TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Historic Site Board
SUBJECT: Hearing on: San Diego County Civic Center (San Diego County Administration Center), Historic Site Designation.

SUPV. DIST.: 1

DESCRIPTION:

This is a request to designate and register the San Diego Civic Center as a historic landmark. The San Diego Civic Center structure is a Spanish-Revival with 1930s Streamline Modern influences and classical Beaux-Arts touches on 16.38 acres of reclaimed tidelands on San Diego's bayfront. This public project was designed and built with Works Progress Administration funds between 1936 and 1938. The site also includes an historic landscape including a sculpture by Donal Hord, The Guardian of Water, that adorns a fountain on the west side of the building and grounds. The landscaping was designed by Roland Hoyt. Murals and decorative features adorn much of the structure, which has been modified continuously over the years but still retained its integrity.

REFERRAL/ PREVIOUS ACTIONS:

The Keeper of the National Register of the United States has placed the San Diego Civic Center on the National Register on May 16, 1988. This honor was accepted by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors at a ceremony on July 11, 1988. The nomination was approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 12, 1986.

The nomination does not include the Public Health facility at 1700 Pacific Highway or a gardener's shed at the corner of Ash and Pacific Highway. These structures were excluded from the National Register nomination.

On March 9, 1988 the Board of Supervisors adopted the Site Listing Guidelines.

HISTORIC SITE BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

1. Find that the San Diego Civic Center and the surrounding Hoyt landscaping and Hord sculpture qualify under the Site Listing Guidelines, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on March 9, 1988 as a historic site with architectural and cultural landscape value;
2. Find that this action is not subject to environmental review because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility of an environmental effect.

3. Register the San Diego Civic Center and 16.38 acres as Historic Landmark Number 1 on the County Register of Historic Sites.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

The Chief Administrative Officer concurs with the Historic Site Board.

MAJOR ISSUES

- Does the San Diego Civic Center and its landscape and sculptures qualify under the Site Listing Guidelines as a historic landmark?

BACKGROUND/REASONS FOR HEARING:

The City of San Diego Historical Site Board included the San Diego Civic Center in a cultural survey in October of 1986 and recommended that it be nominated to the National Register of Historic Sites. Historian Sylvia Kathleen Flanigan and Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 nominated the site to the National Register on January 9, 1988. This nomination to the County Historic Site Board was forwarded by Marie Burke Lia for Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 to honor that site with first place on the County Register of Historic Sites.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR ISSUES AND RESPONSES

- DOES THE SAN DIEGO CIVIC CENTER AND ITS LANDSCAPE AND SCULPTURES QUALIFY UNDER THE SITE LISTING GUIDELINES AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK?

Discussion: Ordinance 7105 and Section 396.5 of the County Administrative Code, Part (L) (3) requires a register to be maintained of all sites, buildings and structures the Historic Site Board has determined to be historic sites. The Site Listing Guidelines define historic locations as places associated with persons or events significant to the history of the County of San Diego. Historic landscape sites are notable examples of landscape architecture.

"Historic Site: A Historic Site is an important (1) structure, architectural or artistic site, (2) historic location, (3) archaeological site, or (4) historic landscape site. A site may include interiors. (Site Listing Guidelines For The San Diego County Historic Site Board, II. Definitions, Page 2)"
The San Diego Civic Center was designed in 1934 by prominent architects, Louis J. Gill, Samuel W. Hamill, William T. Johnson, and Richard S. Requa. It was built as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project between 1936 and 1938 by B.O. Larsen and Charles Hoskins. The landscaping was designed by Richard Hoyt. Interior sculptures and murals reflect WPA symbols of federal New Deal era response to the Great Depression of the United States. The Spanish Revival architecture combined Streamline Modern influences and Beaux-Arts touches in order to express optimism and pride in the government of the County. The San Diego Civic Center qualified under the Site Listing Guidelines as a historic site and location with significant historic landscape and architecture on the 16.38 acres of land on the edge of San Diego Bay.

Response:

Historic Site Board: The Historic Site Board reviewed the information provided by Citizen’s Coordinate for Century III and concluded that this National Register site should be given the honor of position number 1 on the County Register of Historic Sites. The site has outstanding art, architecture, landscape, and has been the forum for the most significant governmental events in the history of the County of San Diego over the past fifty years.

The San Diego Civic Center lies within the zoning jurisdiction of the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego Historic Landmark zone and "H" designator can not be applied to this site. However, the Historic Site Board has retained the right to register historic sites within cities and other agency jurisdictions in order to be free to honor those sites, comment upon other agency listings, and be involved in historic preservation work throughout the region. Authority for this activity is County Administrative Code, Sections 396.5 (L) (4) and (5) that require coordination with other agencies in historic preservation work.

PLANNING GROUP/PUBLIC STATEMENTS

No formal public comment has been received since the Historic Site Board posted the agenda for and held the May 11, 1988 meeting where the San Diego Civic Center was approved to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors. Staff from the City of San Diego Historic Site Board encouraged the registration in a telephone call.
HISTORIC SITE BOARD REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

1. Registration and recognition of the San Diego Civic Center as a historic site is consistent with the policies of the Conservation Element of the County of San Diego General Plan.

2. The Board of Supervisors approved the nomination of the San Diego Civic Center to the National Register of Historic Sites.

3. The San Diego Civic Center and the 16.38 acre parcel of land upon which it rests are on the National Register of Historic Sites.

4. The San Diego Civic Center received a bronze plaque on July 11, 1988, to commemorate the National Register of Historic Places honor.

BOARD POLICY APPLICABLE:
ORDINANCE 7105 AND SECTION 396.5
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, HISTORIC LANDMARK ZONE

CONCURRENCES:

APPROVED BY COUNTY COUNSEL AS TO LEGALITY: (X) YES

W. Taylor

CAO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

Sheffer

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Planning Documentation
Attachment B - P/C - PERB and Public Documentation

cc: Bob Lerner (A6)
Kristin Alliotti, 4211 Middlesex Drive, San Diego, California 92116
SOHO, Post Office Box 3571, San Diego, California 92103

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