

OIL CAN HARRY'S
11502-11506 W. Ventura Boulevard
CHC-2021-5590-HCM
ENV-2021-5591-CE

FINDINGS

(Adopted by the Cultural Heritage Commission on October 7, 2021)

- Oil Can Harry's "is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the location of one of the longest operating LGBTQ+ social gathering places in the San Fernando Valley.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Oil Can Harry's meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it "is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the location of one of the longest operating LGBTQ+ social gathering places in the San Fernando Valley.

The subject property was the long-term site of Oil Can Harry's, a gay bar and nightclub founded by William E. Byrne and Bert Charot in 1968. Opened during a phase of increased political organizing and group resistance to homophobia in Los Angeles, the venue served 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. Listed as "private" in 1970s editions of *Damron's Address Book* – a designation given to protect venues from police raids - the subject property famously utilized a spy hole in the entry door and internal siren system to alert its patrons to police presence, allowing them to halt same-sex dancing or activity. The venue later became a hub for community support and fundraising during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, hosting near daily events to support the cause. The venue continued to host and partner with numerous LGBTQ+ organizations throughout its tenure. In the mid-1980s, the subject property also became a special gathering place for the country-western subculture of the LGBTQ+ community when it began hosting special western-themed events and free country dancing lessons. At the time of its closure in 2020, Oil Can Harry's was one of the oldest LGBTQ+ bars in the country and an institution within the LGBTQ+ community of Los Angeles.

Although most of the interior have been removed on the first level, the building footprint and interior volumes have remained the same since the opening of Oil Can Harry's. Alterations to the exterior, including the removal of the second-floor turret and the enclosure of the porch on the front façade, occurred during the property's period of significance: 1968 to 2020. Therefore, the subject property retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, materials, design, 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 Oil Can Harry’s 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 a 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-2021-5591-CE was prepared on September 16, 2021.