



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

September 15, 2010

HDRC CASE NO: 2010-350

ADDRESS: 1612 N Zarzamora

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 2085 BLK 25 LOT 13 AND 14

PUBLIC PROPERTY: NA

HISTORIC DISTRICT: NA

LANDMARK DISTRICT: NA

APPLICANT: Mary & Gilbert Garcia 147 Roslyn

OWNER: Mary & Gilbert Garcia

TYPE OF WORK: Finding of Historic Significance

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a finding of historic significance for Lerma's Nite Club.

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Lerma's Nite Club, on the west side of San Antonio, is culturally significant for its lengthy association with conjunto music and as a longstanding conjunto dance venue for the Westside community. Many significant musicians including, Eva Ybarra, Henry Zimmerle, Bene Medina, Santiago Jimenez, Lidya Mendoza, Valerio Longoria and the late Esteban Jordan, have played at Lerma's Nite Club. Lerma's is an iconic landmark of the City's Westside and is reportedly the longest running live conjunto music venue in Central and South Texas.

Conjunto music is a very unique Texan fusion of German and Czech accordion sounds and Mexican ranchera played by migrating farm workers in the fields of Texas ranches and farms. Texican migrant workers of Mexican descent traveled from crop to crop in communities with strong German and Czech influences, entertaining family and friends. They soon began adopting the polka accordion sounds with their own native bajo sexto that evolved in Mexico. Conjunto music is truly an American-born Texas music. Conjunto music dance styles include polkas, waltzes, schottizes, redobas, doble paso (two-step), boleros, mambo, huapango, cumbia and mazurka.

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In addition to its lengthy history as a live music and dance venue, Lerma's has also been a location for filming. A portion of the Selena movie was filmed inside Lerma's Nite Club, with the famous Aztec "Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl" mural appearing in the movie. More recently the female rock trio, Girl in a Coma, a local San Antonio band, filmed their "Clumsy Sky" video inside Lerma's.

The building itself was constructed in 1942 of cinder block construction with Art Deco architectural features, including octagonal windows and tile skirting (currently painted over). The building consists of five separate sections, and each section has been home to different businesses: a donut shop, a tire shop, a laundry, dry cleaners, a grocery store, a thrift store, and a restaurant. The largest section was home to El Sombrero, a Norteno/Mexican/conjunto live music venue.

In 1948, Mr. Pablo H. Lerma took over the lease of the larger section (then El Sombrero), turning into an exclusively live conjunto music venue, and called it Lerma's. His son, Armando, took over the business when his father retired, but eventually he fell ill and decided not to continue the family business. Mary and Gilbert Garcia, and Gilbert's father, were very good friends of the Lerma's and took over the lease, agreeing to keep using the family name. The business was registered as Lerma's Nite Club by Mary and Gilbert Garcia in 1981. The building owner passed away, and the executors of his estate decided to sell the building and offered it to Mary and Gilbert in 1988. Gilbert, a saxophonist and now bar owner, and his wife Mary decided to invest their retirement savings in purchasing the building.

A group of community members has banded together and formed the SAVE LERMA'S coalition. The group is currently organizing community fundraisers and conducting a general clean-up of the property. The group has received in-kind architectural services from Community Design Studio. They have also just received a \$1500 grant from the National Trust for a more detailed structural engineers report. The owners will appear before the DSDB on September 27, 2010. A structural engineer has already provided a structural report at the DSDB meeting on July 26. It was determined to be a viable structure but will require time and money for repairs. The building is currently not open for business.

RECOMMENDATION:

Lerma's is an excellent example of a structure with cultural significance. Staff recommends approval of a finding of historic significance based on the following criteria.

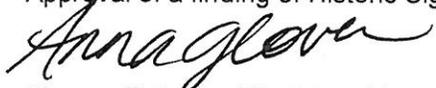
35-607 (b) 1. Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event: its lengthy association with Conjunto music and as a longstanding dance/music venue for the Westside community;

35-607 (b) 11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly emphasizes the cultural, economic, social, ethnic, or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas, or the United States: its lengthy association with Texas Conjunto music and as a longstanding dance/music venue for San Antonio's Westside community;

35-607 (b) 15. It represents a resource, whether natural or man-made, which greatly contributes to the character or image of a defined neighborhood or community: its lengthy history as a community dance/music/gathering place for the Westside community.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Approval of a finding of Historic Significance for 1612 N. Zarzamora.



for
Shanon Peterson Wasielewski
Historic Preservation Officer