

December 6, 2021
Job Number: 2547-001
Historic Preservation Services for
1025–1027 Crenshaw Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA

Ms. Karly Katona
Office of Council District 10
City Hall
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: 1025–1027 Crenshaw Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA

Dear Ms. Katona:

In February 2021, a City of Los Angeles (City) Historic-Cultural Monument (HMC) nomination was submitted for the subject property, identified as the Crenshaw Women’s Center. In March 2021, the City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission chose to take the HMC nomination under consideration; and in April 2021, the Cultural Heritage Commission completed a site visit to the subject property. Sapphos Environmental, Inc. (Ms. Carrie Chasteen and Ms. Kasey Conley) was retained by the client to ascertain if the subject property qualifies for designation as an HCM.

Although the property located at 1025 Crenshaw Boulevard was the location of one of the first women’s centers in Los Angeles, it was not a long-lasting institution, and better representations of the women’s movement can be found in the city. The center is also minimally associated with the Gay Women’s Rights movement during the 1970s as the center focused on all women’s rights.

The Crenshaw Women’s Center was founded in 1970 and was located at the subject property from January 1970 to December 1972. The building was the first physical representation of the women’s liberation movement in Los Angeles and was the starting ground for numerous other women’s centers, groups, and services.¹ The women’s centers and groups, such as the Self-Help One Clinic, Sisterhood Books, and the Gay Women’s Center began in small part at the Crenshaw Women’s Center; but based on the research conducted by Sapphos Environmental, Inc., most of their periods of significance begin after leaving the Crenshaw Women’s Center.

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¹ The term *women’s liberation movement* is used to encompass the women’s and lesbian movements.

The interior of the Crenshaw Women’s Center was designed in a way to shake the male-dominated, sterile ideals of political and social movements, and was instead made to be a comfortable place for women to meet to discuss issues in the women’s rights movement. The building was outfitted with couches, chairs, floor cushions, and rugs, which created a safe and welcoming feeling for women coming to the center. The front living room was used as the main meeting space and the bedroom at the rear served as the starting place of the Women’s Self-Help One Clinic. All aspects of the interior of the space were created in a way to invoke comfort, safety, and a homey feeling for those seeking counsel there. Women’s centers in the city were generally housed in low-cost commercial or residential buildings. The one exception to this at the Crenshaw Women’s Center was the playground installed to keep the children of women visiting entertained (no longer extant). The Crenshaw Women’s Center was also home for a short while to the Gay Women’s Liberation group. This group was formed between the Women’s Caucus from the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and lesbian members already attending meetings at the Crenshaw Women’s Center. The Crenshaw Women’s Center gave the Gay Women’s Liberation group a home to host weekly meetings until, in 1971, the Gay Women’s Service Center was established in Echo Park. The partnership between the Crenshaw Women’s Center and the Gay Women’s Service Center was short lived, and the Gay Women’s Center’s stake to a claim in history is being the first social services agency to have its own location at 1542 Glendale Boulevard (no longer extant) and not for its time at the Crenshaw Women’s Center. The environment that was created and the happenings that took place within the Crenshaw Women’s Center are what sparked the creation of numerous other women’s groups, including the NOW’s first location, Westside Women’s Center, Gay Women’s Service Center, Women’s Self-Help One Clinic, the *Sister Newspaper*, and various others. Yet the short time spent at the Crenshaw Women’s Center was not the most significant and successful years of these groups. The Crenshaw Women’s Center only functioned for three short years, and its impacts on the Women’s and LGBTQ movements fall short in comparison to the groups, centers, and services that followed after it closed.

The subject property has also been substantially altered and can no longer convey its significance as an important meeting place of the women’s liberation movement. The building lacks integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, which, based on SurveyLA integrity considerations, the building must meet to be considered a resource under this theme. During the period of significance of the Crenshaw Women’s Center, 1970–1972, the center was still reflective of a duplex Craftsman-style residential building with a living room (meeting space), kitchen, dining room, and bedroom (Self-Help One Clinic). Based upon SurveyLA integrity considerations, resources associated with Women Serving Institutions and Organizations, “primary interior spaces such as social halls and large meeting rooms should remain as readable spaces.” Based on historic photographs and a visual evaluation based on multiple site visits, the interior has been gutted and remodeled into a single-tenant commercial space with the original wood trim; fireplace, mantle, and chimney; kitchen; and rear bedroom all removed. The space no longer achieves the comfortable meeting space the Crenshaw Women’s Center strove to create and retains no integrity of feeling, association, or design. According to National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the Nation Register Criteria for Evaluation*, a space retains integrity of association if it “is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer” and integrity of feeling if the space retains the “presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property’s historic character.” The National Register Bulletin poses an integrity test for a property associated with a significant event as “whether a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today.” Based on a comparison of historic photographs and new building materials present, the interior space has been



extensively remodeled and is unrecognizable as a meeting space for the Crenshaw Women’s Center. Therefore, it can no longer convey its significance as a meeting space for the women’s liberation movement, an important integrity consideration based on SurveyLA findings. Although some resources are significant for their contribution to the built environment externally, this space heavily relies on its interior space, and the environment that was meticulously created for the center as the significant part of its history and those interiors no longer exist. Although HCM criteria notably do not include consideration of integrity, the significant interior spaces no longer reflect any aspect of the building for which it might be considered significant. Commemorating the site as the location of this women’s group through designation of the parcel would allow future generations the opportunity to experience the location of this event even though the extant building cannot convey an association with this group.

The Historical Resources Assessment Report for 1025 Crenshaw Boulevard is attached for reference (Attachment A).

Should there be any questions regarding the contents of this letter or should additional information be required, please contact Ms. Carrie Chasteen at (626) 683-3547, extension 102.

Respectfully submitted,

SAPPHOS ENVIRONMENTAL, INC.



Carrie Chasteen
Cultural Resources Manager

Attachment: A. Historical Resources Assessment Report for 1025 Crenshaw
Boulevard

