

## MEMORANDUM

### PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CITY OF SANTA MONICA PLANNING DIVISION

**DATE:** May 14, 2007

**TO:** The Honorable Landmarks Commission

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**SUBJECT:** **2001-2011 Main Street (Horizons West Surf Shop), LC-07LM-002**  
Public Hearing to Consider a Landmark Designation Application

PROPERTY OWNER: 2001 Main Street LLC  
APPLICANT: City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission

#### INTRODUCTION

On April 9, 2007, an application was filed by the Landmarks Commission to designate 2001-2011 Main Street as a City Landmark. A Landmark Assessment Report (Attachment A) has been prepared for the subject property by the City's historic resources consultant, PCR Services Corporation. This assessment of the subject property also includes review of all information and research materials previously submitted by the property owner and members of the public.

The subject property is located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Bay Street and is a rectangular parcel with dimensions of 100 feet by 120 feet. The property was originally constructed in 1922 and is currently developed with a one-story, C-shaped masonry building consisting of several distinct sections: a narrow west wing facing Main Street, a south wing attached to the west wing, and an east wing.<sup>1</sup> The entire development is centered around a parking area with vehicular access from Bay Street.

The subject property is within the boundaries of the Main Street District, however, it has not been identified as a contributor to the District in any prior surveys.

#### PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Notice of the public hearing was provided as follows: Pursuant to SMMC Section 9.36.120, notice of the public hearing was mailed to all owners and residential and commercial tenants of property within a 300-foot radius of the project and was published in the *Santa Monica Daily Press* at least ten consecutive calendar days prior to the hearing. A copy of the notice is included as Attachment B.

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<sup>1</sup> Chattel Architecture, Historic Resource Assessment, 2001-2011 Main Street, December, 2006.

## ANALYSIS

### Property Information and Architectural Description

The subject property consists of a one-story masonry building consisting of three distinct sections. The west wing is composed of the long rectangular block which contains two adjacent stores in a north section and south section. The west wing is covered by a hipped roof sheathed in rolled composition asphalt and is crowned by a wide overhanging cornice. Entrances to the stores are located on the west elevation facing Main Street. The attached south and east wings have an L-shape plan and have housed studios used by artist John Baldessari since 1975.

The building was constructed in 1922 as a gas station and auto repair shop with stores facing Main Street. A historic photograph of the property showed that there was a driveway from Main Street that lead through the building and to the service bays in the east wing.<sup>2</sup> A variety of alterations and uses have occurred on the property since that time including filling in of the auto service bays, a check cashing booth, restaurant, and other neighborhood convenience uses. A major alteration occurred in 1956 when the storefronts along Main Street were remodeled. The remodel was designed by Ralph Vaughn (1907-2001), an important African American architect best known for his role in designing Lincoln Place (1949-1951) and Chase Knolls Apartments (1949).<sup>3</sup> However, the storefront remodel is not a significant or representative example of his work. In 1972, the storefront on Main Street was again remodeled by owners Lew Hermann and Allan Jeffrey Ho, and store co-founder, Skip Engblom, for use as a retail surfboards and accessories shop. The use of the west wing as a retail surf shop has continued since that time.

### Historic Associations

#### *SANTA MONICA*

In 1875, the original town site of Santa Monica was surveyed including all the land extending from Colorado Street on the south to Montana on the north, and from 26<sup>th</sup> Street on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west. As the community developed through the 1920s due to the automobile, commercial development concentrated along Second and Third Streets and Wilshire Boulevard and Colorado Avenue within the Central Business District. A concentration of commercial development also occurred along Main Street, extending from Colorado Avenue on the north to the Los Angeles city limits on the south. Main Street is divided into two sections north and south of Ocean Park Boulevard. The subject property is situated within the section north of Ocean Park Boulevard, which reflects the streets' varied historic commercial, industrial, and residential usage.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> PCR, Revised Supplemental Information Memorandum: 2001-2003 Main Street, April 24, 2007.

