



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION COMMISSION ACTION

This is not a Certificate of Appropriateness and cannot be used to acquire permits

October 21, 2015

HDRC CASE NO: 2015-421
COMMON NAME: Merchant's Ice
ADDRESS: 1305 E HOUSTON ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 567 BLK 4 LOT 1 THRU 14
LANDMARK: Merchants Ice and Cold Storage
APPLICANT: James McKnight/Brown & Ortiz - 112 E Pecan
OWNER: John Miller/Urban Ice, Ltd - 7324 Gaston Ave #124-311

REQUEST:

The applicant is seeking HDRC recommendation to remove historic designation for the majority of the property at 1305 E Houston (Merchant's Ice Complex). The applicant proposes to maintain historic designation for the oldest building which faces E Houston.

FINDINGS:

g) The Merchant's Ice & Cold Storage Company is a local historic landmark and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The earliest part of the complex was constructed in 1909 along E Houston. Three additional storage buildings were constructed between 1944 and 1957, and are noteworthy for their lift-slab construction technique, an innovative method pioneered in San Antonio c.1950. The complex remains a prominent and important landmark on the City's East Side. h) Local historic designation necessitates HDRC review of demolition and places design controls for infill construction and additions. If an owner wishes to seek demolition, information supporting an economic hardship or loss of significance must be presented to the HDRC. Staff strongly encourages the owner of this property to continue to make applications to the HDRC through this established process. i) The HDRC has not reviewed any proposed plans, alterations, or a requests for demolition for this property. The current request for removal of historic designation is preemptive to an HDRC action and the property owner must first work through the appropriate channels to seek approval of a proposal for the site. If there is an economic hardship associated with rehabilitating the buildings on the site, then information substantiating that claim must be made to the HDRC. j) UDC Section 35-606 requires that new and compelling evidence and a negative evaluation according to the same criteria under which the property was designated is required for the HDRC to consider removal of designation. No new evidence has been provided by the applicant, and staff finds that no loss of significance as occurred which would result in ineligibility for designation. k) The Merchant's Ice complex is an excellent candidate for adaptive reuse using local, state, and federal historic tax incentives. However, utilization of the incentives is contingent on the retention of its contributing structures. Removal of local designation not only removes the property's candidacy for local tax incentives, it also releases a potential developer from any design-review requirements. The historic and design review process in put in place for historic landmarks and districts to ensure quality, compatible development in relation to the places the community wishes to protect. Removal of historic designation is a negative approach to economic development which undermines community efforts of the past.

RECOMMENDATION:

Local historic designation is an important tool which protects historical and community resources from demolition, provides incentives for rehabilitation which spurs economic development, and places design review requirements on the property which ensure quality and compatible construction. Staff does not recommend approval to remove

the historic zoning overlay from any portion of this property. If demolition is desired by the owner, then staff recommends that an application be made to the HDRC. If the HDRC does not approve a demolition request, the applicant has an opportunity for appeal through the established process.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Denied.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shanon Shea Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Shanon Shea Miller
Historic Preservation Officer