significance. The zoning commission and the city council shall process the application as prescribed in [section 35-421](#) of this chapter and this section. The zoning commission shall schedule a hearing on the historic and design review commission recommendation to be held within sixty (60) days of receipt of such recommendation and shall forward its recommendation to city council which shall schedule a hearing to be held within sixty (60) days of council's receipt of such recommendation. Upon passage of any ordinance designating a historic landmark, or removing or upgrading 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) and the criteria applied to evaluate properties for inclusion in the National Register. 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.
Criteria for Evaluation.

1. **Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;**
3. **Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;**
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;**
14. **It possesses significant archeological value that has produced or is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest;**

FINDINGS:

- a. On July 9, 2021, the Conservation Society of San Antonio, the Westside Preservation Alliance, and the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center jointly submitted a Request for Review of Historic Significance for the property at 503 Urban Loop. DPMiller Investments LLC currently owns the property, which is located in City Council District 1.
- b. **CASE HISTORY:** On January 24, 2020, Charles John, HSI Design Group, submitted a request for a review of contributing status for 503 Urban Loop, which at that time was believed to be a designated local landmark. The assessment evaluated the property's historic significance and found that the primary structure, including several additions, met three criteria and remained eligible for landmark designation. On March 5, 2021, an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for demolition of a landmark with new construction was submitted to the Office of Historic Preservation by Jonathan Card, Card and Company Architects, on behalf of the property owner of 503 Urban Loop. In May 2021, staff researched available records and could not locate any designation ordinance. Staff determined that the designation for 503 Urban Loop was likely an error that occurred about 30 years ago. The HDRC agreed that the property was eligible for local landmark designation on September 15, 2021. On February 23-24, 2022, a fire destroyed the structure on the property. The property owner has not provided any plans for future development.
- c. **DEMOLITION AND DESIGNATIONS COMMITTEE:** The Demolition & Designation Committee (DDC) attended site visits on April 28 and May 12, 2021. Staff conducted additional site visits with the property owners on February 21, 2020, and October 7, 2020.
- d. While the HDRC approved a Finding of Historic Significance on September 15, 2021, the circumstances under which that Finding was approved have changed entirely now that the building is no longer extant.
- e. **HISTORIC CONTEXT:** The structure at 503 Urban Loop was a Spanish Eclectic-style structure built in 1883 for Aurelia W. Dashiell, with Spanish Eclectic additions built by 1931, 1951, and by 1963, for

the Carmelite Sisters Day Nursery. The famous San Antonio bawd Fannie Porter lived and worked at the subject structure from c. 1897 until c. 1901; during that time, Porter hosted members of the Wild Bunch, including Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. No other remaining site in San Antonio is associated with these persons. The form of the 1880s bawdy house remained discernable within the Carmelite Sisters' later Spanish Eclectic additions. The building retained original interior elements, including a staircase and numerous walls, from its original construction in 1883 by Aurelia Dashiell as a bawdy house or brothel. Although not representative of the whole of Laredito, this building served as a rare, visible reminder that vice and entertainment played a significant role in the area. The Carmelite Sisters opened an orphanage and day care in the former brothel in 1914, just two years after the tragic fire that destroyed the nearby St. Joseph's Orphanage on the grounds of Santa Rosa Hospital, which had been run by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. The Carmelite Sisters' expansion of 503 Urban Loop between 1931 and 1963 testifies to the critical role the Catholic Church played in meeting an underserved community's needs, both material and spiritual.

- f. **SITE CONTEXT:** Urban Loop runs south from W Cesar Chavez Blvd, turns east in front of the Sanitary Tortilla Company (623 Urban Loop) and ends at S Santa Rosa. It runs through a parcel bounded to the north by W. Cesar E. Chavez Blvd, the east by S Santa Rosa Ave, the south by El Paso St, and the west by Interstate Highway 10/35, just blocks south of historic Market Square and Milam Park. By 1965, urban renewal and highway projects completely changed the landscape of the Laredito neighborhood. This block is one of only seven that retained structures after this process. The structure is surrounded by individual landmarks, including the Immaculate Heart of Mary complex at Urban Loop and S Santa Rosa, Richter Bakery at 426 S Santa Rosa, Jose Antonio Navarro School at 141 Lavaca, La Trinidad Methodist Church at 300 San Fernando St, and a cluster of landmarks on El Paso St between Interstate Highway 10/35 and S Leona St. The property itself is largely paved in asphalt, but also has a concrete pad serving as a basketball court and some small grassy lawns. The property is surrounded on the south, west, and north elevations by a low CMU wall.
- g. **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** A fire destroyed the structure on February 23-24, 2022. All aboveground materials have been removed. The structure at 503 Urban Loop was a Mission Revival-style structure built in 1883, with Spanish Eclectic additions built by 1931, 1951 and by 1963. Character-defining features of 503 Urban Loop included a low-pitched shed, hipped, and gabled roofs and flat roofs with wide eaves and exposed rafter tails where present; stucco cladding, wood-frame quatrefoil window above the main entrance on the east elevation; and stucco-clad chimneys on the c. 1931 addition.
- h. **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):
 1. **Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event;** The property is a valuable archaeological reminder of the cultural heritage of Laredito; a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood that included the city's red light district. The property later served as an important example of the Catholic Church's outreach to children, the poor, and immigrants on the Westside.
 3. **Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;** For its association with Fannie Porter, who lived and worked at the subject structure from c. 1897 through c. 1901 and hosted members of the Wild Bunch; the Reverend John W. Shaw, who purchased the property in 1913 and invited the Carmelite Sisters to make the house in Laredito into a home for orphans and a day nurser for the children of the working poor; and with Reverend Mother Mary Teresa, founder and superior general of the Carmelite Sisters.
 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;** due to its distinctive interest and value for its ties to the vanished Laredito neighborhood. The property relates to the sociocultural and economic activities of working-class labor, including that of Mexican American and African American prostitutes, and the predominantly Euro-American madams of the