## OCEAN PARK

The subject property is located within the City of Santa Monica's Ocean Park neighborhood. Ocean Park's history was somewhat independent from that of the rest of Santa Monica. Separated from the north by a gully, which today is filled by the Santa Monica Freeway, Ocean Park was initially oriented towards the beach where a series of piers and other tourist attractions were erected in the late Nineteenth Century. Ocean Park was the center of Santa Monica's amusement piers including Crystal Pier and Pacific Ocean Park Pier. The Pacific Ocean Park Pier was destroyed by fire in 1922 and restored 30 years later only to be abandoned because it was financially unsuccessful.<sup>4</sup> "Dogtown" was the name for the area around where the Pier was situated on the south side of Santa Monica. During the early 1970s, local surfers rode the waves around the deteriorated Pier structure, an area known as "The Cove". It was a dangerous place to surf due to limited space, underwater obstructions, and tilted wood pilings. Within this group of local surfers were a group of kids from the area who became the Zephyr Team (i.e. Z-Boys).

## DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS

In 1972, Jeff Ho, Skip Engblom, and Craig Stecyk started a surf shop in the middle of "Dogtown" called "Jeff Ho and Zephyr Surfboard Productions". Jeff Ho experimented with surfboard shapes and Craig Stecyk designed the surfboard graphics. The graphics reflected the urban setting of the area demonstrated by local graffiti and car models of the period. The Zephyr Team was created from young surfers that lived in "Dogtown":

Shogo Kubo	Bob Biniak	Nathan Pratt
Stacey Peralta	Jim Muir	Allen Sarlo
Chris Cahill	Tony Alva	Paul Constantineau
Jay Adams	Peggy Oki	Wentzle Ruml

The Zephyr Team wore blue Zephyr shirts and blue Vans shoes, providing an identity for the youths, many of whom came from broken homes. The Z-Boys initially enjoyed skating as an after-surfing activity; however, as they started to apply their aggressive surfing style to skating, they created new moves such as the *Burt*, named after prominent local surfer, Larry Burtleman.<sup>5</sup> The *Burt* involved dragging fingers or planting a hand on the ground and turning on it, a move that is still used in skateboarding today. While the rest of the country practiced skateboarding in a more conventional freestyle or slalom form, the Z-Boys practiced a unique and powerful style that mimicked wave riding and relied on urban structures such as concrete pavement, sidewalks, and roads.

During the 1970s, California experienced a record drought that required swimming pools to be emptied. True to their style, the Z-Boys saw this as an opportunity to experiment with "pool riding". Initially, this involved only skating in the pools, however it quickly evolved and innovations in style and technique occurred rapidly. It was during this time that Tony Alva

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

first perfected the *aerial*, which involved suspension in mid-air above the edge of a pool.<sup>6</sup> This move, among others invented by the Z-Boys, became the standard used in skateboarding and surfing today.

In 1975, the Z-Boys' style would be unveiled to the skateboarding world at the Del Mar Nationals, the first major skateboarding championship since the 1960s. Their aggressive, low skating style and creativity were an instant hit. So unique were the moves that the judges had no reference from which to judge their routines. Although the allure of fame and fortune was to break apart the Z-Boys shortly after the competition, there is little doubt that the event was a defining moment in skateboarding and in their own lives. The influence of the Z-Boys movement continued to modern skateboarding expressed through performance, innovation, and style.

The subject property is clearly associated with the Z-Boys as the surf shop was where the team met and where the creative work in experimenting with surfboard design occurred. Their lives have been well documented through film and print. Some members of the team continued to make contributions to skating in their own way. Stacey Peralta became a professional skateboarder and film director. Included in his accomplishments was the highest ranked professional skateboarder in the world at the age of 19 and more recently, the creation of the documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. Tony Alva became one of the most influential skateboarders of all time going on to form his own skateboard company, the first skateboard company owned by a skater. Jeff Ho and Skip Engblom eventually ended their partnership and the Zephyr surf shop closed in 1976. Nathan Pratt would reopen the surf shop in 1977, renaming it Horizons West. So tied are the Z-Boys to the area's cultural identity that visitors from around the world continue to visit the surf shop at Main and Bay where the Z-Boys originated.

