



BRUNZELL
HISTORICAL

December 11, 2017

Planning Division
City of Union City
34009 Alvarado-Niles Road
Union City, California 94587

Subject: Historical Evaluation of the Santos Family Property including the buildings at 31088 Vallejo Street, 31150 Horner Street, and 31063 and 31067 Watkins Street, Union City, Alameda County, California.

Dear Avalon,

The letter report that follows, along with the DPR 523 forms attached, comprise the evaluation of the property at 31088 Vallejo Street, 31150 Horner Street, and 31063 and 31067 Watkins Street, Union City, as required by the City of Union City Planning Division.

Methodology

Kara Brunzell conducted a site visit on August 3, 2016. The site visit included collecting photographs of all elevations of the seven buildings on the property, the parcel, and the neighborhood setting. Kara Brunzell conducted a record search of the subject property at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC), located at California State University, Sonoma, deed research at the Alameda County Recorder's and Assessor's offices, permit review at the Union City Building Department, and online research at ancestry.com and other websites. In addition, she conducted research through the Fremont branch of the Alameda County Library and the Washington Township Museum of Local History.

Summary of Findings

The record search at the NWIC did not reveal any previous surveys of the parcel. The City of Union City's Planning Department, however, provided a copy of a DPR 523 form documenting the Silver Dollar Café and Tavern. Local historian Timothy Swenson prepared the DPR 523 form in 2015 but did not submit it to the NWIC. The City also provided access to a document entitled "Design Guidelines for Old Alvarado" that a planning consultant prepared in 1989. The "Design Guidelines" document, while outdated in some respects, provided useful background information regarding Alvarado's history and built environment. Because this evaluation is undertaken pursuant to CEQA, all resources discovered during the field survey require evaluation for California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR). The property was also evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility, and according to Section 18.106.240 of the City of Union City's Municipal Code, which sets forth local criteria for inclusion in the City's Landmarks and Historic Preservation Overlay (LHP) Zone. The seven buildings evaluated are located at the following four addresses on a single large parcel:

- 31150 Horner Street, the vacant former Silver Dollar Café and Tavern building
- 31063 and 31067 Watkins Street, a duplex building that comprises two residential units and two integral garages;
- 31088 Vallejo Street, which includes:
 - the Tudor-style house fronting onto Vallejo Street
 - a small clapboard shed south of the house and driveway
 - a single-car garage immediately behind the house to the east

- an accessory residential building adjacent to the east elevation of the garage (listed on County of Alameda Residential Building Record as “Rumpus Room A”)
- an accessory residential building at the approximate center of the property (listed on County of Alameda Residential Building Record as “Rumpus Room B”) .

This report evaluates the seven buildings for historical significance and integrity both individually and as a district. The National Park Service defines a district as follows. “A district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.” These buildings on the property are concentrated on a single large parcel and therefore linked physically by their siting. They are also united by their shared land-use history of development over time by a single family for use by its members. Therefore, the property has been evaluated on a DPR 523 d (district) form, and its individual resources documented on primary forms.

National Register of Historic Places

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Under most circumstances, a property¹ must be at least fifty years old before it can be evaluated for historic significance under NRHP criteria.

California Register of Historical Resources

The criteria for listing historical resources in the California Register are consistent with those developed by the National Park Service for listing historical resources in the National Register, but have been modified for state use in order to include a range of historical resources which better reflect the history of California (CCR 4852) . For a property to be eligible for inclusion on the CRHR, one or more of the following criteria must be met:

- 1. It is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
- 2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
- 3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; and/or
- 4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

¹ For the purposes of historic documentation, survey, and evaluation “property” refers to a historic-period building or structure and its parcel or site.

Under most circumstances, a property must be at least fifty years old before it can be evaluated for historic significance under CRHR criteria. The CRHR also requires that a resource possess historic integrity.

City of Union City

The zoning ordinance in the City of Union City's municipal code sets forth criteria for inclusion in its LHP Zone. These criteria for designation are modeled on NRHP and CRHR standards, but stated somewhat differently. Age and integrity requirements, and the definition of historic districts are stated within the criteria (rather than separately as with the state and national standards). Union City Criterion A focuses primarily on aesthetic qualities and is intended to correspond to NRHP/CRHR Criterion C/3 (architecture and design). Union City Criterion C covers the aspects of historical significance that are split into NRHP/CRHR Criteria A/1 and B/2 (events and persons). Union City Criterion B is a locally unique category that deals with rarity. (Although historic preservation professionals, cultural resource managers, architects, local historical societies, preservation advocacy groups, historic property owners, State Historic Preservation Officers, city planners, and other interested parties familiar with historic preservation practices tacitly accept rarity to be a factor in historic eligibility, it is not an explicitly codified element of the NRHP or CRHR significance criteria.)