more luxurious brothels, like Fannie Porter's. Over three-quarters of a century, the repurposed brothel became a neighborhood fixture, representative of the organized efforts to improve barrio life that are part of San Antonio's social and historical heritage.

14. It possesses significant archeological value that has produced or is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest; 503 Urban Loop is worthy of designation because of its rich archaeological potential to fill missing gaps in our knowledge about life in Laredito during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The property is part of just a handful of properties in Laredito left intact in the Central West Area of the 1960s urban renewal projects. The property may help form a more complete picture of diverse cultural practices in Laredito. Between 1896 and 1960, the site contained a total of 14 freestanding structures representing a microcosm of the neighborhood. The lack of new construction, both where earlier dwellings once stood and in historically open spaces, points to a greater likelihood of discovering foundations, privies, trash middens, and other artifacts. The frequenting of the property by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid even raises the possibility of discovering artifacts of national significance related to the Wild Bunch gang.

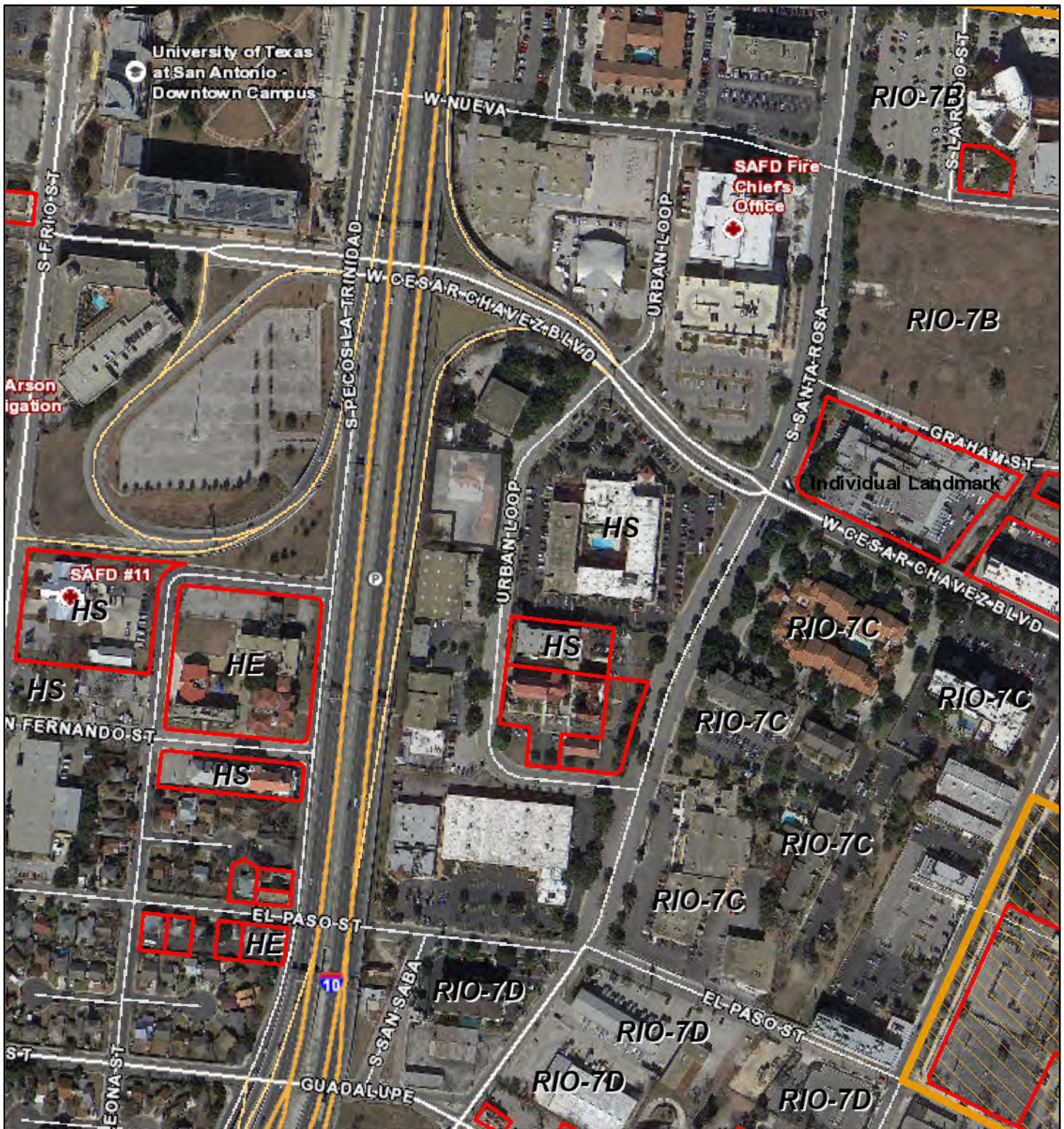
- i. Per UDC Sec. 35-453, once the Commission makes a recommendation for designation, property owners must receive a written approval (a Certificate of Appropriateness) for any exterior work until the City Council makes their final decision.

