



L A N D M A R K S
P R E S E R V A T I O N
C O M M I S S I O N

S T A F F R E P O R T

REFERRAL
MARCH 7, 2019

1835 San Pablo Avenue

Demolition Referral: Use Permit (#ZP2018-0220) to demolish an existing one-story auto-service shop constructed in 1979 and a free standing pole sign, and to construct a new six-story mixed-use building.

I. Application Basics

Parties Involved:

Property Owner/Applicant: San Pablo Investors One, LLC
505 Sansome Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94111

II. Background

On November 19, 2018, the applicant submitted a Use Permit application to demolish an existing one-story, commercial auto-service shop at this project site [APN 057-2086-025-01], constructed in 1979 and a free standing pole sign, and to construct a new six-story, mixed-use building with 95 dwelling units and 4-live work units and off-street parking at the ground floor level.

More information about the project can be found here:

https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Land_Use_Division/Current_Zoning_Applications_Log.aspx

Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) 23C.08.050.C, any application for a Use Permit to demolish a non-residential building or structure which is 40 or more years old shall be forwarded to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for review prior to consideration of the Use Permit for demolition. Given the lack of a current, City-wide comprehensive historic resource survey, the referral requirement is understood to address the potential for the loss of unidentified significant resources.

In considering the proposed demolition of a structure, the Commission will weigh the potential to meet the significance criteria for COB Landmarks and Historic Districts in the City's Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3), which are relatively specific and appear to align with the California Register. The Commission will also weigh the potential to meet the broader COB Structure of Merit criteria, which can include structures that are neither individually architecturally distinctive nor associated with significant people or events but may qualify as

contributors to identified districts, areas, or clusters. The LPC may initiate a designation or take no action based on the significance criteria, but still forward comments regarding potential project conditions such as relocation, salvage, and/or photographic documentation to the Zoning Adjustments Board for consideration in its action on the application.

II. Historical Resources

The subject building does not appear on the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources or the State Historic Resources Inventory.

The subject building is not adjacent to any City of Berkeley Landmarks. The nearest City of Berkeley Landmark is the Toverii Tuppa/Old Finnish Hall Building (constructed in 1908), located one block west of the subject property at 1819 Tenth Street.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

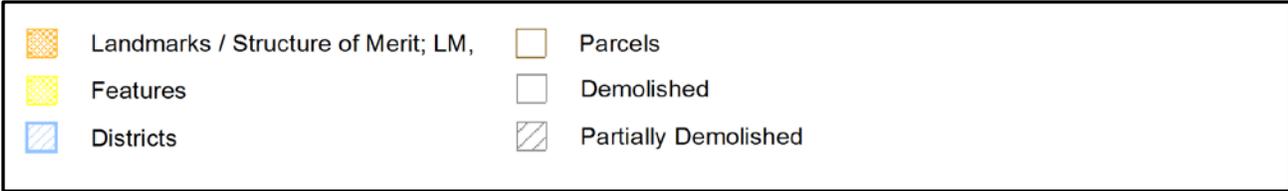


Figure 2: Photograph – Current Site Conditions (view of one-story building and pole sign looking east from San Pablo Avenue)



Figure 3: Photograph – Current Site Conditions (view of one-story building and pole sign looking north from Hearst Avenue)



III. Property Description and Evaluation

The historic resource evaluation (HRE) for the subject property has been submitted in the form of California Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) Forms 523 A and B completed by Jay W. Claiborne, Historic Consultant, in January 2019; please see Attachment 1 of this report. The following analysis derives from the information contained in the HRE as well as the City's land use archives and building permit records.

Description: The subject property is located on the northeast corner of San Pablo Avenue and Hearst Avenue in the West Berkeley Commercial District (C-W) district. This approximately 19,353 sq. ft. parcel contains an approximately 4,365 sq. ft. one-

story auto-service shop situated along the north property line (see Figure 2). The parcel also includes a paved parking lot with 15 off-street parking spaces (with vehicle access from Hearst Avenue), and a pole sign that reads 'Midas Auto Service Experts', located in a landscaped area on the southwest corner of the site facing the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Hearst Avenue (see Figure 3).

The building is made of concrete block and is rectangular in form with a flat parapet roof. There are four windows; two facing San Pablo Avenue and two facing the parking lot on the subject property, and two glass-paned entry doors on the front façade facing the parking lot. The window and door treatment is an aluminum-framed, manufactured system commonly found in commercial buildings. Along the front façade facing the parking lot, there are three roll up garage doors for the auto-service use separated by concrete block columns.

The HRE provides a brief description of the project setting as well as the buildings' history and architectural context, which is summarized below.

History: The HRE prepared by Jay Claiborne notes that, based on City records, prior to construction of the one-story building, the site was a vacant paved lot, primarily used for automobile and truck sales/rentals. Land Use records indicate that Use Permit (UP#5834) was granted on May 25, 1966 for the operation of a truck rental service. On November 14, 1978, Use Permit (UP#8559) was issued to Midas Muffler to establish an auto repair facility with parking for 15 vehicles. However, construction does not appear to have taken place until a few years later. Building permit (#515797584) for excavation and grading was issued on January 4, 1979 and a building permit for the construction of the one-story building was issued on February 6, 1979.

