



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Article 11 Change of Designation Case Report

HEARING DATE: JANUARY 21, 2015

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Date: January 5, 2015
Case No.: 2013.0910L
Project Address: 149 9th Street (Western Manufacturing Company Building)
Zoning: RCD(Regional Commercial)
55-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 3728/048
Project Sponsor: KFF RPP Storek LLC
100 Montgomery Street
San Francisco, CA 94104
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Recommendation: **Approve reclassification of the property from Category V (Unrated) to Category III (Contributory) under Article 11 of the San Francisco Planning Code.**

BACKGROUND

The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is consideration to recommend to the Board of Supervisors a change of designation of 149-155 9th Street, historically known as the Western Manufacturing Company Building, from a Category V (Unrated) building to a Category III (Contributory) building pursuant to Article 11 Section 1106 of the Planning Code. The Article 11 Change of Designation Report was prepared by Page & Turnbull at the request of Rubicon Point Partners, representative of the KFF RPP Storek LLC, building owners.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

149-155 9th Street is located on the northeast corner of 9th Street and Natoma Street in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood. Constructed in 1923, the subject property is a three-story-with-mezzanine, steel-frame and brick industrial building. The building is clad with polychrome brick and capped by a flat roof with wire-glass skylights.

Typical fenestration consists of multi-light industrial steel-sash windows with center awning mechanism. The spandrels between the window bays feature coursed brickwork with a diamond pattern at center. Coursed brickwork is also used to accent the piers, including the use of a herringbone pattern for the capitals of the center piers and a polychrome "X" pattern at the capitals used on the building corners. The façade terminates in a galvanized iron cornice featuring a beltcourse, dentils, and a paneled base. The attached *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents* prepared by Page & Turnbull includes a detailed building description on pages 9-16.

The immediate vicinity of the subject building is characterized by two- to three-story light industrial buildings along 9th Street, with smaller-scaled light industrial and residential buildings located along the interesting alleys of Natoma and Minna Streets. Notable buildings in the vicinity include the Pacific Gas & Electric substation at 66-86 8th Street, the Mangrum and Otter Building at 1235 Mission Street, the Hotel Porter at 1282-1288 Mission Street, and the Lick Baths at 165 10th Street.

The subject parcel is located within the South of Market Extended Preservation District, described in Section 819 of the Planning Code. This District embraces an area formerly zoned C-3-S in which the provisions of Article 11 and Section 128 of the Planning Code (Transfer of Development Rights in C-3 Districts) continue to be in effect.

The parcel is zoned RCD (Regional Commercial), although the areas immediately east are zoned RED-MX (Residential Enclave-Mixed) or WMUG (Western SoMa Mixed Use-General). To the north, Mission Street acts as a transition zone between the South of Market and downtown, with the north side of Mission Street zoned C-3-G (Downtown-General), while the south side of Mission Street is zoned MUO (Mixed Use-Office).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, Article 11 designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

If the Historic Preservation Commission adopts a resolution recommending approval of the change of designation, its recommendation will be sent by the Department to the Board of Supervisors. The recommendation would then be considered at a future Board of Supervisors hearing for formal Article 11 change of designation.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

ARTICLE 11

Section 1106 of the Planning Code authorizes the designation or change of designation of an individual structure or group of structures. Section 1106(a) outlines that a change of designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors, the Historic Preservation Commission, the property owner, an organization that has historic preservation stated as one of its goals in its bylaws or articles of incorporation, or by the application of at least 50 registered voters of the City. An application by the property owner, qualified organization, or 50 registered voters must contain historic, architectural, and/or cultural documentation to support the change of designation. If initiated by the Board of Supervisors, the change of designation would be referred to the HPC for its review and recommendation prior to passage by the Board of Supervisors.

Section 1102 of the Planning Code outlines the applicable standards for the five categories of Article 11 buildings which include Significant Buildings (Categories I and II), Contributory Buildings (Category III and IV), and Unrated Buildings (Category V).

Section 1106(h) of the Planning Code outlines the six grounds for an Article 11 change of designation. The designation of a building is warranted if changes in the area in the vicinity of a building impact its relationship to the environment and therefore place it in a different category; or changes in Conservation District boundaries make a building eligible or ineligible for designation; or changes in the physical features of the building due to circumstances beyond the control of the owner; or restoration of the building to its original quality and character; or by the passage of time, the building has become at least 40 years old; or the discovery of new factual information makes the building eligible for rating as a Building of Individual or Contextual Importance.

Section 1106(e) states that if the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days. An appeal, however, is not necessary in cases whereby the Board of Supervisors initiates the change of designation.

PUBLIC / NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

Pursuant to Section 1106(b)(2), the Department mailed a hearing notification to all property owners located within 150 feet of 149-155 9th Street. There is no known opposition to the proposed Article 11 change of designation. The Department will provide any public correspondence received after the submittal of this report in the Historic Preservation Commission's correspondence folder.