RECOMMENDATION:

Given the complete loss of the structure in question, staff does not recommend a Finding of Historic Significance. Staff agrees that 503 Urban Loop remains a site with potential archeological significance as identified in findings e-h. In light of the destruction of the aboveground resources, staff recommends mitigation actions in lieu of a Finding of Historic Significance. These actions could include, but are not limited to:

1. An archaeological investigation and report for the full parcel;
2. Recovery and donation of any remaining materials and newly discovered artifacts to the archaeological collection of a local archive;
3. Funding for research, publication, and permanent exhibit at the Museo del Westside regarding San Antonio's Sporting District and the Carmelite Sisters as well as other areas identified by the applicants as deserving of additional investigation;
4. Permanent onsite interpretation visible from the public ROW resulting from a nomination to the History Here local markers program.

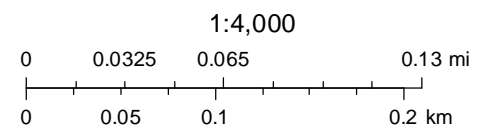
City of San Antonio One Stop



August 25, 2021

drawGraphics_poly

- User drawn polygons
- Historic Landmark Sites
- Historic Districts
- Zoning Overlay Label



Bexar CAD

Property Search Results > 525057 DPMILLER
INVESTMENTS LLC for Year 2021

Tax Year: 2021

Property

Account

Property ID:	525057	Legal Description:	NCB 13420 BLK LOT 4
Geographic ID:	13420-000-0040	Zoning:	D
Type:	Real	Agent Code:	60585
Property Use Code:	400		
Property Use Description:	OFFICE		

Protest

Protest Status:

Informal Date:

Formal Date:

Location

Address:	503 URBAN LOOP SAN ANTONIO, TX 78204	Mapsco:	616D5
Neighborhood:	NBHD code10040	Map ID:	
Neighborhood CD:	10040	E-File Eligible	

Owner

Name:	DPMILLER INVESTMENTS LLC	Owner ID:	3243069
Mailing Address:	14500 SAN PEDRO AVE STE 101 SAN ANTONIO, TX 78232-4354	% Ownership:	100.0000000000%

Exemptions:

Values

(+) Improvement Homesite Value:	+	\$0	
(+) Improvement Non-Homesite Value:	+	\$318,830	
(+) Land Homesite Value:	+	\$0	
(+) Land Non-Homesite Value:	+	\$681,170	Ag / Timber Use Value
(+) Agricultural Market Valuation:	+	\$0	\$0
(+) Timber Market Valuation:	+	\$0	\$0

(=) Market Value:	=	\$1,000,000	
(-) Ag or Timber Use Value Reduction:	-	\$0	

(=) Appraised Value:	=	\$1,000,000	
(-) HS Cap:	-	\$0	

(=) Assessed Value:	=	\$1,000,000	

Taxing Jurisdiction

Owner: DPMILLER INVESTMENTS LLC

% Ownership: 100.000000000000%

Total Value: \$1,000,000

Entity	Description	Tax Rate	Appraised Value	Taxable Value	Estimated Tax		
06	BEXAR CO RD & FLOOD	0.023668	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$236.68		
08	SA RIVER AUTH	0.018580	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$185.80		
09	ALAMO COM COLLEGE	0.149150	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,491.50		
10	UNIV HEALTH SYSTEM	0.276235	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,762.35		
11	BEXAR COUNTY	0.277429	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,774.29		
21	CITY OF SAN ANTONIO	0.558270	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$5,582.70		
57	SAN ANTONIO ISD	1.502300	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$15,023.00		
CAD	BEXAR APPRAISAL DISTRICT	0.000000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$0.00		
SA030	San Antonio TIF #30 Westside	0.000000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$0.00		
Total Tax Rate:		2.805632					
					Taxes w/Current Exemptions:	\$28,056.32	
					Taxes w/o Exemptions:	\$28,056.32	

