

**CITY OF SAN LEANDRO
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: January 19, 2022

TO: Library-Historical Commission

FROM: Brian Simons, Secretary, Library-Historical Commission

BY: Anne Wong, AICP, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: PLN20-0044; Referral to the Library-Historical Commission for a proposed industrial Project at 1919 Williams Street. Zoning District: IG (Industrial General); Alameda County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 77A-700-9-6; Applicant: Jason Bernstein, Duke Reality. Property Owner: Duke Reality 1919 Williams LP

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to demolish an existing one-story industrial office and warehouse building to construct a new 220,495 square-foot industrial building with associated site improvements and landscaping on a 9.8-acre site located at the southwest corner of Williams and Merced St. zoned Industrial General (IG). The existing building proposed for demolition was found eligible for listing at the state and local level. There were several additions to the building over time. The physical features that convey significance and justify eligibility are limited to the original 1952 portion of the building.

Per Section 4-26-1405 of the San Leandro Municipal Code, an eligible project involving a potentially significant historic resource shall be referred to the Library-Historical Commission for review prior to consideration before the Board of Zoning Adjustments, the decision making body.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Library-Historical Commission motion to accept the "Historic Resources Evaluation" completed in April 2021 by MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC and recommend to the Board of Zoning Adjustments the following for Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit for PLN20-0044:

1. Building Documentation. The applicant shall prepare archival documentation of as-built and as-found conditions of the property at 1919 Williams Street. Prior to issuance of demolition permits, the City of San Leandro shall ensure that documentation of the buildings and structures proposed for demolition is completed that follows the general guidelines of Historic American Building Survey (HABS)-Level III documentation. The

documentation shall include high resolution digital photographic recordation, a historic narrative report, and compilation of historic research. The documentation shall be completed by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for History and/or Architectural History (36 CFR Part 61). The original archival-quality documentation shall be offered as donated material to organizations and repositories that will make it available for current and future generations, including the City of San Leandro and the San Leandro Historical Society where it would be available to local researchers. Prior to the issuance of demolition permits, the City shall confirm documentation has been provided to all applicable organizations, including the City of San Leandro and the Historical Society.

2. Unanticipated Discovery of Archaeological Resources. If cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work within 50 feet of the find shall be halted, and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology (National Park Service 1983) shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA, additional work, recommended by the qualified archaeologist, the City, and if appropriate, local Native American Tribes, such as data recovery excavation, Native American consultation, and archaeological monitoring may be warranted to mitigate significant impacts to cultural resources.
3. Unanticipated Discovery of Tribal Cultural Resources. In the event that cultural resources of Native American origin are identified during construction, all earth-disturbing work within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily suspended or redirected until an archaeologist has evaluated the nature and significance of the find and an appropriate Native American representative, based on the nature of the find, is consulted. If the City, in consultation with local Native Americans, determines the resource is a tribal cultural resource and thus significant under CEQA, a mitigation plan shall be prepared and implemented in accordance with state guidelines and in consultation with Native American groups. The plan would include avoidance of the resource or, if avoidance of the resource is infeasible, the plan would outline the appropriate treatment of the resource in coordination with the archaeologist, if applicable, and the appropriate Native American tribal representative(s). The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City and the consulting Native American tribal representative(s) prior to implementation.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING STATEMENT

See attached applicant statement.

RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING AREA

The project site is located at the southwestern corner of Merced and Williams Street in an area zoned Industrial General (IG). The project site is surrounded by industrial uses to the north, east, and west. Properties to the south are zoned Industrial Transition (IT)

and Community Commercial (CC) at the intersection of Marina Blvd. and Merced St. The project site is approximately two miles southwest of the San Leandro Creek and approximately one mile northeast of the Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline bordering the San Francisco Bay. There are no locally designated landmarks or merit resources within the general vicinity of the Project site.

