

JEWEL’S CATCH ONE
4061 – 4069 West Pico Boulevard;
1263 – 1271 South Norton Avenue
CHC-2024-3334-HCM
ENV-2024-3335-CE

FINDINGS

- Jewel’s Catch One “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as the first African American female-owned disco in Los Angeles and one of the first openly gay night clubs that welcomed LGBTQ+ people of color.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Jewel’s Catch One meets one criterion for designation under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the board cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” as the first African American female-owned disco in Los Angeles and one of the first openly gay night clubs that welcomed LGBTQ+ people of color.

Jewel’s Catch One was established by Jewel Thais-Williams in 1973 when she took over the space at the subject property formerly occupied by the Diana Cafe (also known as the Diana Club) and opened a bar called Jewel’s Room. Thais-Williams learned that the Diana Cafe did not serve Black people and wanted to open a bar in the space welcoming anyone regardless of race or sexuality. Due to a state law that prohibited women from bartending unless they owned the establishment in effect until the mid-1970s, Thais-Williams was not allowed to practice bartending until she acquired the property. After a concerted effort to raise and borrow the funds, Thais-Williams purchased the bar and Jewel’s Room’s reputation as a tolerant space quickly grew as people learned that the owner was a Black lesbian woman. After acquiring the second-floor dance space in 1975 (the former location of the Diana Ballroom, which opened in 1929), Thais-William ran the business as a full-fledged nightclub, renamed to Jewel’s Catch One, suggesting the promise of “catching” a lover for the night. The nightclub ran successfully despite targeted raids from the Los Angeles Police Department and the Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control, and targeted acts such as an arson that destroyed much of the second floor in 1985. The nightclub continued and became well known for its discotheque and house music programming throughout the 1970s and 1980s. After losing popularity amongst LGBTQ+ communities of color to increasingly more diverse gay clubs in West Hollywood, Thais-Williams sold the property and business in 2015.

During its over five decades of operation, not only did Jewel’s Catch One serve as a safe haven for the marginalized LGBTQ+ population of Los Angeles, who faced increased surveillance and harassment by law enforcement in the 1960s and 1970s, it was also a community space for LGBTQ+ people of color at a time when straight spaces and White gay spaces actively discriminated against them. Though some bars allowed or were opened specifically for people of color, they were relatively few and far between in comparison. During the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, the nightclub also became a hub for community support and fundraising, providing a meeting space for numerous LGBTQ+ organizations, hosting charity balls and fundraisers,

and serving as a place of refuge for people with HIV/AIDS. At the time of its sale in 2015, Jewel's Catch One was the oldest African American femaleowned disco in Los Angeles and one of the oldest Black-owned discos in the country.

While the subject property has experienced many alterations over the years, many of these alterations occurred during the period of significance from 1973 to 2015 and the building retains a high level of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT ("CEQA") FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 *"consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment."*

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 *"consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings."*

The designation of Jewel's Catch One as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of the City of Los Angeles Administrative Code ("LAAC") will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to an Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments. The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2024-3335-CE was prepared on July 10, 2024.