

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION

PALM TREE INN *(Palm Tree Inn Motel)*

2724 Monterey Rd.
San José, Santa Clara County, California
(APN 497-33-004)



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April 18, 2003

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* Cover photo

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Historical and architectural research and evaluation for historic significance of the property known as Palm Tree Inn, located at 2724 Monterey Rd., San José, Santa Clara County, California, was conducted in March and April 2003 by the firm of Dill Design Group of Los Gatos, California, in association with Archives & Architecture, Heritage Resource Partners. CORE Development, Inc. of San José, California, is planning to construct a multi-family housing complex at the subject site. The project proposed by CORE includes demolition of all the extant structures on the subject site, including the Palm Tree Inn.

The intent of this evaluation is to clarify the historical status of the site as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to determine whether demolition of the buildings and structures on the Palm Tree Inn site would or would not have an adverse effect on the environment.

The Palm Tree Inn and site is presently owned by Raman N. Patel et al. The property is identified by the Santa Clara County Assessor as APN 497-33-004. The development may include other properties not presently associated with the Palm Tree Inn. These other properties were not included as a part of this study.

1.1 Qualifications of the Consultants

Leslie A. G. Dill, Principal of the firm Dill Design Group, has a Master of Architecture with a certificate in Historic Preservation from the University of Virginia. She is licensed in California as an architect. Ms. Dill provided project oversight and assisted with building descriptions. The principal author of this report and evaluator for significance was Franklin Maggi, Architectural Historian, who consults in the field of historic architecture and urban development. Mr. Maggi has a professional degree in architecture with an area of concentration in architectural history from the University of California, Berkeley. Charlene Duval, Consulting Historian, conducted the property history and prepared the historical overview of the area. Ms. Duval has a Master of Social Science with emphasis in History, Geography, and Archeology from San José State University. Bonnie Montgomery prepared the section on the evolution on automobile-oriented lodging. Ms. Montgomery has a Master of Arts degree and is owner of Bay and Valley Publishers, a firm specializing in local history books. Mr. Maggi and Ms. Dill are listed as architectural historians with the Northwest Information Center, Rohnert Park, which is operated under authority of the California State Office of Historic Preservation; additionally, Ms. Dill and Ms. Duval are listed as Historic Architect and Historian, respectively, with the Northwest Information Center. Ms. Dill, Mr. Maggi, and Ms. Duval meet the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications to perform identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities within their respective fields of Architect, Architectural Historian, and Historian in compliance with state and federal environmental laws. The Northwest Information Center utilizes the criteria of the National Park Service outlined in 36 CFR Part 61.

1.2 Methodology

This document is presented in a report format, and attached as a supplement to the report are State of California DPR523 historic property recordation forms that condense the text of the main report within an abridged format. The report was prepared according to the City of San José *Guidelines for Historic Reports* (1998), and includes a numerical rating sheet based on the work of Harold Kalman (1980).

The buildings and site that are within the scope of this report were examined in April 2003 by Franklin Maggi, Charlene Duval, Bonnie Montgomery, and Leslie A.G. Dill. Notes on the architecture, characteristic features of the buildings, and the neighborhood context were made. Photographs of the exterior of the buildings and the related site were taken. Unlabeled photographs within this report were

taken digitally by Franklin Maggi on April 2, 2003. Architectural descriptions within this report were written based on these notes and photographs. Historical research was conducted by Charlene Duval and Bonnie Montgomery, and included visits to major repositories of local historical source material. These repositories included the California Room at the San José Martin Luther King Jr. Main Library, the historical archives at the San José History Park, and the Santa Clara County Recorder's and Surveyor's Offices. This report was prepared utilizing the methodology recommended by the National Park Service, as outlined in Preservation Briefs #17 - Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character (1988), and #35 - Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation (1994).

1.3 Survey Status

The property at 2724 Monterey Rd. is not listed on the San José Historic Resources Inventory. As the property was originally developed in unincorporated Santa Clara County, the 1975 Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory as well as the 1979 update were checked but no listings of the property were found. The nearest identified historical resource is the Holt House, located north of the subject property at 2662 Monterey Rd. This building is located in unincorporated Santa Clara County and is presently listed on the County Inventory.