Improvement / Building

Improvement #1:	Commercial	State Code:	F1	Living Area:	12994.8 sqft	Value: \$307,825
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Type	Description	Class CD	Exterior Wall	Year Built	SQFT
400	OFFICE	D - A	MA	1950	9282.0
400	OFFICE	D - A	MA	1950	3712.8

Improvement #2:	Commercial	State Code:	F1	Living Area:	sqft	Value: \$6,876
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Type	Description	Class CD	Exterior Wall	Year Built	SQFT
GAR	Detached Garage	* - F		0	900.0

Improvement #3:	Commercial	State Code:	F1	Living Area:	sqft	Value: \$1,727
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Type	Description	Class CD	Exterior Wall	Year Built	SQFT
FEN	Fence	S - F		0	298.0

Improvement #4:	Commercial	State Code:	F1	Living Area:	sqft	Value: \$2,402
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Type	Description	Class CD	Exterior Wall	Year Built	SQFT
ASP	Asphalt	* - F		0	2012.0

Land

#	Type	Description	Acres	Sqft	Eff Front	Eff Depth	Market Value	Prod. Value
1	IND	Industrial	0.7950	34630.00	0.00	0.00	\$681,170	\$0

Roll Value History

Year	Improvements	Land Market	Ag Valuation	Appraised	HS Cap	Assessed
2021	\$318,830	\$681,170	0	1,000,000	\$0	\$1,000,000
2020	\$556,149	\$681,170	0	1,237,319	\$0	\$1,237,319
2019	\$564,440	\$667,670	0	1,232,110	\$0	\$1,232,110
2018	\$549,180	\$865,750	0	1,414,930	\$0	\$1,414,930
2017	\$529,030	\$865,750	0	1,394,780	\$0	\$1,394,780

Deed History - (Last 3 Deed Transactions)

#	Deed Date	Type	Description	Grantor	Grantee	Volume	Page	Deed Number
1	4/20/2020	SWD	Special Warranty Deed	GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN OF SAN ANTONIO	DPMILLER INVESTMENTS LLC			20200081509
2	7/5/2005	SWD	Special Warranty Deed	FATHER FLANAGANS BOYS HOME	GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN OF SAN ANTONIO	11705	2158	20050239225
3	10/12/1990	Deed	Deed		FATHER FLANAGANS BOYS HOME	4925	1911	0

Economic Unit Links**Property ID:**

525057

110

Protest status and date information current as of Aug 25 2021 1:18AM.

2021 and prior year appraisal data current as of Aug 6 2021 5:48PM

For property information, contact (210) 242-2432 or (210) 224-8511 or email.

For website information, contact (210) 242-2500.



Overlay: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1912 v 4 sheet 413
Background: Aerial Photograph c.2020



East elevation of 1931 addition



Main entrance with addition on the right is c. 1963



Rear of property looking north



Site of 503 Urban Loop looking south/southwest. The edges of concrete foundations are visible on the east, south and west side surrounding a central gravel bed.



Foundation of additions c. 1931 and c. 1951



Site of 503 Urban Loop looking north



Edge of foundation on east side showing tile remnants



Surface debris following fire on the late evening/early morning of February 23-24, 2022

Supplemental Material Submitted by Applicant

Statement of Significance for 503 Urban Loop

503 Urban Loop, remains a site with many layers of history highlighting the city of San Antonio and specifically, the nearly lost neighborhood of “Laredito.” While no historic structures survive on this site, the archaeological remains of the many layers of habitation could prove fruitful as we continue to learn about the site and prepare to interpret it for future generations.

The site offers the rare opportunity to illuminate and reveal aspects of a poorly known and little understood theoretical construct. Such illumination and possible discovery can be determined through an anthropological lens of economic, social, religious and political activities, and daily lives as represented by material culture found in the archaeological record of seldom studied populations. This theoretical construct is applicable not only in San Antonio, but across the nation during the late 19th to early 20th century.

History of NCB 314, Block 5, Lots 4, 5, 6, north parts 11 and 12.