PROPERTY OWNER INPUT

The property owner, KFF RPP Storek LLC, represented by Rubicon Point Partners, initiated the request to change the designation to an Article 11 Category III (Contributory) building.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The case report and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff based upon the attached *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents* prepared by Page & Turnbull, as well as additional research.

The Department finds that the subject property is eligible for a change of designation to an Article 11 Category III (Contributory) building. The building is a noteworthy example of a light industrial building constructed during a significant period of industrial construction in the South of Market neighborhood. In particular, the building's polychrome brickwork and decorative detailing conveys high artistic values superior to most contemporary industrial buildings in the area.

The building served as the headquarters for the Western Manufacturing Company from its construction through the end of the 20th century. The Western Manufacturing Company was established in 1909 by Wencil C. Storek, Sr., and was primarily involved in the manufacture of leather and canvas goods, including the company's Sto-Rex brand leather and craft supplies. During its history, portions of the building were also rented out to various other tenants, including knit goods and sporting goods manufacturers.

The building retains outstanding physical integrity to its original construction. A review of the original architectural drawings indicates that the subject property retains its original pattern of windows and

entries on its primary facade, and the only alterations on its secondary (Natoma Street) facade appear to be modifications of the two eastern-most bays at the ground floor. Here, a loading dock was installed in 1936, and a pedestrian entry was reconfigured. Overall, the exterior of the building is extremely well preserved.

Specific justification for an Article 11 change of designation for 149-155 9th Street from a Category V (Unrated) property to a Category III (Contributing) building is outlined below.

Pursuant to Section 1102(c) of the Planning Code, a Category III (Contributory) building must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Is located outside a designated Conservation District; and
- (2) Is at least 40 years old; and
- (3) Is judged to be a Building of Individual Importance; and
- (4) Is rated either Very Good in Architectural Design or Excellent or Very Good in Relationship to the Environment.

As described in the *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents* 149-155 9th Street meets the first criterion for Category III eligibility in that it is located outside a designated Conservation District.

149-155 9th Street is located outside the boundaries of any established conservation district. The property is zoned RCD (Regional Commercial) and included within the boundaries of the South of Market Extended Preservation District. As discussed previously, per Section 201 of the Planning Code, the term "C-3 District" also includes the South of Market Extended Preservation District for the purposes of Article 11. Therefore, 149-155 9th Street meets the first criterion for designation.

149-155 9th Street meets the second criterion for Category III eligibility regarding its age. The property was constructed in 1923 and is today 92 years old.

149-155 9th Street meets the third criterion for Category III eligibility regarding Individual Importance. The Department concurs with the *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents* prepared by Page & Turnbull, which states that the building is individually important for the reasons set forth on page 4 and pages 30-31 of the report:

The property is significant at the local level for its architecture, which demonstrates high artistic values. Specifically, the building employs unusually high-styled polychrome brickwork relative to other industrial buildings in SoMa, and it was previously found to be of "Major Importance" by the 1977-78 Downtown Survey conducted by San Francisco Architectural Heritage. It is also of importance as one of the best remaining examples of an industrial building designed by Samuel F. Schell, a prominent developer in SoMa during the peak years of the neighborhood's industrial development While several other buildings constructed by Schell remain in the neighborhood, 149-155 9th Street exhibits an overall higher level of architectural quality and artistic values relative to its peers.

149-155 9th Street meets the fourth criterion in that it appears "very good" in architectural design and/or "excellent" in relationship to the environment. As described under criterion III above, the building's design

exhibits a high level of architectural quality. The subject property also exhibits an excellent relationship to its environment. The building is a contributor to the National Register eligible Western SoMa Light Industrial & Residential Historic District. It likewise relates extremely well to its immediate context. As described on page 31 of the *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents* prepared by Page & Turnbull:

The building is part of a particularly cohesive row of two-to-three story industrial and mixed use buildings located along the east and west sides of 9th Street between Minna Street and Howard Street. The building also relates well to the historic development pattern in western SoMa, where larger buildings tended to be located along the larger numbered streets, while smaller light industrial and residential buildings were constructed on the intersecting alleys such as Minna and Natoma streets.

The Department has further determined that the subject property meets the following grounds for an Article 11 change of designation per Section 1106(h)(6):

The discovery of new factual information (for example, information about the history of the building) makes the building eligible for rating as a Building of Individual or Contextual Importance and, therefore, eligible to be designated as a Significant or Contributory Building.

149-155 9th Street meets the grounds for a change of designation per Section 1106(h)(6) in that the discovery of new factual information about the building's history and significant associations—documented above and in the *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents*—makes the building eligible for rating as a Building of Individual Importance and, therefore, eligible to be designated as a Contributory building.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

The identification of a building's character-defining features enables property owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the property's historical and architectural character. While interior character-defining features may be present, Article 11 limits designation to the exterior features.¹

A list of character-defining features for 149-155 9th Street are included on page 33 of the *Article 11 Change of Designation Documents*. The following features have been adapted from that list:

General Features

- Rectangular plan and four-story (three-story with mezzanine) over basement massing
- Polychrome brick cladding with ornamental detailing
- Fenestration pattern and multi-light steel-sash windows with center awning mechanisms
- Cornice and roofline ornamentation
- Flat roof with wire glass skylights

¹ Interiors are subject to Article 11 if proposed interior alterations result in any visual or material impact to the exterior of the building (per Planning Code Section 1110(g)(3)).