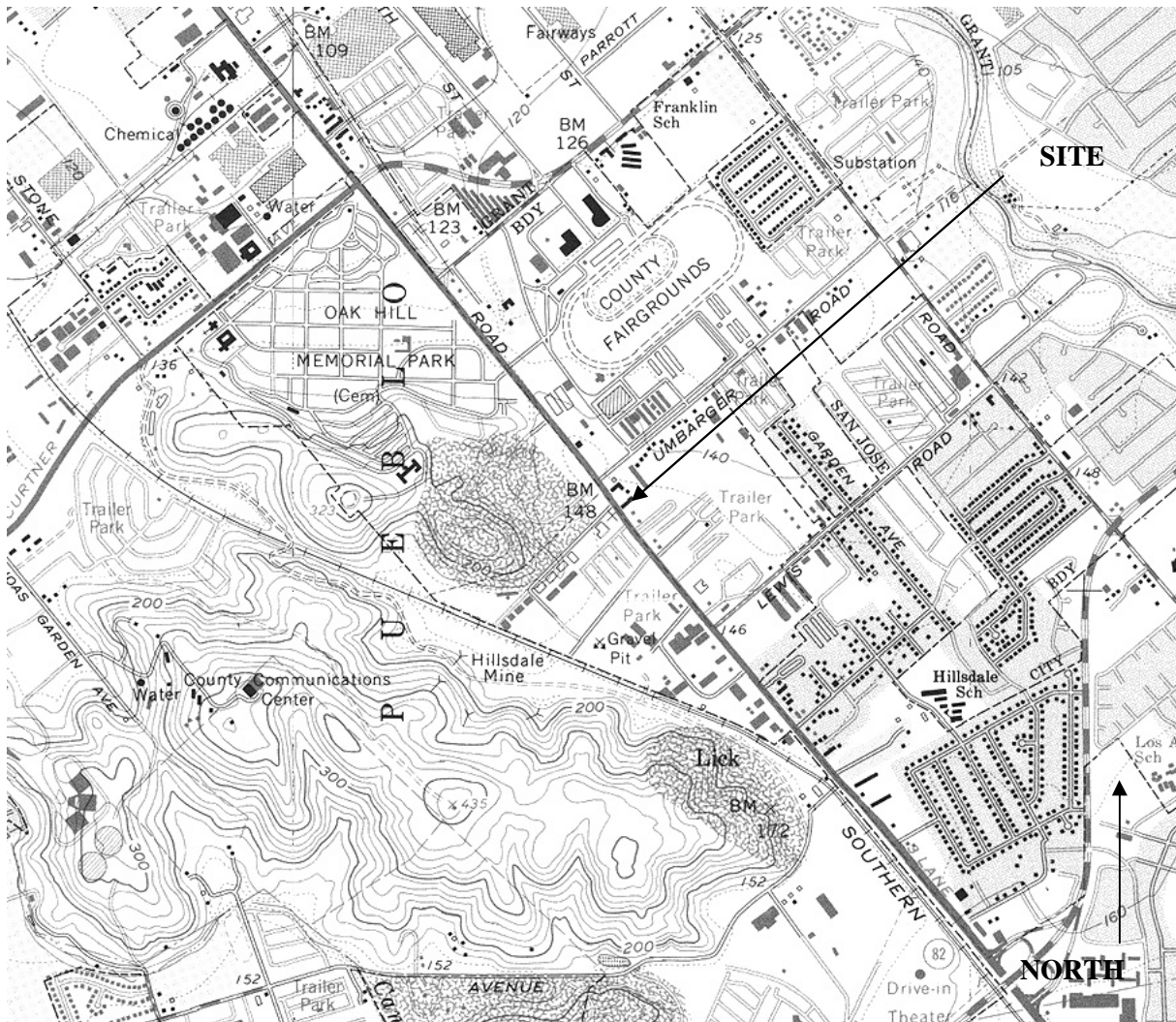
Listing as an historical resource in the San José Historic Resources Inventory indicates that a property is potentially significant historically, and that within the land use and development planning processes of the city, it should receive careful scrutiny during the environmental review procedures in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City's official Historic Resources Inventory was adopted by the San José City Council on March 18, 1986, under Resolution 58957. This action authorized the San José Historic Landmarks Commission to maintain the listing, adding and deleting specific properties as appropriate (City of San José 1998). However, properties not listed on the San José Inventory may still be historically significant and subject to detailed review under CEQA.

1.4 Summary of Findings

The Palm Tree Inn, known originally as the El Rancho de San Jose Motel, was evaluated for significance under CEQA for this report, and the buildings and site were not found to meet the minimum criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. The motel has local significance as an historical resource, and appears to meet the minimum requirements for listing on the San José Historic Resources Inventory as a Structure of Merit. This local significance is due to the association of the earlier El Rancho de San Jose Motel with evolving patterns of development associated with motor lodging. The design of the original motel was creative, using Spanish Colonial Revival architectural elements in a way that was distinctive and gave the site visual identity. Aspects of this design continue to exist today at the Palm Tree Inn, although the original concept was compromised when the open carports were enclosed with additional rooms in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Because the buildings and site do not appear to qualify for the California Register, demolition to accommodate the construction of a housing development would not have a significant effect on the environment in the context of historic resources as defined by CEQA.

1.5 Location Map



Partial San José East, UGSG 1980 (photo revised).

2.0 HISTORICAL INFORMATION

2.1 Early Development of the Area

The Palm Tree Inn lies south of downtown San José, a city with origins as the first *pueblo* to be established in Alta California under Spanish rule, settled on November 29, 1777, on the eastern bank of the Guadalupe River two miles north of the subject area. Within the *pueblo*, the settlers (*pobladores*) were granted house lots (*solares*) and cultivation plots (*suertes*). The undeveloped lands surrounding the *pueblo* were suburbs or common lands (*ejidos*) used for the grazing of livestock and retained for future residential growth of the *pueblo*. The subject area was part of the *pueblo's* grazing lands. Use of the *ejido* lands was under the control of the *pueblo's* *alcalde* (major) and *ayuntamiento* (town council).

Early development in the project area included the formal establishment of a rural cemetery by the town council in 1848 at the site of present-day Oak Hill Memorial Park. This cemetery exists today on the west side of what is now Monterey Road, just northwest of the project site.

With the American occupation of California, the Hispanic system of land ownership did not meet the needs of the rapidly growing population of American and European settlers. In 1847, pressure was exerted upon the town council to make more land available for public ownership. The council decided that the vast areas of unoccupied *pueblo* lands (*ejidos*) would be subdivided into 500-acre lots. James D. Hutton was hired to survey this land into seventy-seven 500-acre lots, to be sold to heads of families on the basis of a draw. This plan went forward, but with unsatisfactory results. Hutton was a poor surveyor, and most lots were later discovered to be short several hundred acres. In 1848, a new surveyor, Chester Lyman resurveyed most of the 500-acre lots, finding Hutton's survey "wretched in every respect." Since title to these lands was conditional, and in most instances the conditions were not met, in 1850 the council declared them forfeited. It was also determined by the Governor of California that the *Junta* had no legal authority to dispose of these lands (Hall 1871; Laffey 1981). In spite of their invalidity, however, references to the 500-Acre Lot titles were mentioned in deed records for many years to come.

2.2 Property History of 2724 Monterey Rd.

The project site is located on the east side of Monterey Road, south of the original city limits of San José as established in 1850. The parcel was a portion of 500-Acre Lot 5, purchased by David Umbarger in 1851. Umbarger, a native of Virginia, came overland to California, arriving in January 1850. After spending a few years in the gold fields, he settled on this property in 1853 (Foote 1888). The 1854 tax assessment record states that he had a house on 90 acres of Lot 5, sharing title with a person named Bigham. Umbarger was living with his wife, Mary J., in 1860; but by 1870, his household consisted of his sister Margaret McBane, her two daughters, Alice and Carrie, and his brother Austin F. Umbarger (U.S. Census 1860, 1870). By 1876, Umbarger owned 138 acres. When David Umbarger died in 1891, the heir to his farm was his sister, Margaret McBane. His will disinherited his wife Mary and his son, James A. Umbarger. Mrs. McBane died in 1894, and her daughter Carrie McBane Jordan inherited much of what remained of the property (Loomis 8/1/1970).