This block appeared in the c. 1850 City of San Antonio Survey as Lots 1-8, bounded on the south by S. Sixth Street (San Luis) and on the east by West Street (third street west of Laredo Street), which became S. San Saba.¹ All eight lots were owned at the time by John D. McLeod, but later came into the possession of retired Confederate Colonel Jeremiah Yellott Dashiell. As the result of a legal judgement against Dashiell in 1873, Bexar County seized and sold his property at public auction. His son, George, acquired Lots 1-8 for the high bid of fifty-five dollars in 1874.²

Sometime between 1874 and 1884, Dashiell re-platted his lots. Deed records indicate joint ownership of Lots 5, 6, 11 and 12 with his five siblings and two brothers-in law: Fannie and William T. Mechling, Aurelia W. Dashiell, Thomas P. Dashiell, Addie and William H. Harrigan, and Charlotte Dashiell. Aurelia Dashiell received Lots 5 and 6 for the sum of five dollars in 1883,³ while Fannie Mechling received Lots 11 and 12, for the same amount, in 1884.⁴ George Dashiell sold Lot 4 outside the family to Emilia Garza in 1890.⁵

Occupation History of Lot 4

Lot 4, NCB 314 was bounded on the north by Durango Street, on the east by Lot 5, on the south by Lot 10, and to the west by New Mexico Alley (also called Bell Alley), which ran north-south through the block to San Luis Street. From 1896 onward, deeds stipulated that the alley had to be kept open for access to the buildings fronting it.

Lot 4 became the site of five frame dwellings, 410 (originally 310) Durango and four shotgun houses facing Bell/New Mexico Alley. All were rented to primarily Mexican American/Mexican tenants.

¹ Pfeiffer, Maria Watson and Kristi Miller Ulrich, “Archaeological and Historical Background Review of the Santa Rosa Police and Fire Administration Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas,” Center for Archaeological Research, UTSA, Technical Report, No. 27, 2010, p. 28.

² Bexar County Land Records Deed, vol. X1, p. 445.

³ Ibid vol. 31, p. 257

⁴ Ibid vol. 38, p. 528

⁵ Ibid, vol. 65, p. 406.

The earliest known was a policeman named Alejo Montez, who first occupied 410 Durango in 1897.⁶ Despite living around the corner from the brothel at 503 S. San Saba, he and his wife, Cecilia, purchased Lot 4 from owner Louis Polk in 1906.⁷ The “privilege” of using water from the Water Works Company, with a connecting pipe on Durango, transferred with the deed. The Montezes raised five children on Durango, supplemented by the income from the four alley rental houses. Mr. Montez died in 1927, but his widow remained in residence for several more years.

According to the Sanborn Maps, 2, 6, and 8 Bell/New Mexico Alley were built between 1896 and 1904.⁸ Number four was the last house on the lot, constructed between 1904 and 1909.⁹ A sampling of tenants throughout the early twentieth century showed them to be predominantly Mexican American families of laborers and skilled tradesmen, including painters, carpenters, bricklayers, cooks, and bakers.

In 1931, Cecilia H. Montez and her adult children sold Lot 4 to the Carmelite Sisters.¹⁰ Sanborn maps indicate that the Sisters tore down the shotguns at 4, 6, and 8 New Mexico Alley between 1934 and 1951.¹¹ Sometime between 1951 and 1960, they demolished the remaining structures at 410 Durango and 2 New Mexico Alley.¹² No new construction appears to have taken place where the original structures stood, although some of the ground was later paved.

Occupation History of Lots 5 & 6

Lots 5 & 6, NCB 314 were bounded on the north by Durango Street, on the east by S. San Saba Street, to the South by Lots 11 & 12, and to the west by Lot 4.

This site experienced two distinct phases of development. Between 1883 and 1912, 503 S. San Saba served as a private residence-turned-brothel. Miss Aurelia W. Dashiell took out a mechanic’s lien to build a substantial, two-story house for herself at the southwest corner of Durango and S. San Saba in 1883. By the time her home appeared on Koch’s 1886 Bird’s Eye View Map of San Antonio, her brief residency was drawing to a close.¹³

In November of 1886, a woman named Lizzie Smith took over payment of Dashiell’s lien with the assistance of the Michael Loan Company.¹⁴ The deed was transferred to Smith in 1895.¹⁵ Frame structures extant on the site in 1896 included a house, stable, shed, and a round outbuilding with open sides –

⁶ San Antonio City Directory, 1897 (Montez, Alejo).

⁷ Bexar County Land Records, Deed, vol. 250, p. 237.

⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1896, p. 24 and 1904, vol. 1, p. 32.

⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1904, vol. 1, p. 32 and San Antonio City Directory, 1910-11 (Jaimes, Jesus).

¹⁰ Bexar County Land Records, Deed, vol. v. 1257, p. 266.

¹¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1934, 1938, 1951, vol. 4, p. 413.

¹² Ibid, 1951, vol. 4, p. 413 and 1960, vol. 1A, p. 49A.

¹³ San Antonio City Directory, 1885-1886 (Dashiell, Aurelia W.).

¹⁴ Bexar County Land Records, Mechanics Lien, vol. C, p. 45.

