



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:

Agenda Item Number: 33

Agenda Date: December 16, 2021

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: District 1

SUBJECT:

Resolution to initiate landmark designation for 503 Urban Loop

SUMMARY:

This resolution requests direction from City Council to move forward with historic landmark designation for the property at 503 Urban Loop. On September 15, 2021, the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) agreed with the Finding of Historic Significance and supported the designation of the property as a local landmark.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

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. 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.

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.

On June 15, 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, located in City Council District 1. The request for a Finding of Historic Significance was heard by the HDRC on September 15, 2021.

The structure at 503 Urban Loop is 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. It is located in City Council District 1. DPMiller Investments LLC currently owns the property. The structure meets criteria 1, 3, 6, 7, and 11, meeting the eligibility requirements for local landmark designation outlined in the Unified Development Code. Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event; although not representative of the whole of Laredito, this building serves as a rare, visible reminder that vice and entertainment played a significant role in the area. As later enlarged, the building also serves as an important example of the Catholic Church's outreach to children, the poor, and immigrants on the Westside. 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.

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation; 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.

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; it is a surviving example of an orphanage or non-institutional group quarters in Laredito, a neighborhood associated with the city's Hispanic community since its founding.

Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature; beyond Casa Navarro and a few other structures to the south, almost nothing remains of the Laredito neighborhood in San Antonio. This negation resulted from a long and aggressive pattern of urban renewal, which displaced people, and destroyed homes and businesses, between 1949 the 1970s.

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; 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. 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. Under the later management of the Carmelite Sisters, 503 Urban Loop played an important role in addressing the needs of poor Mexican American Families and children on the Westside.

On September 15, 2021, the HDRC agreed with the Finding of Historic Significance, recommended approval, and requested a resolution from the City Council to initiate the designation process. The property owner does not support designation.

ISSUE:

503 Urban Loop meets the criteria and is eligible for landmark designation. If Council approves a resolution to proceed with landmark designation, OHP would apply for a change in zoning to include a historic landmark overlay for the properties. The change in zoning requires approval from the Historic and Design Review Commission, Zoning Commission, and City Council. If approved by Council, the property would become a local historic landmark. Rehabilitation work would qualify for local tax incentives, and all future proposals for the property would require HDRC review.

ALTERNATIVES:

Landmark designation would help protect and preserve this structure. If Council does not approve a resolution to proceed with landmark designation, the designation process would come to an end and the HDRC's recommendation would not be required for any demolition requests. New construction on the property would not require review by the HDRC.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Historic Preservation requests a waiver of the required zoning fees in an amount of \$1,876.20 that would otherwise be paid to the City's Development Services Fund. Should Council not approve the resolution to waive the fees, this amount would be paid to the Development Services Fund by the Office of Historic Preservation General Fund FY 2022 Adopted Budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

The property is eligible for historic designation. The HDRC recommends that City Council initiate the historic designation process.