In 1895, members of the German community opened Scheutzen Park on the west side of Monterey Road, south of Oak Hill Cemetery across from the project site (*SJM* 9/30/1895). The 1895 USGS survey of San José shows that the subject site lacked improvements at that time (USGS 1899). In 1899, Carrie McBane

Jordan deeded the Umbarger Road right-of-way to the County of Santa Clara (Loomis 8/1/1970). The alignment had been surveyed by Umbarger in 1890 (Herrmann 1890).¹

By 1902, the portion of the Umbarger property that contained the project area was a 14.84-acre parcel owned by a person with the initials “Y.H.B” (McMillan 1902-03). The only local person identified as part of this research effort with the initials Y.H.B. was Ygnacio H. Bernal, member of the nearby Bernal family who owned Rancho Santa Teresa. Deeds tying him to this property could not be located.

In 1909, the racetrack associated with San Jose Driving Park, operated by Ray Mead, had been constructed between Tully and Umbarger Roads, east of Monterey Road. The construction of this racetrack attracted persons associated with that business/pastime to the area, including Mary A. Burke who bought the property where the Umbarger House was located (2662 Monterey Rd.) about 1910 and the Macomber family who eventually purchased the track. The track accommodated both horse and automobile racing. The property would eventually become the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds (Arbuckle 1986; U.S. Census 1910; Pierce 1976).

By 1914, the 14.84-acre parcel that included the project area had been further subdivided with the subject property then consisting of 7.8 acres. It appears that about that time a house and barn were constructed on the property. These buildings are shown on a 1931 aerial photograph of this portion of Santa Clara County. The property was owned in 1924 by David L. Holt. Holt also owned and lived on the Umbarger/Burke property on the north side of Umbarger Road. He is noted in directories, census records, and other biographical sources as a farmer, a saloonkeeper, a Prohibition-era resort operator, and owner of Holt’s Palm Inn on Monterey Road (*SJMH* 1/21/1949; Loomis 8/1/1970). In the 1930 census, the study area property owned by Holt on the south side of Umbarger Road appears to be leased by a Japanese American family who were vegetable farmers.

On December 26, 1940, David L. Holt sold 6.57 acres, which included the study area, to Charles and Dora Knudsen (Official Records 1014:493). The Knudsens may have continued to lease the study area, as they were living in San José where Charles was foreman for the Nash Manufacturing Company and Dora worked for Baron-Gray Cannery.

2.3 Development of the El Rancho de San Jose Motel

About 1946, Charles and Dora Knudsen demolished the home on their property and constructed a motel that they named El Rancho de San Jose Motel. The property located then in unincorporated Santa Clara County, was listed in the San Jose Yellow Pages and the San Jose City Directory as an auto court in 1947. The barn and tank house located to the rear of the motel may have been associated with the farmhouse previously located on the property, in which case they were most likely moved to their current location in 1946. A 1948 aerial photograph shows that fruit trees continued to exist on the property behind the motel. The barn may have been part of continued use of that portion of the property as a fruit farm. The Knudsens operated the motel from 1946 to 1954.

The Knudsens built the motel as a group of rooms separated by individual carports and connected by a common roof. The office and manager’s office was centrally located between the two wings as it remains today. The 1948 aerial photograph reveals that a circular fountain was located in the middle of the landscaped square in front of the complex.

Leo Barone operated the motel from 1954 to 1957. In May 1957, Herve R. and Pauline Stokes purchased the motel and 2.43 acres (Official Records 3803:645). The Stokes operated the motel until 1960. Work on

¹ In 1970, the Umbarger House was relocated from its location at 2662 Monterey Road to the San José Historical Museum, now known as San José History Park, where it remains today.

converting the carports to additional motel units was begun in May 1957 by the Stokes (SJ Building Permit #50168; May 16, 1957) and completed in May 1960 (SJ Building Permit #58323; April 12, 1960). An unspecified addition to the motel was also done during this period (SJ Building Permit #56379; July 17, 1959).

From 1961 through 1963, various persons operated the motel, including William Addiego and James and Philip Miraglia (1961), Norman E. and Mary Ajlouny (1962), and William F. and Lucy Miller (1963). The swimming pool was added in summer 1961 (SJ Building Permit #60842; April 11, 1961). In 1964, Sebastian M. and Edith J. Sampognaro took over management of the motel with their daughter Frances. Robert S. and Kathleen Sampognaro purchased the motel in January 1973. In 1986, Raman N. Patel, *et al.* purchased the motel from the Sampognaros. The Patels changed the name of the motel to the Palm Tree Inn, the name it carries today.

2.4 The Evolution of Automobile-Oriented Lodging in San José

2.4.1 Auto Camping 1910-1920: Rejection of Railroads and Hotels

When the automobile made its appearance in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, motorists had their choice of three million miles of mostly dirt roads on which to drive. This transportation system served horse-drawn vehicles used largely for short-distance travel. Americans had abandoned the hardships of long-distance wagon trips after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. By 1910, trains routinely transported almost a billion passengers a year, and lodging for the long-distance traveler centered around hotels near railroad depots or city downtown districts (Belasco 1979).