Municipal Code Section 18.106.240

Designation findings.

The Planning Commission may approve a nomination application for, and the City Council may designate, a structure, improvement, natural feature, object or area for designation as a cultural resource or historic district if it finds that the structure, improvement, natural feature, object or area meets the following criteria:

- A. It exemplifies or reflects a special element of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, architectural or natural history and possesses an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and
 1. It embodies distinctive characteristics of style, type, period or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or
 2. It contributes to the significance of a historic area being a geographically definable area possessing a concentration of historic or scenic properties or thematically related grouping of properties or properties which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by plan or physical development, or
 3. It embodies elements of architectural design, detail materials or craftsmanship that represents a significant structural or architectural achievement or innovation, or
 4. It has a unique location or singular physical characteristic or is a view or vista representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Union City, or
 5. It is at least forty-five (45) years of age;
- B. It is one (1) of the few remaining examples in the City, region, state or nation possessing distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or historical type or specimen;
- C. It is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history.

Evaluation

Criterion A/1/C (historically significant events): The Santos Family Property is not eligible for historic listing to the NRHP under Criterion A, the CRHR under Criterion 1, or Union City's LHP under Criterion C. The residential and commercial buildings on the parcel were constructed between c1927 and c1950, within the general context of the twentieth century residential and commercial development of Alvarado (which became part of Union City after the buildings were constructed). Every building constructed is at least tangentially connected to one or more specific historic contexts, however, most buildings are not historically significant according to NRHP, CRHR, or local criteria. The Santos House on Vallejo Street and the duplex on Watkins Street were both loosely associated with residential development and growth in Alvarado. They were among

many such dwellings constructed, and research has revealed no important association between the dwellings on the property and this historic trend. Therefore they are ineligible for individual historic listing for their historical associations.

Likewise, the Silver Dollar Café and Tavern (constructed c1938) was associated with commercial development in Alvarado. It was one of several bars that opened (or re-opened) in Alvarado after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933. Thirty years later, the Silver Dollar was still just one of a half dozen bars in the immediate area. Extensive research has not revealed any important associations between this particular business and the commercial development of Alvarado. Nor is there evidence that the bar was a significant cultural or social locus for the community. Therefore it is ineligible for individual historic listing based on its association with historical trends. In addition to the bar's lack of significance, its integrity has been compromised to the point that even if future research revealed historical significance it would be unlikely to be eligible for historic listing. When the Nimitz Freeway was constructed, Horner Street lost its historical status as a highway, significantly altering the *setting*. Demolition of the adjacent gas station c1961 further compromised the setting. Integrity of *feeling* and *association* are especially important for buildings that lack architectural distinction. Integrity of *association* was lost when the Silver Dollar ceased operation as a tavern c2014. Degradation of most other aspects of integrity combine to form a lack of integrity of *feeling*.

The garage, shed, and two accessory residential buildings are ancillary buildings constructed to provide storage and extra living space for the residents of the house and duplex. As such, they would only be eligible for historic listing based on their association with the house and duplex. Since those buildings are not significantly associated with an important historic context, the ancillary buildings are similarly lacking in historic significance..

Criterion B/2/C (historically significant persons): The Santos Family Property is not eligible for historic listing to the NRHP under Criterion B, the CRHR under Criterion 2, or Union City's LHP under Criterion C. Although members of the Santos family were active in the local community in various capacities during their lifetimes and were somewhat prominent as local business operators, research does not indicate that they were important to local history or influenced historical trends. Therefore, none of the buildings on the Santos Family Property is individually eligible for historic listing due to its association with persons important to history.

Criterion C/3/A (architecture and design): The Santos Family Property is not eligible to the NRHP under Criterion C, the CRHR under Criterion 3, or Union City's LHP under Criterion A. The Santos House on Vallejo Street is a modest example of a Tudor-style house from the 1920s. The style was popular from about 1890 until 1940, and was inspired by English medieval and Renaissance architecture. The Santos House's steeply-pitched cross-gabled roof, arched entry door, and massive chimney are features that associate the residence with modest examples of the style. According to Virginia McAlester, the most widely respected expert on historic American houses, roughly a quarter of the houses constructed during the 1920s were Tudor style, so it was a common type of residence during this era. The Santos House lacks the decorative features and elaborations that distinguish architecturally significant examples of Tudor architecture, including half-timbered cladding, brick and or stone masonry cladding or trim, strapwork, decorative chimney pots, carved wooden doors, and windows with multiple small panes. Alterations over the years, especially the large hipped-roof addition at the rear and porch enclosure on the south elevation, have also compromised its integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship*. Therefore the house is not eligible for historic listing for its architecture.