¹⁵ City directories indicate that Lizzie Smith was employed and lived elsewhere. Because early city directories lack address listings, it has yet to be determined who lived at 503 S. San Saba during the ten years between the departure of Aurelia Dashiell and the arrival of Fannie Porter.

possibly a gazebo or arbor.¹⁶ All outbuildings, except the round one, remained standing in the southwest corner of the site through 1912.¹⁷ The shed survived into the early 1930s.¹⁸

Fannie Porter, who became one of the most famous madams in Texas, moved to 503 S. San Saba in 1897.¹⁹ Between 1897 and 1901, her brothel provided a favorite refuge for members of the Wild Bunch gang headed by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.²⁰ They likely used small, metal tokens stamped, “Good for One,” to pay for gambling chips, drinks, and other services.²¹

From 1913 to 1960, the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio and the Carmelite Sisters reshaped the former “female boarding” house into an orphanage and day nursery.²² The Sisters constructed a two-story, frame, school building in the southeast corner of Lot 6 between 1914 and 1931.²³ Sanborn Maps show subsequent one-story, frame additions to the north and south sides of the school between 1938 and 1951.²⁴

The Archdiocese ceased the orphanage operation in 1942, with 23 children under 24-hour care being relocated.²⁵ However, by 1957, the Sisters sought permission from the Archbishop to increase the capacity of their day nursery from 80 to 140 children, and to build a new chapel with a basement.²⁶ Architect Leo M. J. Dielmann, Jr. designed two masonry buildings, which were added to the north and south sides of the original house by 1960.²⁷ None of the Sister’s additions appear to have extended into the part of the yard where the outbuildings once stood. This area also appears to have been paved.

Occupation History of Lots 11 & 12

Lots 11 & 12, NCB 314 were initially bounded on the north by Lots 5 & 6, on the east by S. San Saba Street, to the south by San Luis Street (the lots were further subdivided later), and to the west by Lot 10.

The northern part of these two lots became the site of three frame, one-story houses built at 515 (originally 513) S. San Saba. The firm of Freeman and Wright constructed the main house for William T. Mechling and his wife, Fannie (née Dashiell), in 1884.²⁸ Koch’s 1886 Bird’s Eye Map indicates that this house joined Aurelia Dashiell’s as one of the first built on the west side of S. San Saba between Durango and San Luis Streets.

¹⁶ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1896, p. 24.

¹⁷ Ibid, 1912, vol. 4, p. 413.

¹⁸ Ibid, 1931, vol. 4, p. 413.

¹⁹ San Antonio City Directory, 1897-98 (Porter, Fannie). Mistakenly listed at 503 Durango [sic], although Durango did not extend past the 300 block.

²⁰ Selcer, Richard F. *Hell’s Half Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red Light District*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1991.

²¹ Ibid, p. 320, note 32.

²² Bexar County Deed Records, vol. 429, p. 551 (1913) and vol. 544, p. 138 (1918).

²³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1914 and 1931, v.4, p. 413.

²⁴ Ibid, 1938 and 1951, v.4, p. 413.

²⁵ Archdiocese of San Antonio, Records of the Chancery, ROC.01, RB/2017/51, folder 33: Letter from Rev. Paul J. Ehlinger to Archbishop Robert Lucey, 7/1/1942.

²⁶ Ibid, Letter from Msgr. Popp to Archbishop Robert Lucey, 3/19/1957.

²⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1960, v. 1A, p. 49A.

²⁸ Bexar County Land Records, Mechanic’s Lien, vol. B, p. 203.

During the Mechling's residence, the grounds featured a glass-framed greenhouse.²⁹ Two shotgun type houses were constructed by new owners behind the Mechling house between 1904 and 1912. This timing coincided with the addition of four other modest size dwellings throughout the surrounding block.³⁰

515 S. San Saba changed hands seven times between 1901 and 1920 among Mexican American/Mexican owners. Few of them lived on site. They rented the rear dwellings primarily to other Mexican American/Mexican families. A sampling of tenants revealed occupations similar to those of tenants on New Mexico Alley, although a few clerks and a printer rented at 515.³¹

Emeterio and Herminia G. Gonzalez purchased the property in 1920.³² Mr. Gonzalez, who worked as a merchant, lived at the house for less than a year before he died in 1921. His wife, who had immigrated with him from Mexico, resided at 515 with their three children.³³ She continued to rent out the rear houses until the family sold the entire property to the Carmelite Sisters in 1928.

The Sisters demolished the main house by 1931 and the shotguns by 1934.³⁴ When they constructed the southernmost addition to their school (sometime between 1938 and 1951) the new building extended onto the northern part of Lot 12 where the main house at 515 S. San Saba once stood.³⁵ However, the northern part of Lot 11, where the shotguns once stood, remained untouched except by paving.

Landmark Designation Criteria Met

Despite the recent loss of the remaining 19th and early 20th century structures at 503 Urban Loop, it meets the following four criteria for landmark designation under the terms of the Uniform Development Code (UDC).