Early automobile owners tended to be adventuresome people for whom the unreliable new technology represented a challenge rather than a headache. Around 1910, some of these affluent individualists began taking their machines out for long “tramps” across America. This new class of traveler eschewed the downtown hotels and camped with their automobiles by the side of the road. Part of this choice was practical and part was romantic. Practically speaking, early automobile travel was a dusty, dirty business, and few travelers wished to walk through hotel lobbies to register. Because hotels largely served a clientele arriving by railroad, parking was not available. Cars were taken to local garages, often at an inconvenient distance from the hotel. Automobile drivers and their families would prefer to rough it by camping alongside their cars. Automobile travelers would return to comfortable homes after their trips and romanticize their “gypsy” experiences. Many wrote accounts that were published in newspapers, magazines, and books, which attracted new gypsy tourists to the road (Belasco 1979).

Registered automobiles in the United States grew from 500,000 in 1910 to eight million in 1920. Where only 12 Americans had driven cross-country in 1912, an estimated 20,000 were making the trip in 1920. What was innocently called gypsying in 1910 was viewed as squatting by 1920, as more tourists made roadside litter and property damage a problem for farmers. “No Trespassing” signs became common along roadsides. Autocampers found it more difficult to find sites with clean water, exposing them to typhoid and other diseases (Belasco 1979).

The answer to these problems came with the development of free auto campgrounds around 1920. Camps preserved order, protected local property, and safeguarded the health and safety of tourists. As a byproduct, local businessmen hoped that auto campers, still mostly affluent tourists, would spend their travel dollars in their town (Belasco 1979).

2.4.2 Auto Tourists Find Their Way to San José

The San José Chamber of Commerce established a local auto camp in 1920 by leasing Cedar Brook Park, four acres at the northeast corner of South Twelfth and Keyes Streets, from its owner, P. Hermann H.

Richter. Richter, a native of Germany, had purchased the site, an abandoned brickyard, in 1900, and had run it as a private park after then.

Excerpt from 1915 Sanborn Map of Cedar Brook Park
at 12th and Keyes Streets.

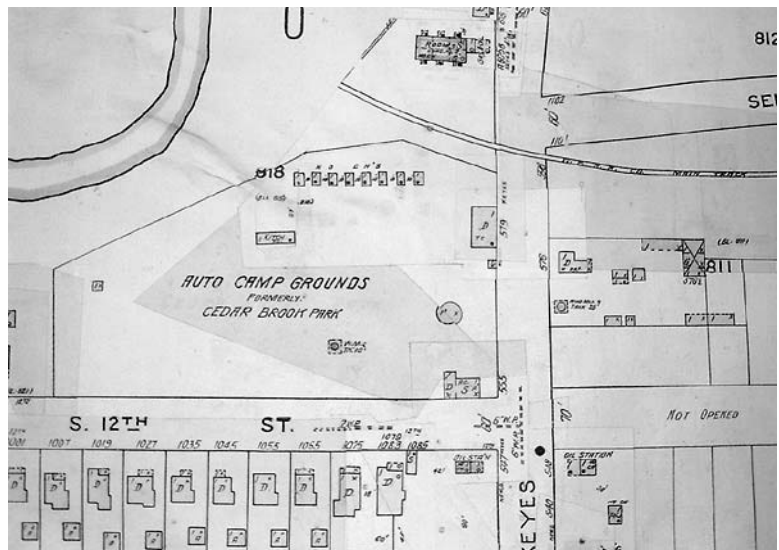
The park abutted Coyote Creek and provided tourists with a wooded setting and mountain views. Campers provided their own equipment, and Mr. Richter acted as caretaker to help tourists establish their camps (Sawyer 1922).

Free auto camps were a short-lived phenomenon throughout the United States, lasting only until around 1923. Automobile registrations increased four-fold from 1920 to 1926, to 19.2 million. As the countryside could only support a certain number of squatters before disorder and disease became problematic, free campgrounds soon fell victim to the same problems. Maintaining clean, sanitary, well-used campsites was expensive, and became even more so as tourists began to demand better amenities. Also, the availability of free facilities made it economically unfeasible to open competing private campgrounds (Belasco 1979).



Excerpt of 1939 Sanborn Map of Cedar Brook
Auto Camp at 12th and Keyes Streets

San José's free auto camp also had a very brief existence. When the Chamber of Commerce lease expired on January 1, 1922, Mr. Richter declined to renew it and continued Cedar Brook Auto Camp as a private venture. Sawyer (1922) reported that "Mr. Richter's charges are very reasonable, the tourists providing their own camping outfits. He also conducts a store where provisions can be conveniently obtained by the campers, and has established an open-air kitchen, equipped with gas stoves; he has installed shower baths, doing everything in his power to provide for the comfort of tourists."



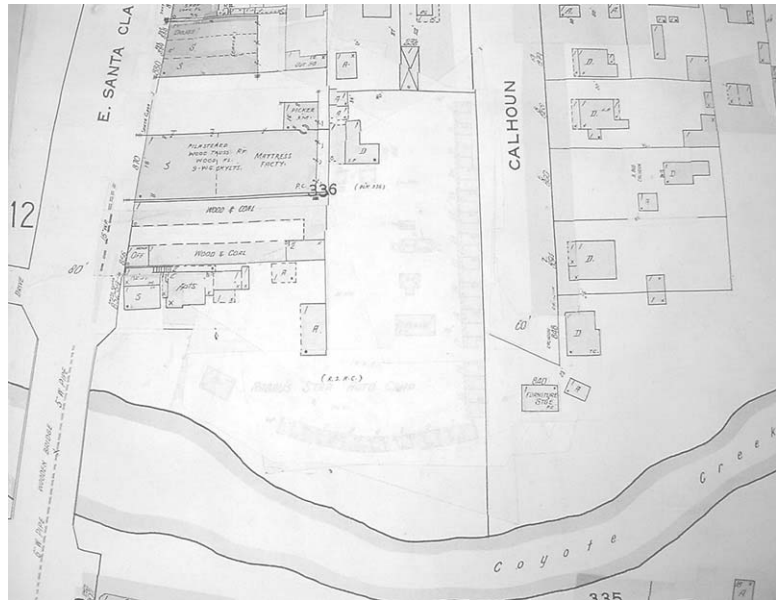
By 1925, two competing auto camps had opened, both sited along the Coyote Creek. Louis I. Rabau and his wife Meta opened the Star Auto Camp at 854 E. Santa Clara St., an L-shaped lot just to the southeast of the Santa Clara Street bridge (no longer extant).