#### *PERSONS OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE*

##### **Jeff Ho**

Jeff Ho has been a seminal force in the surfing and skating world for more than three decades. He developed the innovative split-tail surfboard design that would become the hallmark of his creative work. Ho designed and built shorter, lighter boards at various "underground" surfboard factories all over Los Angeles and started to sell his boards from his truck at the beach and at local surf shops, most notably the shop located at the corner of Main and Bay Streets, then known as Select Surf Shop.<sup>7</sup> As his success grew, he purchased the shop and continued to create boards within the south section of the west wing, adding a wall partition to separate the store in the north section from his surfboard studio. In addition to forming the Zephyr Team, he also created the Zephyr skateboard that would be imitated as the standard within the skateboarding world.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## **Craig Stecyk**

Craig Stecyk is considered one of the region's leading pop-culture historians. Creator of icons of skateboarding attitude, such as the "Pig and Crossbones" graffiti and Dogtown cross, he gained notoriety for his artwork on surfboards designed by Jeff Ho. He documented the Z-Boys through photography and print for *Skateboarder* magazine and has continued to expand his reputation as an internationally known contemporary artist working in sculpture, painting, surfboards, and hot-rod cars. His documentation of the gentrification of Ocean Park that eliminated the community with which he was linked was from the view of a surfer/artist and has made him an unlikely historian on the subject.<sup>8</sup>

## **John Baldessari**

John Baldessari is a prominent local artist who has won international acclaim for his work in the visual arts. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions all over the world. Since 1975, his studio has been located at 2001 ½ Main Street, within the south wing of the subject property, although it is unknown whether this is his primary studio. The corner of Main and Bay has featured prominently in a number of artworks. In evaluating whether the artist studios in the east and south wings can be associated with John Baldessari, the only relevant Landmark criterion would be #3. While a prominent artist, Mr. Baldessari cannot be considered to be a "historic personage" because he is still living. In reaching this conclusion, staff referenced the National Register Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*, which states the following with respect to association with living persons:

"On rare occasions, properties associated with individuals still living have been listed in the National Register. However, the nomination of such properties is strongly discouraged in order to avoid use of the National Register listing to endorse the work or reputation of a living person."

Properties nominated due to their association with living persons have occurred in situations where their active life in their field of endeavour is over. In these cases, sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both their field and their contribution in a historic perspective.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Mr. Baldessari, he continues to be active in his field and therefore, would not qualify under this criterion.

## **William Wegman**

William Wegman is an artist best known for his photographs and videos and dogs in humorous situations. He was the tenant in the studios at 2001 ½ Main Street before John Baldessari. It does not appear that Wegman's important work took place at the subject property and therefore, it cannot be concluded that the subject property has strong associations to his work.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cmp.ucr.edu/exhibitions/ocean-view/stecyk>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb22/nrb22\\_VII.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb22/nrb22_VII.htm)

## Architectural Significance

The subject property is a concrete masonry commercial building and does not represent a style that is no longer prevalent in the City. The property's significance lies primarily in its association with the Z-Boys and their contribution to cultural and social history of skateboarding and Santa Monica. Character-defining features of the subject property were identified by PCR and were specifically identified for their association with Jeff Ho, the Zephyr surf shop, and the Z-Boys:

- **West façade of the subject property including the display windows and store entrances.** These features existed at the time that Jeff Ho Surfboards and Zephyr Productions occupied the space. The windows allowed passersby to look at surfboards, which reflected the local culture during that period.
- **Space occupied by surf shop in the south end of the west wing.** This space contained Jeff Ho's surfboard shaping room and was the place where the Z-Boys were formed.
- **Space occupied by the skateboard shop in the north end of the west wing.** This space contains one of the original Z-Boys insignia on the door and a painted mural of the Pacific Ocean Pier. It also exhibits icons such as the Dogtown Cross and graffiti that may be associated with the Z-Boys. This was where the Z-Boys gathered regularly.