Criterion 1: Its value as an archaeological reminder of the cultural heritage of Laredito; a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood that included "one of the most famous red-light districts in the country" at its center.³⁶ Within this district, Fannie Porter's brothel at 503 South San Saba achieved a prominence that merited mention in several other published sources, including the Texas State Historical Association's *Handbook of Texas*, Richard F. Selcer's *Hell's Half Acre*, and David Bowser's *West of the Creek: Murder, Mayhem, and Vice in Old San Antonio*, which features Miss Porter's photo on the cover.³⁷ Middle and working-class families co-existed on either side, engaged in occupations other than entertainment and vice.

²⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1896, p. 24.

³⁰ Ibid, 1912, v.4, p. 413.

³¹ San Antonio City Directory, 1907 -1927 (S. San Saba, 515).

³² Bexar County Land Records, Deed, vol. 597, p. 73.

³³ Ibid, Affidavit, vol. 1027, p. 115.

³⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: San Antonio, Texas, 1931 and 1934, vol 4, p. 413.

³⁵ Ibid, 1938 and 1951, v. 4, p. 413.

³⁶ Perez, Rueben M. and Dr. Citali M. Zentella. "Laredito," *The Forgotten Neighborhood West of San Pedro Creek*, Published by Rueben Perez, 2013, p. 79.

³⁷ Bowser, David. *West of the Creek: Murder, Mayhem and Vice in Old San Antonio*, Maverick Publishing Company, 2003, p. 41-45.

As later enlarged, the site served as an important example of the Catholic Church's outreach to children, the poor, and immigrants on the Westside. The Carmelite Sisters opened an orphanage and day care in the former brothel in 1914, just two years after the tragic fire that destroyed the nearby St. Joseph's Orphanage on the grounds of Santa Rosa Hospital, which had been run by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.³⁸ Nearby Catholic landmarks with similar charitable missions include the 1911 Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, whose residence hall sheltered Mexican clergy fleeing religious persecution in 1914³⁹, and the 1921 Nuestra Señora Guadalupe Church, where Father Carmelo Tranchese became a powerful advocate for the poor in the 1930s.⁴⁰ The Carmelite Sisters' expansion of 503 Urban Loop between 1931 and 1963 testifies to the critical role the Catholic Church played in meeting an underserved community's needs, both material and spiritual.

The property meets **Criterion 3** for its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community. The famous San Antonio bawd Fannie Porter lived and worked at the subject structure from c. 1897 until c. 1901; during that time, Porter hosted members of the Wild Bunch, including Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.⁴¹ No other site in San Antonio is known to be as closely connected with these persons. Many of the women associated with the gang also worked at Fannie's establishment, including Laura Bullion, Lillie Davis, Etta Place, Annie Rogers, and Maud Walker.⁴²

San Antonio's fourth Bishop, the Reverend John W. Shaw, saw the need to help care for children in the Westside barrios. He purchased the house at 503 San Saba in 1913 and paid for its renovation. Appointed at a time when large numbers of Mexican Catholics were fleeing to South Texas to escape the Mexican Revolution, Bishop Shaw reopened San Antonio's Spanish missions and created the parish of Nuestra Señora Guadalupe for Spanish-speaking Catholics.⁴³ He also invited the Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus to make the house in Laredito into a home for orphans and a day nursery for the children of the working poor.

Reverend Mother Mary Teresa, the founder and superior general of the Carmelite Sisters, arrived in San Antonio to help prepare the house for its new mission in 1914.⁴⁴ The Reverend Mother founded

³⁸ Sowa, Carol Bass, "Tragic orphanage fire remembered by CCVIs," *Today's Catholic*, November 12, 2012, p. 1, 16.

³⁹ "A Short History of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish," accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.ihmsatx.org/history.html>.

⁴⁰ Zelman, Donald L. "Tranchese, Carmelo Antonio," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 09, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/tranchese-carmelo-antonio>.

⁴¹ Selcer, Richard F. "Porter, Fannie," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/porter-fannie>, and Van Ostrand, Maggie, "Fannie Porter of San Antonio, Texas Escapes," accessed June 13, 2021, <http://www.texasescapes.com/MaggieVanOstrand/Fannie-Porter-of-San-Antonio.htm>.

⁴² Selcer Richard F. *Hell's Half Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red Light District*, p. 247 -249.

⁴³ "Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine - Chapter 1 In the Beginning: 1911 to 1932," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.olgsanantonio.com/post/our-lady-of-guadalupe-church-history>.

⁴⁴ The Archdiocese of San Antonio. "Diamond Jubilee: 1874-1949." Copyright 1949, Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop of San Antonio, p. 221.

her order in Berlin, Germany in 1891 and came to North America in 1912, creating several homes for children in the U.S. and Canada.⁴⁵ This Carmelite order remains active worldwide.