In the 1960's an approximately 150 sq. ft. accessory structure was placed at the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Hearst Avenue and used as a rental office. This accessory structure was removed in April 1979 as part of the construction of the existing auto-service shop.

A signage permit was issued December 10, 1999 for installation of the existing pole sign on site.

Research of phone directory listings provides documentation of owners and occupants of the property beginning in 1950. They are as follows:

Table 1: Past Owners and Occupants of 2198 San Pablo

Year	Occupant
1949	Richard Howell, Midway Motors
1951	Henry Weyenth
1957	Keho Pontiac dba Keho Sales
1964	Bank Auto Sales; Owner: W.A. Mariani et. al. SFCA, Lessee: Philip S. Snyder
1967	Hertz & Bank Auto Sales
1977-1979	Budget Rent-A-Car; California Motor Rental; Owner: William Granger
1980-1996	Midas Muffler; Owner: Shane Corp.
1996-2018	Midas; Owner: Mosel Family Trust; Lessee: Jose Luis Gonzalez

As noted in Table 1 above, the site has been associated with auto-related uses and operated by various owners and tenants, prior to the subject building's construction in 1979 through April 2018, when Midas ceased operation at this location.

Significance Criteria: The subject property is evaluated based on the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources and the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO/BMC 3.24). The existing building is greater than 50 years old; and therefore may be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources. Hulbert's evaluation has found the subject property to be ineligible for listing on the Registers as well as for consideration as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit.

For the purpose of conducting this historic evaluation, staff has defined the period of historic significance for this property as date of the existing buildings' construction (1979), to be consistent with the regulatory criteria for demolition control prescribed in BMC Section 23C.08.050. Owing to the building's commercial use, location along San Pablo Avenue, also known as State Highway 123, and period of significance, this property is linked to a historic context that is best defined as Berkeley's commercial, auto-oriented development. This evaluation of the property's historic significance, therefore, analyzes the significance criteria within the theme of commercial auto-oriented development.

Analysis of National and State Register Criteria: Claiborne and staff recognize that the existing building retains the general form and spatial relationships that characterize auto-oriented development such as a low-scale building setback from the street frontage, ample parking, and monumental signage, as well as architectural details such as stone corner elements on the front façade and transom windows, which are typical of this commercial building type. However, we agree that the building does not represent high quality or expressive design of that era, and thereby lacks particular architectural expressiveness, (NR Criteria C/State Criteria 3). The subject property was a vacant lot used for automobile and truck sales and rentals until November 14, 1978, when Use Permit (UP#8559) was issued to Midas Muffler to operate an auto repair facility. The buildings' original designer and builder are unknown and the commercial building has remained an auto-service use since its construction. Neither the designer, builder (both which are unidentified), nor the commercial tenants, have played a decisive role in Berkeley's commercial development or history, and no one of national or state-wide prominence is associated with the property (NR B/State 2). The subject building is not known to be associated with particular events related to auto-oriented development in Berkeley during the property's period of significance (1979) (NR A/State 1), and this site is not known to have the potential to yield information about pre-history or pre-colonial civilization (NR D/State 4). For all of these reasons, Claiborne and staff conclude that the building is not eligible for Register listing.

Analysis of LPO Criteria: Similarly, Claiborne and staff conclude that the building would not meet the LPO criteria for consideration as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit (BMC Section 3.24.110). The LPO criteria closely aligns with the National and State Register criteria, giving value to architectural merit as well as historical, educational and cultural significance. As described in the HRE and summarized briefly above, the building

possesses some characteristics of auto-oriented development and commercial architecture, but is similar to many standardized buildings and sites, is not unique relative to Berkeley's history, and lacks particularly distinctive utilitarian architectural expressiveness (BMC Section 3.24.110, Paragraph A.1), and is not associated with persons of City-wide importance for their participation in historic events or social and cultural movements (Paragraphs 2 and 4). No available information from the California Historical Resources Information System indicates that the property is expected to provide information about this area's pre-history (Paragraph 3). And, due to its lack of significant associations with design, events or persons important to Berkeley during the period of significance, the subject building is not an exemplary visual representation of Berkeley's commercial auto-oriented development during that time.

As a potential Structure of Merit (BMC Section 3.24.110.B, Paragraph 2), the building fails to meet the LPO criteria related to exemplifying good architectural design; similarly with the age, style and size of nearby City Landmarks; and associations with events that are historically significant to the City or to West Berkeley.

IV. Recommendation

Consider the extent to which the buildings appear to meet historical resource criteria and **Take No Action** pursuant to Section 23C.08.050.C

Reference:

1. Historic Resource Evaluation for 1835 San Pablo, prepared by Jay Claiborne, Historic Consultant, dated January 2019

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