The Silver Dollar building is a primarily utilitarian example of a commercial building constructed to house a bar after Prohibition. Its small hexagonal windows were commonly incorporated into bar buildings during this period in order to make drinkers less visible to children and other passersby. The building's flat roof, irregular plan that conforms to the slant of the road, lack of entry porch or permanent awning, and cladding that is different on front and rear elevations are all features of a building constructed to be inexpensive rather

than according to particular design principles. Its only extant decorative features are minimal molding on wall surfaces and coping at its parapets. For simple buildings such as this one, even minor alterations can significantly degrade historic integrity. Its two original neon signs have been removed, destroying the building's most characteristic decorative features. Other alterations have also been performed, such as replacement of the original door, boarding up of transoms and sidelights, installation of security bars over windows, and installation of a rooftop satellite dish. These modifications, in aggregate, significantly compromise its integrity of *design, workmanship, and materials*. Therefore, the Silver Dollar Café and Tavern is not eligible for historic listing for its architecture.

The duplex on Watkins Street is a common example of Minimal Traditional architecture, the most popular style for inexpensive houses and small multi-family buildings when it was constructed. It lacks architectural distinction and is therefore not eligible for historic listing for its architecture.

The garage, shed, and two accessory residential buildings are ancillary buildings that lack decorative or aesthetic qualities and are not eligible for historic listing for their architecture.

To sum up, none of the buildings on the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic values, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship. Nor do any of the buildings embody elements of architectural design, detail materials or craftsmanship that represents a significant structural or architectural achievement or innovation. Therefore, none of the elements of the Santos Family Property qualifies for historic listing at any level for their architecture or design.

Criterion D/4: The Santos Family Property is not a likely source of information about history or prehistory, and is therefore not eligible to the NRHP under Criterion D or the CRHR under Criterion 4.

Union City LHP Criterion B: None of the buildings on Santos Family Property can be considered rare in Union City, the region, state, or nation. As stated above, the house and duplex on the property were types of dwellings commonly constructed during the twentieth century. There are many examples of these building types and architectural styles throughout the region. The Silver Dollar is an example of a utilitarian commercial building from the 1930s, and lacks strong distinguishing aesthetic or design characteristics. As such it does not qualify as one of a few remaining examples of an architectural or historical type. The ancillary buildings on the parcel are also utilitarian in style and as such do not qualify as rare. Therefore the property is not eligible for local listing under LHP Criterion B.

Historic District Evaluation: A district derives its importance from being a unified entity (even though they are frequently composed of a wide variety of resources). A district must possess significance, as well as being an identifiable entity, to qualify for historic listing. It must be important for historical, architectural, archeological, engineering, or cultural values. Therefore, districts that are significant under the NRHP criteria will usually meet the last portion of Criterion C (represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction) in addition to another criterion. The Santos Family Property does not meet this standard because although it is a distinguishable entity, it lacks the historical or architectural significance required for listing as a historic district. Therefore the property is not eligible for listing as a historic district at any level.

Historic Status

None of the buildings on the Santos Family Property are eligible for historic listing either individually or as contributors to a historic district. Therefore does not qualify as a historic resource, and should be assigned

California Historic Resource Status Code 6Z², which means a property has been found ineligible for NRHP, CRHR or local designation through survey evaluation.

Recommendations

None of the buildings on the property rise to the level of significance required for historic listing as individual landmarks or as contributors to a potential historic district. Therefore, none of those buildings qualifies as a historic resource under CEQA and as such do not merit special protection during the planning process.

Preparer's Qualifications

I meet the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications for both History and Architectural History. I hold a Master's degree in Public History and have worked in multiple facets of historic preservation and cultural resource evaluation since 2007. My experience includes municipal preservation planning and working as the lead staff member of a non-profit preservation organization. Since 2012, I have worked full-time as a historical consultant, completing dozens of evaluations for CEQA and Section 106 compliance. Additionally, I have completed local and national register nominations, historic context statements, and HAER recordation. I have managed historical projects in Union City, Fremont, Mountain View, San Jose, Los Gatos, and unincorporated Santa Clara County. I frequently work in the greater Sacramento area and other parts of the Bay Area, and have also completed projects in Southern California, Oregon, and New York. In addition to my work with historic-period domestic, agricultural, and commercial properties for private clients, I have evaluated post offices, military bases, university campuses, hospitals, church properties, and a NASA site. I am listed as a Historian and Architectural Historian on the California Office of Historic Preservation's roster of qualified consultants for every county in California.

Please contact me by phone at 707/290-2918 or e-mail at kara.brunzell@yahoo.com with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Kara Brunzell, M.A.
Architectural Historian

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² See the California Office of Historic Preservation's "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BULLETIN #8 User's Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historic Resources Inventory Directory" for background and additional information regarding California Historical Resource Status Codes.