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November 19, 2019

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

C.B. VAN VORST CO. MANUFACTURING PLANT/SANTA FE ART COLONY; 2345–2425 SOUTH SANTA FE AVENUE; CASE NO. CHC-2019-3798-HCM, ENV-2019-3799-CE; CD-14

At its meeting of **November 7, 2019**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council:

1. **Determined** that the proposed designation is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
2. **Determined** that the property conforms with the definition of a Monument pursuant to Section 22.171.7 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code;
3. **Recommended** that the City Council consider the C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony for inclusion in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments; and
4. **Adopted** the attached findings as the findings of the Commission.

The Commission vote was as follows:

Moved: Kanner
Seconded: Kennard
Ayes: Barron, Buelna, Milofsky

Vote: 5 - 0


James K. Williams, Commission Executive Assistant II
Cultural Heritage Commission

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject property to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Time for Council to Act: The Commission action is hereby transmitted to the City Council for consideration. Pursuant to Section 22.171.10(f) of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Council may approve or disapprove in whole or in part an application or initiation for a proposed designation of a Monument. The Council shall act in 90-days of the public hearing held before the Commission on the proposed designation. The City Council may unilaterally extend the 90-day time limit to act for a maximum of 15 days for good cause. With written consent of the owner, the time for the City Council to act may be extended by up to an additional 60 days. If the Council does not act on the application or initiation within this specified time limit, the application or initiation to designate a Monument shall be deemed to have been denied.

Enclosure: Findings

FINDINGS

- The C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" for its association with the development of manufacturing in Los Angeles in the early 20th century, and as the Santa Fe Art Colony, the city's first publicly subsidized artists' housing.
- The C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" as an excellent and rare example of an early 20th-century daylight manufacturing plant.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" for its association with the development of manufacturing in Los Angeles in the early 20th century, and as the Santa Fe Art Colony, the city's first publicly subsidized artists' housing. The subject property is directly associated with the rise of Los Angeles as an important industrial center during the early 20th century. It contains four, purpose-built buildings for the manufacture of furniture and mattresses by the C.B. Van Vorst Manufacturing Company, which played an important role in the early development of the furniture manufacturing industry in Los Angeles and throughout the West Coast.

Furthermore, the subject property represents the successful collaboration of the for-profit general partnership, the Santa Fe Art Colony, and the CRA to create affordable housing for the city's artist community. The Santa Fe Art Colony was developed in response to the increased demand for affordable live-work spaces in the areas surrounding downtown during Los Angeles' burgeoning art movement in the 1970s and '80s. At this time, the high cost of living in established artist communities such as Pasadena and Venice forced young and emerging artists to look elsewhere for housing and work space. Cheap rent and spacious open floor plans made the vacant commercial buildings and industrial warehouses in downtown ideal artist studios. The development of artist lofts continued through the 1980s, expanding into the industrial areas south and east of the city center. While only a handful of artists were living in downtown in 1975, by 1990, an estimated 1,800 artists lived and worked out of studios in and around downtown. However, by the mid-1980s, many local artists, who had played a significant role in downtown's renewal in the previous decade, could no longer afford to rent in the heart of downtown. As exemplified by the subject property, the CRA recognized the importance of local artists and art organizations to the revitalization of the city center, and sought out methods to support their existence downtown.

The subject property also “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent and rare example of an early 20th-century daylight manufacturing plant. At a time when electricity was expensive and not always reliable, early 20th century factories were often designed to maximize the amount of light reaching the interior of the building, featuring bays of large industrial sash windows, skylights, or other roof forms that bring in additional light. Hallmarks of industrial buildings during this era, as exemplified by the subject property, include a height between one and two stories, continuous steel sash windows on two or more elevations, oversized bays with industrial sash windows, and the extensive use of skylights. Low-scale industrial building complexes dating to the early 20th century such as the C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony are a rare property type in Los Angeles, with only a handful known to survive.

While the applicant argues that the subject property also “represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as noted local architect John Montgomery Cooper’s earliest known industrial project in Los Angeles, the information provided in the application does not support this finding. Cooper designed dozens of industrial buildings in Los Angeles throughout the 1920s and 1930s in the wholesale manufacturing and garment district, however he does not appear to rise to the level of a master architect, builder, or designer.

Although the subject property has experienced alterations over the years, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, 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 C.B. Van Vorst Co. Manufacturing Plant/Santa Fe Art Colony 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-2019-3799-CE was prepared on September 17, 2019.