## Landmarks Ordinance/Findings

The Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission to review the building's eligibility as a landmark based on the six criteria discussed below. The Commission may designate a property as a Landmark if it meets one or more of these criteria.

Based on the research and evaluation of the commercial property at 2001-2011 Main Street, staff concludes that only the west wing of the building, with dimensions of approximately 20'Dx108'W, appears to meet four designation criteria and is therefore eligible for City Landmark designation. The following draft findings are made to support these conclusions:

- (1) *It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.*

In the 1970s, the area where the subject property is located was a poor and blighted urban area. Teenage youths, some from broken homes, were trying to find a way to prove themselves. In 1972, the subject property was taken over by the Jeff Ho Surfboards and Zephyr Productions shop. Ho, along with Craig Stecyk and Skip Engblom, started a business selling their own surfboards decorated with urban images inspired by the gritty neighborhood surroundings, the local graffiti, and the famous car models of the time. The shop also became a popular spot for street kids to gather and tapped the talent of these youths by forming them into a surfing and skateboarding team. This started a revolution in the sport, based upon an

aggressive, urban attitude that formed an integral part of their skateboarding and surfing style. They used local urban structures like sidewalks, pools, streets, beach parking lots, and school yards to express their new found freedom. In pool riding, the Z-Boys found a new urban expression for skateboarding. They often broke the law by going into dry pools in private backyards and then running off when they heard police sirens. This subversive behavior was like a socio-political statement representative of their new-found freedom, power and identity. In resurrecting and revolutionizing the almost dead sport of skateboarding, these teenagers from Dogtown inspired the young people of their own time and those that followed to strive for identity and achievement in the face of adversity.

An article in the *Journal of American Folklore* (2004) mentions the documentary film, *Dogtown and Z Boys*, which focuses on a self-defined subculture. This subculture claims an ardently oppositional identity, which positions itself against the values of mainstream middle-class life. "Dogtown" describes the depressed, lower-middle class of the south Santa Monica neighborhood that witnessed the birth of contemporary skateboarding during the 1970s. Today, people remember Dogtown, and in particular, the subject property, as the home of the famous Z-Boys. They feel the shop is an important part of Santa Monica's local culture. The documentary, *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, and the film, *Lords of Dogtown*, as well as articles and websites dedicated to the Z-Boys and the Zephyr shop have recorded the importance of the place and the influence of those associated with it on surfing and skateboarding. The present commercial building is thus representative of the Z-Boys and the movement they initiated. Therefore, subject property exemplifies, symbolizes and manifests the cultural, social, and economic history of the City, and thus appears to satisfy this criterion.

(2) *It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.*

Although the buildings on the subject property do not possess artistic interest or value for their architectural qualities, the subject property appears to have noteworthy interest or value in the sense that it harbored the revolution of an art form which found its expression in the design and graphic arts associated with the surfboards and skateboards of the 1970s era which became an important, recognizable part of southern Californian culture. The subject property is associated with the artistic activities of Jeff Ho and Craig Stecyk, and Stacy Peralta. In addition, the property is associated with the members of the Z-Boys Team who played a key role in revolutionizing the style of a sport and went on to become top-ranked surfers, champion skateboarders, and entrepreneurs in their own right. The display windows housed and disseminated this expression around the world. The door in the northern part facing west with Tony Alva's art work is also an expression of the self and so is the art work in the interior of the northern part of the building. The pier on the eastern wall is associated with life on the sea side with the omnipresent pier. The art form on the exterior of upper part of the northern wall and the southern part of the western wall shows an expression of the freedom of spirit with the help of waves and the flowers akin to the creeper in the northern part. Thus, the property appears to

have sufficient noteworthy interest and value necessary for designation under this criterion for its association with important artists and noteworthy surfers and skateboarders, the Z-Boys.

