



Memorandum Planning Commission

July 22, 2020

To: Planning Commission
From: Jonathan Lightfoot, Economic Development Officer
Subject: Miramar Rehabilitation Project – Historic Preservation

Initiation

A question was raised by a member of the public and presented by the San Clemente Historical Society regarding whether the extent or method of rehabilitation at the Miramar Theater and Bowling Alley site would require an additional entitlement for Demolition, per SCMC, § 17.16.170, for the required reconstruction of the bowling alley. A second and related question is whether the rehabilitation would result in the removal of the property from the City's local register of historic resources.

Summary

The Miramar (1700 N. El Camino Real) and bowling alley (150 W. Ave Pico) are two properties in the North Beach gateway area that are both locally listed in the City's Historic Resources List. The properties have been vacant for nearly three decades, and are in significant disrepair. A Historic Structures Report (HSR) was prepared in 2013, which served as a guiding document for the property owners to pursue entitlements to rehabilitate the properties. The HSR identified that significant damage already existed, and that the future goal of rehabilitation should be to repair rather than replace where possible, but acknowledged that severe mold, wood rot, and deterioration already existed and that replacement of materials would likely be needed in some extent once further exploratory investigation of the building and structural components was performed. The ownership received entitlement approval from the Planning Commission via Resolution PC 17-017 in 2017 to rehabilitate the properties. Coastal Commission subsequently approved the project in December of 2017. Following a property sale in 2019, the new owners began in earnest to seek building permits to develop the property according to the approved entitlements. The owners have submitted a building and demolition permit to the City to begin the approved rehabilitation of the site.

Discussion

Regarding the question of an additional entitlement for demolition and reconstruction of the bowling alley:

The initial review contemplated the possibility of significant replacement of materials. The HSR indicated that black mold and wood rot were already pervasive; staff and Planning

Commissioners toured the building in 2016 and witnessed the poor state of the bowling alley; and cracks in the stucco running the length of the Calle Deshecha elevation indicated foundational issues. Upon further investigation, the project's structural engineer submitted a letter indicating that the rot of the wood walls would result in the walls crumbling as the project moved forward with building out the approved subterranean basement. The City's Building Official concurred, indicating that the existing walls could not be maintained in place safely. The Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) guidelines for rehabilitation do state that "[w]here the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature" the replacement can occur meeting certain criteria. (Rehabilitation Guidelines, No. 6.) Those criteria will be met as the replacement materials will be identical. Also, this standard specifically concerns replacement of "distinctive features". The HSR indicated that the walls are not distinctive. The HSR does highlight the arched roof as a distinctive feature. The arched trusses were preserved, and will be reincorporated into the reconstructed building.

Ultimately, the project matches the scope of approved entitlements and the replacement and reconstruction of building elements is accomplished within the SOI Guidelines.

Regarding the question of whether the proposed work, including significant demolition of materials at the bowling alley, will result in the removal of the building from the HRL:

The City does have parameters whereby a listed resource could be removed from the HRL. However, someone would have to demonstrate that none of the historical significance criteria apply any longer to this building. That would not be the case here for several reasons:

1. The Historic Structures Report (2013) anticipated a significant need for repair or replacement of portions of the building in order to be rehabilitated.
2. Rehabilitation is an allowed treatment by the Secretary of the Interior's standards. Repair is preferred, but replacement with compatible materials is permitted. This project will be replacing irreparable materials with in-kind materials reflecting original construction.
3. The salvaged materials will be preserved on site, repaired as needed, and reintegrated into the rebuilt structure, maintaining integrity of a significant amount of the structural elements.
4. The structure will be reconstructed in its existing location – maintaining its integrity of location.
5. Speaking of location, the significance of this building is location and association. It is not significant for its architecture or its architect. Its significance lies in its location within North Beach – a master planned area by Ole Hanson – and with its association with the other recreation uses that as a group created an "entertainment gateway" into the City. Bringing back a visitor serving use improves this aspect of the property's integrity (as with the Miramar).

Therefore, it is staff's position that the property is not eligible for removal from the HRL. On the contrary, the reconstructed building gains integrity by returning the property to an

active visitor serving commercial use that is integral to Ole Hanson's vision of North Beach as a visitor serving gateway into San Clemente.