BACKGROUND

The study area is a 9.8-acre industrial site located at the southwest corner of Merced and Williams Street. The City is currently processing a Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Permit application to allow for the demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site with a new multi-purpose industrial building. A Phase I Cultural Resources report was prepared for the Project, which included a records search and historic evaluation of the property (attached). The property does not appear to have been previously evaluated and was not identified in the City's prior Historic Resources Surveys.

The original one-story building at 1919 Williams St. was constructed in 1952 with two connected uses: an office and a warehouse. Aerial photographs taken shortly after that time show the industrial building was among the first to be constructed in this part of the City, in a transition from agricultural fields. In 1963, 1982, and 1985 respectively, additional sections were built to expand the footprint of the warehouse portion of the building. The function and use of the building has been consistent since 1952, housing various companies involved with the distribution of agricultural, industrial and vehicle parts and equipment. The property was most recently occupied by CNH Parts & Service which operated at this location since 2010. Prior occupants were involved with similar business activities, dating back to the original tenant.

The existing building was designed by George Vernon Russell for the Republic Supply Company of California, which served as their Northern California headquarters. A modernist garden and parking lot was located adjacent to the office wing. The warehouse was notable for the use of natural lighting. In 1953, after the completion of the building, the American Institute of Architects awarded Russell an Award of Merit for "architectural excellence." The design was described as incorporating "*features combining beauty and livability, two factors that experts claim have a definite influence on worker efficiency and industrial relations problems.*" The design was included in a US Government Exhibit at the Berlin, Germany Trade Fair in 1953.

An Historic Resources Evaluation of the project site was completed by MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC in April 2021 (attached). The report provides a historic and architectural analysis of the subject property and evaluates the property for its historic significance. The report includes a review of the existing building's history, as well as its current and potential historic status. The property was evaluated for potential historic significance according to criteria established by the California Register of Historical Resources and the city of San Leandro's requirements for historic resources designation, per the San Leandro Municipal Code Sections 4-26-705 and 4-26-710.

The report found the existing building qualifies for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources because it possesses significance under Criterion 3 (Architecture) and retains integrity as defined by the California Office of Historic Preservation.

Although the design of the Project is not within the purview of the Library-Historical Commission, the Project plans and elevations are attached to this report.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Sacred Lands Records Search

In August 2021, a records search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) at the Northwest Information System was conducted in support of the Project. The purpose of the records search was to identify all previously recorded cultural resources, as well as previously conducted cultural resources studies within the project site and a 0.5-mile radius. The records search included a review of the National Register of Historical Resources (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), the California Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD) and the Archaeological Determinations of Eligibility list. The City also reviewed the results of the citywide historic resources survey prepared in 2003 by Architectural Resources Group.

The cultural resources records search identified four previously recorded cultural resources within a 0.5-mile radius of the project site, none of which are within or adjacent to the project site. The Sacred Lands File search conducted by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was returned with negative results. The BERD and 2003 citywide historic resources survey did not identify any known cultural resources within or adjacent to the project site.

Historic Resources Evaluation

The California Register of Historical Resources is an inventory of significant resources in California. For a property to be eligible for listing in the California Register, it must be found significant to events, persons, architecture, and/or information potential.

The building does not appear to be eligible for listings under events, persons nor information potential. It is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history of the cultural heritage of California of the United States. The property is not significantly associated with or connected to the lives or people important to local, California, or national history. The property is not likely to provide information important to prehistory or history of San Leandro, California, or the nation.

The building does appear to be eligible for listing under architecture. The building is characteristic of industrial modern architecture. Its style is reflected in its flat roof and simple form. Decorative elements including, the flat decorative awning with roof details at the office entry that extends to the covered parking, exposed steel details, the flat eave

overhang, and the metal fin decorative details exemplify the architectural style. Other character-defining elements include the T-shaped plan with separated uses with double-loaded corridors and large fixed-pane windows. The innovative “liveable” design is also reflected in the deep landscaped areas and the courtyard accessible from the building’s interior. The warehouse portion of the building, though utilitarian in design, is reflective of the architecture of the period with exposed steel trusses and roof monitors providing generous amounts of daylight to the factory floor below.