- (3) *It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.*

Research has revealed that the subject property is associated with personages important in local, state and national history of the sport of surfing and skateboarding. Historic personages associated with the property include Jeff Ho, Craig Stecyk, Skip Engblom, the founders of the Z-Boys team, and prominent team members Tony Alva, and Stacey Peralta. The contributions that the Z-Boys made as a group to skateboarding outweighed the individual notoriety that some members would go on to achieve. The entrance of the northern part facing west has art work painted by Tony Alva himself, one of the most influential skateboarders. Therefore, the subject property does appear eligible for local landmark designation under this criterion for its association with personages important in the history of surfing and skateboarding.

- (4) *It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.*

The subject property does not possess sufficient architectural merit to warrant designation as a contributor to the Main Street District or as an individual landmark. It is a common, undistinguished concrete and masonry building which does not satisfy this criterion.

- (5) *It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.*

The subject property is not a significant or representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect and does not satisfy this criterion. The building was designed and built by a local architect and contractor, J. L. Schrurs, but is not a significant or representative example of his work and has lost integrity to numerous later alterations. The storefronts were remodeled in 1956 by notable African American architect, Ralph Vaughn, but the storefronts are not significant or a representative example of his work. Therefore, the building does not satisfy this criterion.

- (6) *It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.*

The subject property has attained recognition in the recent past as a unique location in Santa Monica by virtue of its association with the Jeff Ho Surfboards and Zephyr Productions shop and the Z-Boys. The subject property has also become an

established and familiar visual feature of Main Street in the Ocean Park neighborhood (Dogtown) and is well documented in the film, *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. The subject property has been in use as a surf shop from 1972 until the present time and is associated with the cultural identity of Ocean Park that is defined by the local culture of skateboarding and surfing. The Horizons West surf shop which occupied the building after the Zephyr shop closed was owned by Nathan Pratt, one of the Z-Boys. Around 1994, the mural on the front of the building which was associated with the Zephyr surf shop was painted over. For the past 15 years the surf shop has been owned by Randy Wright. The shop has served the needs of three generations of ocean enthusiasts. As a result of movies, books and articles by photographer, Craig Stecyk, who defined the skateboarding movement, the site has become an international destination for skateboarding fans. The subject property retains the ambience that reminds a silent onlooker of its glorious past. Tourists still visit the subject property and frequent the places where the Z-Boys practiced their sport. Neighborhood residents also consider themselves a part of the history associated with the subject property. Therefore, the property satisfies this criterion as a unique location and as an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood and community in the City.

### RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research and evaluation of the property at 2001-2011 Main Street, staff concludes that the west wing of the building, approximately 20 feet in depth and 108 feet in width (Figure 1), meets four designation criteria and is therefore eligible for City Landmark designation.

**Figure 1: Illustration of west wing recommended for Landmark designation**



Staff recommends that the Commission designate the one-story, west wing of the building

currently used as the surf shop as a City Landmark and the real property, commonly known as 2001-2011 Main Street (legal description), as a Landmark Parcel based on the draft findings contained herein.

Staff further recommends that the Commission exclude the east and south wings of the subject property from the Landmark designation.

Pursuant to SMMC 9.36.180, the Landmarks Commission's determination regarding this application may be appealed to the City Council if the appeal is filed with the City Planning Division within ten (10) consecutive days commencing from the date that the decision is made by the Landmarks Commission.

Attachments:

- A. PCR Services Revised Supplemental Information Memorandum (April 2007)
- B. Public Notice
- C. Additional Correspondence
- D. Materials provided at previous hearings