

DANIEL D. PAUL, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
3938 VISTA COURT GLENDALE – LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214

AGENDA ITEM 15 (RELATED TO 16)- Taix French Restaurant

December 7, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Daniel D. Paul, and I am the architectural historian who, on behalf of Silverlake Heritage Trust, completed supplemental arguments to the City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument application for Taix French Restaurant. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep concerns, many of which are technical, for what CD13 currently proposes as the Taix HCM by CD13 as an amendment to the Taix Historic-Cultural Monument. I am not a party in the present lawsuit.

What O’Farrell’s office is proposing to landmark: a legacy business, three objects, or all of this, is confused.

On May 4, 2021, CD13 drafted an amendment to the version of the landmark approved by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission. The amendment acknowledges Taix eligibility under City HCM Criterion 1 (“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”) for its historic significance. But CD13’s amendment implies- after the fact, that this eligibility is only for Taix as a legacy business, and nothing else. This needs to be clarified, or confirmed, since the HCM proposed Criterion 1 eligibility for other reasons. Along with this- in a manner not wholly resolved to the legacy business eligibility, CD13 proposes the preservation of a bar top and two signs in and upon the new building and somehow designating these character defining features alone as a Historic-Cultural Monument on an otherwise brand-new property that doesn’t yet exist.

What specifically is the proposed Historic-Cultural Monument is, and how many resources are there? Is there one (legacy business)? Three (bar top and two signs)? Or four (two signs, bar top, legacy business)? One can’t preserve a few character defining features but not the resource itself; there is no there there.

If the Council’s intent is that the three objects constitute the historical resource, then why try and list the legacy business at all? Likewise, if the Council’s position is that no character defining features are necessary to preserve cultural significance under Criterion 1 since in their view it seems a significant broad pattern or event has no character defining features in of itself, then why preserve the bar top and the signs? These three salvaged parts are neither the Taix restaurant property nor the legacy business. They do not in of themselves convey historic integrity under the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards to either the property nor the legacy business.

CD13 seems to be treating the signs and the bar top as commemorative properties, and properties are not historic-cultural monuments.

What appears to be the case is that CD13 is proposing preservation of the sign and the bar top not as historical resources in their own right, but as commemorative properties associated with the legacy business. The ordinance does not address or otherwise acknowledge the preservation of commemorative properties this way. Federal guidance does, and it discourages their listing on the National Register unless special considerations are met. A commemorative property and a Historic-Cultural Monument are two different items, and CD13 seems to be confusing them.

A legacy business in of itself has no materiality, and therefore no character defining features.

CD13 is nebulous in their amendment regarding why Taix is eligible under Criterion 1. If it is only the fact that Taix is a legacy business, there are no character defining features- no physical materiality- nothing against which the Secretary of the Interior's Standards can be applied, and therefore nothing that can be preserved- in a legacy business in of itself, separate from the property it occupied or with which it is otherwise associated.

If CD13 only perceives the legacy business in of itself is the historical resource- as their amendment seems to imply- then if Mike Taix ever ceases its operation, is he therefore legally liable for committing a significant impact to a CEQA resource?

Though it acknowledges two signs and a bar top, language in CD13's amendment implies the landmarking the legacy business as *the* historical resource. I can't imagine the City would set Mr. Taix up for this, but if CD13 is implying that no material character defining features are really necessary for this resource under Criterion 1, then the above question seems fair.

Under Criterion 1, the Continental Dining interior, which Mike Taix himself retained and consciously continued, is the main character defining feature of the legacy business.

Even if the Continental Dining interior is not architecturally significant under Criterion 3, it is the primary character defining feature of the legacy business- a design that earlier generations of Taix established, one that later Taix' purposely continued, and one that the CHC acknowledged when it found the property eligible under Criterion 1. Mr. Taix', by own unsolicited account at the CHC site visit, stated that his intention with later renovations and changes was to maintain "Continental" theming. His later changes are nearly all thoughtfully done to that end.

CD13 has continuously acknowledged the historic significance of Taix but has either denied or misread how historic integrity interfaces with the significance of a resource.

CD13 agreed with the property's Criterion 1 eligibility as identified through the process as laid out in the Ordinance. This eligibility acknowledges the Continental Dining spaces as a character defining feature under Criterion 1. Therefore per the HCM process, their preservation would need to be retained for Criterion 1 eligibility.