The property is also the work of master architect George Vernon Russell. Prolific from the 1940s through the 1970s, Russell became well-known at the time of the construction of this building for his modernist industrial designs. Russell, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA), demonstrated a mastery of architectural design throughout his career and influenced the field of design. His master architect status is further supported by the AIA award he received for the design of this building’s architectural excellence.

Integrity

To qualify for listing in the National or State Register, or to be considered a historic resource at the local level, a property must possess sufficient historic integrity. The seven variables that define integrity are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association are retained as the building remains in its original location in an area that continues to house industrial, and warehouse uses. The building retains integrity of materials and workmanship because the building still reflects mid-century design and comprises large pane windows, distinctive corrugated sign blade, exposed steel elements and fin details, circular cut outs in the main entry awning, and steel truss. These elements combined reflect the building’s feeling and association and embody the modernist industrial design realized by the master architect, George Vernon Russell. Although the building was altered three times – in 1963, 1982, and 1985, the original form of the building such as the T-shaped office portion and distinctive main entry were retained and are still discernable. Therefore, this building does retain integrity of design.

Eligibility

The existing building was found to be qualified for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources because it possesses significance under Criterion 3 (Architecture) and retains integrity as defined by the California Office of Historic Preservation. The physical features which convey its significance and justify its CRHR eligibility are limited to its original 1952 portion.

San Leandro’s historic landmark designation criteria closely aligns with those provided for in the California Register of Historic Resources. Criteria (c) and (d) for the city’s landmark and merit resources are comparable to the architecture criteria in the California Register of Historical Resources criteria, therefore, the property is eligible under Criteria

(c) and (d) in the City's landmark and merit resource criteria.

CONCLUSION

Although the building is qualified to be listed under Criteria 3 (Architecture) and retains integrity, the subject property is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or as a City of San Leandro Historic Resource. The property does not appear to have been previously evaluated. The cultural resources records search did not identify recorded cultural resources within or adjacent to the project site. The Sacred Lands File search conducted by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was returned with negative results.

The proposed project, in conjunction with other nearby planned, pending, and potential future projects in the City of San Leandro would result in a significant impact to a cultural resource. However, the project would not result in cumulative adverse impacts to historical resources as it is the only proposed project in the vicinity that would involve the demolition of a historic building.

Even with implementation of mitigation measures, the demolition of the existing building would have a significant and unavoidable impact under the California Environmental Quality Act. These impacts will be further disclosed and noticed in the forthcoming Environmental Impact Report (EIR) being prepared for the Project. Approval of the Project, as proposed, will require the Board of Zoning Adjustments to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

The applicant has explored potential Project alternatives, including adapting the existing building for a new tenant or constructing the Project in a different location, but found them to be infeasible and is not interested in pursuing preservation or landmark status. While it is unfortunate that the proposed Project would demolish what is now known to be an eligible historic structure, the building's status and eligibility would not have been known at this time if it were not for the research conducted in support of the Project application. The documentation shows that the historic integrity and eligibility of the existing building is partial and limited. Staff finds requiring Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Level III documentation prior to demolition would be reasonable and appropriate in light of the limited historic and economic value of the existing building.

Therefore, staff recommends the Library-Historical Commission to accept the "Historic Resources Evaluation" and recommend to the Board of Zoning Adjustments certain measures for potential archaeological, paleontological and Native American finds during grading/excavation, as well as Historic American Building Survey (HABS)-Level III documentation of the existing structure prior to demolition. This would include providing the resulting reports and materials to the San Leandro Historical Society and Library.

ATTACHMENTS

Vicinity Map

Applicant statement

Plan Exhibits

Historic Resources Evaluation of 1919 Williams Street completed by MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC in April 2021

PREPARED BY:

Anne Wong, AICP

Associate Planner

Planning Division