Excerpt from 1939 Sanborn Map of Star Auto Camp. This map was completed after the camp was gone, the camp layout can be seen under a pasted on update.

Michael Heber opened the San Jose Auto Camp at 527 S. 24th St. around 1925 (existing today as the San Jose Trailer Park).

Rabau and Heber, like Richter, had German roots. Louis Rabau, a native of Germany, had come to San José in 1911 and opened an auto accessory business. He sold it to Baumgartner Brothers in 1919, when he and his wife left the country as part of an American relief commission in post-World War I Germany. He returned to San José in 1923 and opened his auto camp in 1925 (SJM 4/8/1934). Heber had been born in Hungary, but he was a member of the German Verein fraternal organization.

The Chamber of Commerce had advertised its free camp to tourists entering the city by placing signs along Oakland Road and South First Street. This detailed map of San José highways (see below) shows that Oakland Road (North 13th Street) and Monterey Road (South First Street) were the main routes used by tourists coming long distances from the north and south.



Excerpt from 1927 Union Oil Co. road map of California

In addition, travelers from San Francisco would arrive on El Camino Real. Travelers entering San José from the Santa Cruz area would enter on San Carlos Street from Saratoga or Bascom Avenue from Los Gatos. The next auto camps to open capitalized on their highway locations, attracting tourists before they could reach the Coyote Creek camps.

In 1927, Frank S. Whidden opened the Hi-Way Auto Camp one mile south of the then city limits, at what is now 2112 S. First St.² (California Camp Owners Association map 1927), Wynn D. Clay opened a camp adjacent to his gas station at 1856 S. First St., and Ollie L. Van Amburg opened an auto camp next to his grocery store at 991 N. 13th St. The latter two camps



² The Hi-Way Auto Camp appears to exist at this location within a larger multi-family housing complex.

represented a nationwide trend of roadside businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, and gas stations opening auto camps on their properties (Belasco 1979).

By the late 1920s, as the novelty of automobile camping was wearing thin, and as better roads and closed cars made driving a little less dusty, the first of the cottage or cabin camps appeared. One of the first in San José, the Cottage Home Auto Camp, opened at 393 1/2 Stockton Ave. around 1927 (no longer extant). It advertised its amenities in the 1929 San José city directory: “New Modern Sanitary One Two and Four Room Cottages Free Shower Baths Laundry Gas and Electricity Camping and Parking Space.” The camp at 991 N. 13th St. may also have built cottages around this time. Eight tiny cottages that appear to date from the late 1920s still sit on the lot at 552 Horning, the lot just to the west of 991 N. 13th St. They have been used as rental housing since 1956.

By the start of the Depression, seven auto camps were operating in San José. Five more camps opened during 1931 and 1932, the worst years of the downturn. Hard times brought many more tourists to auto camps. Automobile vacation travel continued to be popular during the Depression, and while profits were not good, auto camp owners could continue to make a living. Hotels, on the other hand, fared very poorly during the Depression (Belasco 1979).

The only other auto camp to open during the 1930s in San José resulted from the sudden death in 1934 of Louis I Rabau, owner of the Star Auto Camp at East Santa Clara Street and the Coyote Creek. In 1935, his wife Meta moved the camp to 875 N. 13th Street, where it remained, later operating as the Star Motel, until its demolition in 2001/2002.³

Excerpt from 1939 Sanborn Map of Star Auto Camp at 875 N. 13th St. (demolished 2001/2002)



A few more camps opened in San José prior to World War II, but gas rationing kept the motel industry from growing during the war. Most long-distance travel in the United States switched to the railroads during this period (Belasco 1979).

³ This demolition of the 28-unit Star Motel was done under San José Planning Department permit CP98-009 as a part of the construction of the Comfort Inn at that site. A Negative Declaration was approved and issued by the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement on March 24, 1999, the certification partially based on a finding that “the proposal will not have any impact on known historical structures.” Archaeological Resource Management submitted a letter dated September 28, 1998 used in the Initial Study that incorrectly indicated that the site was developed in the late 1940s, and indicated that the motel “did not convey any particular architectural style and they (the buildings) are of a relatively common resource type. Upon evaluation, the Star Motel received a point value of 21.58, registering it as Non-Significant Structure (sic).” (Cartier 1998).