West (Primary) Facade:

- Symmetrical design divided into four structural bays by brick-clad concrete piers
- Arched entryway for 149 9th Street featuring a recessed vestibule with herringbone tile paving
- Partially glazed wood entry door with sidelight
- Protruding ceramic neon sign reading "StoRex Leather and Craft Supplies Western Mfg. Co."
- 155 9th Street entry featuring a recessed vestibule flanked by display windows crowned with transoms (materials not historic)
- Transom above entry door
- Polychrome brick details
 - Accented spandrels with central diamond designs
 - Pier capitals with herringbone brickwork
 - Corner pier capitals with "x" motifs in red and blonde brick
 - Brick dentils below the cornice
 - Header brick course for window sills
 - Soldier brick course for lintels
- Galvanized iron cornice
- Flagpole centered at the western edge of the roof

South Facade:

- Six structural bays divided by brick-clad concrete piers
- Polychrome brick details that are largely identical to that of the primary façade
- Metal fire escape
- Running-bond brick water table
- Service entries at first floor of two easternmost bays
- Galvanized iron cornice

East (Rear) Facade:

- Flat parapet with elevator penthouse located at the southeast corner of roofline
- No fenestration
- Brickwork laid in common bond with red brick

North Facade:

- Flat parapet
- Two steel-sash, three-over-two windows located at the second and third stories
- Brickwork laid in common bond with red brick

GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 2: Conservation of resources that provide a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding.

POLICY 4: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

The Downtown Plan of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

- OBJECTIVE 12: Conserve resources that provide continuity with San Francisco's past.
- POLICY 12.1: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural, or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.
- POLICY 12.2: Use care in remodeling significant older buildings to enhance rather than weaken their original character.

Designating 149-155 9th Street as an Article 11 Category III (Contributory) building is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Urban Design Element and the Downtown Plan of the San Francisco General Plan. Article 11 designation will further continuity with the past because the building will be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Article 11 incentivizes preservation through the transfer of unused development rights. Designation as an Article 11 Contributory building will also require that the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features. Both entities will utilize the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed change of designation is consistent with the priority policies in that:

The proposed change of designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. The Article 11 designation of 149-155 9th Street as a Category III (Contributory) building will help to preserve an important historical resource that is associated with industrial construction in the South of Market during a significant period of industrial development; with the career of a prominent developer Samuel F. Schell; with the history of the Western Manufacturing Company; and with the evolution of what is today known as the Western SoMa Light Industrial & Residential Historic District—a significant concentration of industrial, mixed use and residential buildings that help to define the South of Market's historic character.

ISSUES AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Office Use at 149 9th Street: The proposed change in designation could assist in accommodating a change in use to office use. Currently, 149 9th Street is located within the RCD (Regional Commercial) Zoning District, which only permits office use on the first or second floor, not both. However, all office uses can be permitted in qualified historic buildings pursuant to the procedures outlined in Planning Code Section 703.9 (Preservation of Historic Buildings Within the Folsom Street NCT and RCD Districts). The definition of qualified historic buildings includes designated Article 10 landmarks, as well as buildings designated as Category I-IV pursuant to Article 11.

For qualified historic buildings, the Zoning Administrator may permit office use with the advice of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which shall determine whether the proposed use would

enhance the feasibility of preserving the subject building. Thus, the HPC would be provided a future opportunity to review the proposed change in use at 149 9th Street, irrespective of the change of designation.

The potential change to office use on all floors would not be subject to recent amendments to Sections 219 and 803.9 of the Planning Code regarding office use in designated Article 10 landmarks. That legislation is specific to designated Article 10 buildings in the PDR-1-D and PDR-1-G Zoning Districts, and limits the proposed amount of office use with vertical controls based on the number of building stories.

BOUNDARIES OF THE ARTICLE 11 SITE

The proposed Article 11 designation covers Assessor's Block 3728, Lot 048—on which the subject building is located.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Based on the Department's analysis presented in this Case Report, 149-155 9th Street meets the designation criteria for an Article 11 Category III (Contributory) building pursuant to Planning Code Section 1102. Likewise, a change of designation is warranted as the subject building meets the Grounds for Designation as outlined in Planning Code Section 1106(h)(6).

The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the proposed change of designation for 149-155 9th Street from a Category V (Unrated Building) to a Category III (Contributory) building.

The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval, or approval with modifications of the proposed Article 11 change of designation of 149-155 9th Street.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Article 11 Change of Designation Documents
- B. Draft Resolution
- C. Draft Designation Ordinance