Mother Mary Felicitas, who took charge of the San Saba home in 1914, and the Carmelite Sisters who served the community warrant additional research, as does midwife Romana Ramos, who ran the nearby *Casa de Maternidad*, a refuge for single mothers with newborn babies.⁴⁶ The beginning of her career as a midwife overlaps with the final years that the house on San Saba operated as a brothel.

This site meets **Criterion 11** due to its distinctive interest and value for its ties to the vanished Laredito neighborhood. Both 503 Urban Loop and Laredito played a significant role in San Antonio's social, ethnic, and economic history. The building, which operated as a brothel between 1883 and c. 1912, contributed to "a period of tension in San Antonio history in which prostitution and proper society clashed and people disputed whether the trade was a necessary evil aspect of urban life or whether it debased urban life and society."⁴⁷

Part of the historic significance of 503 Urban Loop relates to the sociocultural and economic activities of working-class labor, including that of Mexican American and African American prostitutes, and the predominantly Euro-American madams of the more luxurious brothels, like Fannie Porter's.⁴⁸ The deliberate concentration of these vice-related businesses in Laredito further underscored the area's overall marginalization from "respectable" society.⁴⁹

503 Urban Loop is the last physical tie to an area that also served as a major economic engine for the city. The growth of San Antonio, driven by the railroads and the presence of permanent military bases, created significant consumer demand for prostitution. Brothel owners, as well as the city government, found it economically advantageous for vice businesses to locate in a single area on the outskirts of downtown.⁵⁰ In doing so, San Antonio's red-light district followed a development pattern common to other large cities, including Ft. Worth and its infamous "Hell's Half-Acre."⁵¹

Other establishments offering gambling, dancing, and vaudeville theater thrived in proximity to Laredito's brothels. The Office of Historic Preservation's research states that, by 1911, San Antonio's sporting district was "second only to the Alamo" as a tourist attraction. Two years before the brothel at 503 South San Saba closed, the district delivered the equivalent of about \$1.36 million (adjusted to 2020 dollars) to the city government in licensing fees.

Under the later management of the Carmelite Sisters (1914-1990), 503 Urban Loop played an important role in addressing the needs of poor Mexican American families and children on the Westside. The Archdiocese of San Antonio noted that by 1949, "thousands of children [had] been in the care of the

⁴⁵ "Carmelite Sisters of the Devine Heart of Jesus – Our Roots: Our Congregation," accessed June 15, 2021, <https://www.carmelitedcj.org/roots/our-congregation>.

⁴⁶ Museo del Westside, "Romana Ramos – Women & Activism in the Westside," accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.museodelwestside.org/women-activism/romana-ramos>.

⁴⁷ Cain, Jennifer, "For Those Seeking a Good Time while in San Antonio, Texas – The Restrictions and Permissions of Bawdy Houses from 1889-1941," accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.uiw.edu/sanantonio/prostitution.html>, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Guerra, Donna, "Westside Preservation Alliance comments for Texas Public Radio Interview," June 6, 2021.

⁴⁹ Cain, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

sisters.”⁵² Over three-quarters of a century, the former brothel repurposed by Bishop Shaw and the Carmelites became a neighborhood fixture, representative of the organized efforts to improve barrio life that are part of San Antonio’s social and historical heritage.

Criterion 14: It possesses significant archaeological value that is likely to produce data affecting theories of historic interest. 503 Urban Loop originally consisted of multiple lots, representing approximately one quarter of NCB 314 in the former “Laredito” neighborhood. By 1965, it was one of only seven properties in a nine-block area exempted from urban renewal within the Central West Area.⁵³

To date, archeological investigations within Laredito have been limited in number and data yielded. Archaeologist Joseph F. Labadie, who conducted a 1987 assessment of the Vista Verde South area (beginning one block west of 503 S. San Saba), noted the necessity of future research projects in San Antonio to study trash disposal practices among 19th century residents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.⁵⁴ He found his efforts within his survey area frustrated by ground disturbances made in preparation for new construction.

503 S. San Saba may help form a more complete picture of diverse cultural practices in Laredito. Between 1896 and 1960, the site contained a total of 14 freestanding structures representing a microcosm of the neighborhood. The lack of new construction, both where earlier dwellings once stood and in historically open spaces, points to a greater likelihood of discovering foundations, privies, trash middens, and other artifacts. The frequenting of 503 S. San Saba by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, even raises the possibility of discovering artifacts of national significance related to the Wild Bunch gang. 503 Urban Loop is worthy of designation because of its rich archaeological potential to fill missing gaps in our knowledge about life in Laredito during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁵² The Archdiocese of San Antonio, p. 221.

⁵³ Pfeiffer and Ulrich, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Labadie, Joseph H., “An Archaeological and Historical Assessment of the Vista Verde South Project, San Antonio, Texas,” Center for Archaeological Research, UTSA, ASR No. 156, 1987, p. 60.

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***Only references new information not previously documented in the Office of Historic Preservation's
statement of significance for HDRC Case No, 2021-109 presented on May 5, 2021.**