2.4.3 Inventory of San José Auto Camps and Courts Opened 1920-1945

| Opened | Closed | Name/Address/Notes | Current Land Use |
|--------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1920 | 1945 | <i>Cedar Brook Auto Camp. 505 Keyes St. FP. Free camp sponsored by Chamber of Commerce. Closed after death of owner, H. Hermann Richter.</i> | Vacant land |
| 1925 | 1935 | <i>Star Auto Camp. 854 E. Santa Clara St. Owner, Louis I. Rabau, died suddenly in 1934. Widow reopens camp at 875 N. 13th St. Camp demolished by 1939.</i> | Vacant land |
| 1925 | N/A | <i>San Jose Auto Camp. 527 S. 24th St. Original owner, Michael Heber. Converted to trailer park around 1955.</i> | Still open as San Jose Trailer Park |
| 1927 | 1994 | <i>Hi-Way Auto Camp. 2112 Monterey Rd. First owner, Frank S. Whidden. Kept updating over the years; operated as Pepper Tree Inn 1963-1994.</i> | SRO housing run by Emergency Housing Consortium |
| 1927 | 1937 | Unnamed auto camp and gas station, run by Wynn D. Clay. 1856 Monterey Road. | Commercial/ Industrial |
| 1927 | 1955 | Unnamed auto camp, grocery, and gas station. 991 N. 13th St. Mix of tourist and permanent housing 1937-1955. | Old gas station now used as auto repair business. Eight cabins at 552 Horning used as permanent rental housing since 1956. |
| 1927 | 1947 | <i>Cottage Home Auto Camp. 393 ½ Stockton Ave. Cottages demolished, date unknown</i> | Old gas station now used as auto repair business. |
| 1930 | 1939 | <i>May Park Auto Camp with grocery store and gas station. 1465 W. San Carlos St.</i> | Lou's Village restaurant (opened 1946) |
| 1931 | 1947 | <i>California Auto Camp. 1850 Monterey Rd.</i> | Commercial/ Industrial |
| 1931 | N/A | <i>First Street Auto Camp. 1525 Monterey Rd. Palm Motor Court (1939-1947), Three-A Motel (1949-present).</i> | Still open as Three-A Motel. |
| 1932 | 1972 | <i>Glorietta Auto Court. 976 N. First St. Hyde Park Motel (1954-1972). Demolished ca. 1973.</i> | Bank |
| 1932 | 1966 | Unnamed auto camp and gas station. 697 N. Tenth St. Owned by Mrs. Emma F. Mead. Dakota Auto Court (1952-1966). Continued as gas station 1966-2002. Gas station demolished 2003. | Vacant land |
| 1935 | 2002 | <i>Star Auto Camp. 875 N. 13th St. Mrs. Meta S. Rabau moved original Star Auto Camp to this site after husband's death. Demolished 2002.</i> | New Comfort Inn to be opened 2003. |
| 1941 | U/K | <i>Albro Cottages. 1450 Monterey Rd. Cottage Grove Motel (1945-19??). Demolished, date unknown</i> | Vacant land |
| 1941 | 1975 | <i>Campbell's Auto Camp. 281 E. Taylor St. Campbell's Motel (1949-1975). Demolished, date unknown</i> | Chiropractor's office may be part of original motel. |
| 1942 | N/A | Unnamed auto camp. 1050 The Alameda. <i>Alameda Motel</i> (1947-present). | Still open as Alameda Motel |
| 1942 | 1947 | Unnamed auto camp. 1883 Monterey Rd. | Commercial/ Industrial |

2.4.4 The Small Independent Motel: 1946-1955

After the end of World War II, as construction materials began to become available again and as leisure auto travel resumed around the country, motel construction restarted. Motel sites remained on the same routes as pre-WWII camps, although as a result of new Federal highway construction programs that began during the war, many of these were located on renamed “Business” routes. The El Rancho de San Jose Motel was constructed during this period, located on what would soon be called “101 Business” among other earlier motels along the south entry to downtown San José.

The table below lists the nine San José motels opening between 1946 and 1955 that remain in operation:

| Name | Address | Opened |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------|
| El Rancho de San Jose Motel | 2724 Monterey Road | 1946 |
| Bell Motel | 2155 The Alameda | 1947 |
| La Casa Siesta / EZ8 Motel | 1550 N. First St. | 1947 |
| White Way Motel | 1135 N. 13th St. | 1947 |
| California Motel | 1706 Monterey Rd. | 1949 |
| Casa Linda Motel | 1669 Monterey Rd. | 1949 |
| Charles Motel | 1036 N. Fourth St. | 1949 |
| 101 Motel / Sands Motel | 1787 Monterey Rd. | 1949 |
| Traveler's Rest | 1315 Monterey Rd. | 1955 |

In 1956, the first of the large chain motels, Travelodge, opened in San José at 1041 The Alameda. Since then, most of the motels built in San José have been chain or franchise motels. With the exception of the conversion of the La Casa Siesta to the EZ8 chain, and the demolition of the Star Motel to make way for a new Comfort Inn, new motel construction has not infringed on old motel sites in San José. During the last half century many of the earlier motels constructed during the 1930s and 1940s were renovated to compete with new development in travel lodging that occurred along the major entry points to the city. In recent times renovation has continued to occur in the form of window retrofits and other modernizations. Typical of trends in modernization is the recent replacement of the metal casement windows with new vinyl sash at the Casa Linda, located on Monterey Road just north of the intersection of Phelan Avenue.

Some of the earlier auto court sites that could not compete with new motel development or lacked visibility due to changing highway configurations became trailer parks to serve a growing community of mobile home owners who sought permanent locations. The best example is the early San Jose Auto Camp on South 24th Street, which converted to all trailer spaces around 1956. A few auto courts built after World War II are now run as trailer parks, but the vast majority of trailer and mobile home parks in San José were established especially for this purpose. Monterey Road and Oakland Road show a similar development pattern, with some early auto courts and motels closer to downtown, and trailer and mobile home parks farther out. Informal trailer parks sprang up near local defense factories as working housing during the war, and many commercial parks were opened in San José in the decade after World War II.

3.0 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

This section of the report contains detailed descriptions of the buildings and structures on the Palm Tree Inn site that are proposed for demolition as a part of the project.

The site, a rectangular parcel, has frontage on the east side of Monterey Road between Umbarger and Lewis Roads in South San Jose. Approximately the front two-thirds of the site contains the 26-unit Palm Tree Inn, a U-shaped one-story motel with rooms that face a central court open to Monterey Road. The rear third of the property is not used as a part of the motel, and contains a barn and tank house adjacent to large unimproved area. A private patio is also located in this area to the rear of the motel office, which is surrounded by an ornate fence made of adobe-type masonry blocks.



View from the south of office and north wing, 04/03

3.1 Palm Tree Inn

The motel consists of an office and two wings of rooms flanking a central entry and parking area. The architectural style is Neo-Spanish Colonial Revival, a post World War II variation of the earlier revival style (also known as Spanish Eclectic) of the 1920s and 1930s that tends toward exaggeration of historical character defining building features. The El Rancho was designed to be reminiscent of the large rancho headquarters of early California. Although not typical of rancho architecture of the period, the form of the complex, consisting of a ring of rooms facing a central courtyard, is not uncommon to both mission and presidio sites in early Spanish and Mexican California. This site arrangement lent itself well to early motor court designs, and motels throughout the southwest typically exploited the “El Rancho” theme

during the 1940s. The 1941 El Rancho Vegas, which was the first full-scale casino resort on Highway 91 south of Las Vegas (to become the Vegas Strip), was the most well known early source for this particular form of thematic architectural marketing.



