

POINT FERMIN LIGHT STATION
807 West Paseo Del Mar
CHC-2020-513-HCM
ENV-2020-514-CE

FINDINGS

- The Point Fermin Light Station “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with early California maritime transportation.
- The Point Fermin Light Station “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a rare and excellent example of a lighthouse constructed in the Stick architectural style.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Point Fermin Light Station meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with early California maritime transportation, and it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a rare and excellent example of a lighthouse constructed in the Stick architectural style.

The Point Fermin Light Station was built in 1874 by the United States Lighthouse Board in response to growing maritime traffic off the California coast. A number of lighthouses had previously been built in California in the years following the Gold Rush, but this was the first to serve Los Angeles and one of the earliest federal projects in the region. Though the design of Point Fermin Light Station was used at other light stations in California and New Jersey, different materials and construction techniques were carefully selected for each one based on local environmental factors. The lighthouse operated with a lighthouse keeper in residence until 1927; the various ancillary structures built and demolished on the property during this time, including a storehouse, a coal house, an oil house, a barn, and a windmill, reflect the changing necessities for maintaining the light and supporting the lighthouse keeper.

The Point Fermin Light Station reflects the Stick architectural style applied to a relatively uncommon building type. Popular during the 1860s and 1880s, the Stick style was loosely inspired by Tudor and Picturesque architecture and sought to reflect a building’s structure in its exterior design. The lighthouse’s steeply-pitched roof with multiple gables, deeply overhanging eaves, jigsaw-cut decorative molding, carved rafter tails, and prominent trusses and bracing are characteristic features of the Stick style. Stick-style design elements that identify the building as a lighthouse include the vertical orientation of the light tower, second-floor balcony overlooking the ocean, and the fifth-floor observation deck that repeats the decorative elements seen on the lighthouse keeper’s residence below. The subject property includes the only remaining wood-frame lighthouse constructed during the 1870s along the California coastline between San Francisco and San Diego.

Although the subject property has undergone substantial alterations, with structures added, removed, and converted to new uses, these changes largely took place during the period of significance and have not compromised the architectural character of the remaining structures. The subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, materials, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance, and stands as one of the oldest extant buildings in San Pedro.

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 the Point Fermin Light Station 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. Given that the subject property is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources, the pending local designation will lead to a higher level of review and protection of the historic significance and integrity of the subject property that could otherwise be lost through incompatible alterations, new construction, or demolition, particularly to the interior. 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-2020-514-CE was prepared on March 10, 2021.