Thresholds of historic integrity for specific criteria - even for Criterion 3 which addresses architectural design- are not discussed anywhere in the Ordinance. But insofar as the Ordinance references The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, clearly the retention of character defining features and historic integrity is important, regardless of Criteria. Just because Criterion 1 recognizes broad patterns or events immaterial in of themselves does not mean that no character defining features are to be preserved. This is a misreading of the Ordinance and is not within its spirit or intent.

Insofar as the Ordinance references Federal guidance for identifying proper proposed changes to a property, one assumes that OHR may reference Federal guidance for historic integrity relative to a specific criteria, rather than assuming no thresholds of integrity are necessary because they are not mentioned in the ordinance. According to the Park Service the threshold used for National Register of Historic Places Criterion A (The Federal equivalent to Criterion 1), the threshold of integrity is simple: that a historical contemporary would need to recognize the resource from its period of significance.

If one demolished the Bradbury Building, yet installed its glass ceiling in a new condominium, or if one demolished Philippe, saved its sign and counter- and even continued the business as “New Philippe” in a new condominium, a historical contemporary would not recognize these as their respective landmarks. Similarly, it is most unlikely that a historical contemporary from the proposed period of significance (1962-1980) would identify a new condominium having two sign and the bar top from the historic property, as the historic property, whether Taix is operating as a restaurant in it or not.

The federal threshold of integrity under Criterion A affords a fair amount of flexibility. Though some of the recent alterations such as the addition of tin ceilings are conjectural, others- such as Mike Taix having large-panel smoked mirrors custom made in the 1990s, are remarkable. Virtually all of Mr. Taix’ changes within the last thirty years are compatible under the Federal Criterion A integrity threshold. That they were undertaken by member of the “legacy family” itself should reiterate the significance of the space, if indeed this is truly the only eligibility CD13 feels that Taix possesses.

The above are but a couple of points of concern regarding my concerns over the CD13 amendment, and my strong belief that Taix is an eligible historic-cultural monument. This is a point with which I agree with CD13. But this significance is conveyed through the total property itself, including its interiors as articulated above, as articulated by the CHC after two hearing plus a site visit, and as I stated in my HCM supplemental analysis. What CD13 is otherwise proposing clearly fails the spirit and intent of the City of Los Angeles Cultural-Heritage Ordinance.

Thank You,



Daniel D. Paul, Architectural Historian



Armando Bencomo
<armando.bencomo@lacity.org>

Please include this email in Council File 21-0119 - Thank you

1 message

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Tue, Dec 7, 2021 at
3:04 PM

To: armando.bencomo@lacity.org

Dec 7, 2021

PLUM Agenda Items #15, 16 - TAIX

To be clear -

What Mitch O'Farrell has asked this Committee to approve is NOT the HCM designation recommended by the Cultural Heritage Commission.

O'Farrell continues to mislead the public when shouting from the rooftops how he supports TAIX to be declared as one of the cities historic cultural monuments, while the fine print as written by him is asking this committee to designate three accessory objects as the HCM – and to have the building demolished. Going

through all of this trouble to avoid environmental review for his pals. In doing so, O'Farrell has created a mockery of the historical preservation process and if approved, this committee will have set a new standard that would ridiculously allow pieces of buildings such as doors, windows, light fixtures and other object accessories be designated in lieu of the historical site itself.

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance Sec.

22.171.7 defines a Historic-Cultural Monument as a site, building or structure. Nowhere, are fixtures or accessories offered as an option for designation. O'Farrell is asking this Committee to designate furniture – accessories – decorations, against the criteria specified in this ordinance.

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance Sec.

22.171.12 prohibits the removal of objects designated as a monument. If O'Farrell wishes to change this section of the ordinance, there is a process he can initiate for that. Until then, he and this committee will be in violation of the cities cultural heritage ordinance by attempting to remove and designate these accessories from the existing TAIX building in order for them to pursue their agenda.



Armando Bencomo
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**FW: UPDATED - Please include this
email in Council File 21-0119 - Thank you**

1 message

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This BS about “housing” the city is repeating has become the daily song sung as used to justify demolishing our historic resources. Although it has been proven time and time again there are **more than 90,000 vacant housing units in this city**, they remain vacant either because the rent is outrageously high or they are owned by foreigners who have been permitted to park their money here. Housing is not written into the Cultural Heritage Ordinance as an alternate I've to designation. Nor is it an excuse to not designate what is a Historical Monument.