View of a portion of the office from the south, 04/03

San Jose's El Rancho design is a segmented U-shape that is broken by an uncovered passageway to the south of the office, located at the center of the U. A wood gate spans the passageway separating the motel from the private area at the rear of the site. A U-shaped driveway provides access to the motel from Monterey Road, and parking is provided for the lodgers along the driveway directly in front of the motel rooms. In the center of the driveway is a large landscaped area that contains a no longer functioning swimming pool. A number of palm trees are located in the center area among oleanders and a large lawn. Access to the rear of the motel units adjacent the north and south interior property lines, is prevented by large makeshift fences composed of corrugated sheet metal panels standing on end.

The motel buildings are constructed of 6" x 16" concrete masonry block walls that provide an illusion of early adobe construction techniques, common to the rancho period the motel attempts to invoke. Other thematic details contribute to the architecture as well. The low-sloped mission tile roofs are typical of Spanish Colonial architecture, and the tiles have been enhanced with finger marks drawn along the surface to create the illusion of handcrafted fabrication. A limited number of doors remaining from the original construction are also of this style, rough slabs of wood with oversized battered metal strap hinges, also typical of mission and presidio era buildings.



View of central area from the south. The central raised area is most likely the original pond or fountain that appears on the 1948 aerial of the site. The pool is to the right side and is now filled and planted with lawn. 04/03

A covered passageway, or ambulatory, links the units together, creating a cloistered effect. The walkway has 12 x 12 red-tile at the office and concrete elsewhere. The columns are simple “8 x 8” wooden posts, and their related roof beams, beveled “T” caps, and exposed rafter tails contribute to the handcrafted look.

The original motel consisted of rental units that were separated by open carports recessed into the structures. In 1957 work began to construct additional units in these carport spaces, and by 1960 the size of the complex had doubled as the last remaining spaces were converted. Evidence remains of the location of the original carports, as the front walls of the newer rooms are finished in plywood, have small aluminum windows and lack a raised base (see photograph next page). Elimination of the driveway access to these early carports also allowed for additional parking to be included between the driveway and motel units, these additional spaces necessary to serve the new units.

Fenestration had originally consisted of metal casement windows. At the time of the unit expansion, a different style of window was introduced. In recent times, most of the older metal casements have been retrofitted to newer aluminum sliders (see second photo next page). Most of the original doors have also been replaced to newer slab units.

At the rear of the office is a patio surrounded with masonry walls constructed to look like adobe. Tile coping tops the walls, and at the rear an arched opening with a wrought iron gate framed by distressed wood posts faces east.



View of south wing from the north. Note middle unit with high window at what was originally a carport. 04/03



Retrofitted aluminum window in original motel unit, 04/03



Original door and hardware, 04/03



Detail view of tile at rake, 04/03



View from east of rear office patio fence, 04/03

3.2 Barn

The barn is located to the rear of the motel office near the rear property line. It is of wood construction and has a concrete floor, although this floor is situated within the structure and does not appear to function as a footing. The interior was not viewed as a part of the site investigation.



The building has a post and beam structure that is covered with wood dual-bevel drop siding. The siding is in deteriorated condition, and appears to possibly have been salvaged from another structure. A shed on the north side of the barn extends to the tank house. The roofing on the shed and barn consists of corrugated galvanized metal sheets. The central area of the barn has a front and rear gable and is raised above the side sheds. Doors openings in the front and rear gables once provided access to a hayloft. The juncture of the raised and shed sections were most likely open for ventilation at some time in the past but are now blocked shut. The barn has a primary entry door on the west side, a hung sliding panel, and multiple openings along the other elevations, many of which are also blocked shut.

3.3 Tank House

The tank house is of moderate size and is situated at the northeast corner of the site to the north of the barn. The tank is no longer extant, and the structure is presently used for storage. It appears to be about 100 years old, and the wood exterior is exposed, lacking a protective coating. The horizontal redwood drop siding has a v-groove pattern, the framing is post and beam, and the structure sits on a battered concrete foundation. A door opening and one window are located on the south façade. At the northwest corner of the structure, the primary electrical lines to the site are dropped via surface attached conduit to

underground connectors to the motel buildings. The structure, although suffering from exposure, has integrity although lacking the original water tank. It was probably moved to this location at the time of construction of the motel.



Tankhouse viewed from the south, 04/03



Detail view of top of tank house viewed from the northwest, 04/03

4.0 EVALUATION FOR SIGNIFICANCE

This portion of the report constitutes an historical and architectural evaluation of the property that is the subject of the proposed project, based on a statement of historical significance according to the *Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act – Preliminary Review of Projects and Conduct of Initial Study*, to determine the potential significance of impacts to historical resources according to section 15064.5 of the California Code of Regulations. More specifically, two sets of guidelines were used; the California State Historic Resources Commission’s requirements for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, and the City of San Jose’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 13.48 of the Municipal Code).

4.1 California Register of Historical Resources

Properties in the City of San José that are evaluated for significance within the development review process are considered under the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources. The significance criteria are similar to those used by the National Register of Historic Places (see Section 4.3), but oriented to document the unique history of California. The California Register includes properties listed in or formally declared eligible for the National Register, California State Landmarks above #770, certain Points of Historical Interest, and properties listed by application and acceptance by the California Historical Resources Commission. The California Register is a guide used by state and local agencies, private groups and citizens to identify historical resources in the state, and is also used as a planning tool within the California Environmental Quality Act to help indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change within government regulatory programs. [Public Resources Code Section 5024.1]

Under CEQA, an, “historical resource” includes, but is not limited to, any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record or manuscript, which is historical or archaeologically significant, or is significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, education, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California.” [Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(j)] The types of historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register include buildings, sites, structures, objects and historical districts. [California Code of Regulations Section 48542(a)]

The types of resources and the criteria for listing in the California Register are consistent with those developed by the National Park Service for listing historical resources in the National Register, but have been modified for state use in order to include a range of historical resources which better reflect the history of California. Under California Code of Regulation Section 4852(b) and Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, an historical resource generally must be greater than 50 years old and must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following four criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

If nominated for listing in accordance with the procedures outlined in Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(f), the California Register may include:

- (1) Individual historical resources.

- (2) Historical resources contributing to the significance of an historic district under criteria adopted by the Commission.
- (3) Historical resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys, if the survey meets the criteria in Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(g).
- (4) Historical resources and historic districts designated or listed as city or county landmarks or historic properties or districts pursuant to any city or county ordinance, if the criteria for designation or listing under the ordinance have been determined by the State Historic Resources Officer to be consistent with California Register criteria adopted by the Commission.
- (5) Local landmarks or historic properties designated under any municipal or county ordinance.

California Code of Regulations Section 4852(c) addresses the issue of “integrity” which is necessary for eligibility for the California Register. Integrity is defined as “the authenticity of an historical resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance.” Section 4852(c) provides that historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register must meet one of the criteria for significance defined by 4852(b)(1 through 4), and retain enough of their historic character of appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It must also be judged with reference to the particular criteria under which a resource is proposed for eligibility. Alterations over time to a resource or historic changes in its use may themselves have historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

It is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register if it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data.

4.2 City of San José Policies and Ordinance

4.2.1 San José 2020 General Plan Policies

Among the *Goals and Policies for Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Resources in the San José 2020 General Plan*, the following are applicable to the evaluation of the subject properties:

Goal: *Preservation of historically and archaeologically significant structures, sites, districts and artifacts in order to promote a greater sense of historic awareness and community identity and to enhance the quality of urban living.*

Policy 1: *Because historically or archaeologically significant sites, structures and districts are irreplaceable resources, their preservation should be a key consideration in the development review process.*

4.2.2 City of San José Historic Preservation Ordinance

Under the City of San José Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 13.48 of the Municipal Code), preservation of historic landmarks and districts is promoted in order to *stabilize neighborhoods and areas of the city; to enhance, preserve and increase property values; carry out the goals and policies of the city’s general plan; increase cultural, economic and aesthetic benefits to the city and its residents; preserve continue and encourage the development of the city to reflect its historical, architectural, cultural, and aesthetic value or traditions; protect and enhance the city’s cultural and aesthetic heritage; and to promote and encourage continued private ownership and utilization of such structures.* Buildings

and sites that derive quality based on historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic and engineering interest or value are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Identification or association with persons, eras or events that have contributed to local, regional, state or national history, heritage or culture in a distinctive, significant or important way;
2. Identification as, or association with, a distinctive, significant or important work or vestige:
 - a. of an architectural style, design or method construction;
 - b. of a master architect, builder, artist or craftsman;
 - c. of high artistic merit;
 - d. the totality of which comprises a distinctive, significant or important work or vestige whose component parts may lack the same attributes;
 - e. that has yielded or is substantially likely to yield information of value about history, architecture, engineering, culture or aesthetics, or that provides for existing and future generations an example of the physical surrounds in which past generation lived or worked; or
 - f. that the construction materials or engineering methods used in the proposed landmark are unusual or significant or uniquely effective.
3. The factor of age alone does not necessarily confer a special historical, architectural, cultural aesthetic or engineering significance, value or interest upon a structure or site, but it may have such effect if a more distinctive, significant or important example thereof no longer exists.

4.2.3 City of San José Evaluation Rating System

Based upon the criteria of the City of San José Historic Preservation Ordinance, the San José Historic Landmarks Commission has established a quantitative process, based on the work of Harold Kalman (1980), by which historical resources are evaluated for significance. This *Historic Evaluation Criteria* and the related *Evaluation Rating Sheets* are utilized within the *Guidelines for Historic Reports* published by the City's Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, as last revised on October 19, 1998.

This numerical evaluation system has the following categories of significance:

| | |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 67-134 points | Candidate City Landmark |
| 33-66 | Structure of Merit |
| 33-66 | Contributing structure to an historic district |
| 1-32 | Evaluated and found to be non-significant |

As a matter of administrative policy, the City of San José considers designated City Landmarks, structures scoring 67 points and above (candidate City Landmark) as the threshold for CEQA review. Structures scoring lower than 67 points may have historical importance, but for purposes of CEQA, are not considered historically significant unless they are:

- Listed or formally determined eligible for the National Register (see Section 4.3);
- Listed on or eligible for the California Register (see Section 4.1); or
- The City Council independently determines that the structure is historically significant.

4.3 Criteria of the National Register of Historic Places

Properties in the City of San José that are evaluated for significance within the development review process are considered under the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register considers the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture that is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Criterion A that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- Criterion B that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- Criterion C that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- Criterion D that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Properties that are listed on or formally determined eligible for the National Register are automatically listed on the California Register.

4.4 Determining Significance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

A project with an effect that may cause substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment under CEQA. An “Historical Resource” includes those listed in or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, a resource included in a local register that meets the requirements for listing in the California Register, and any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which an agency such as the City of San José, determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, education, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, provided that the determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, the City of San José is required to consider historical significance if a resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register under the criteria previously stated. The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the California Register—or is not included in a local register or identified in an historical resources survey meeting the specified criteria—does not preclude an agency such as the City of San José from determining that the resource may be an historical resource under CEQA.

4.5 Evaluation

The historic El Rancho de San Jose Motel is not “designated” on any federal, state, or local registers. Identified now as the Palm Tree Inn (Motel), the building complex as presently configured is between 43 and 57 years old, and the barn and tank house to the rear appear to be about 90 to 100 years old, and are not original to their sites.

For the purposes of CEQA, the preparers of this report reviewed the structures proposed for demolition as a part of this project, for potential eligibility for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. The motel complex is of historical interest for its association with the evolution of auto orientated lodging in the greater San José area. The design of the motel is distinctive, and shows an artistic attempt to

overlay a thematic revival style related to early California as a marketing means to draw visiting travelers to the site. This thematic overlay is not unique, but is consistent with images popular in the West and Southwest, the early signature building for this motif being the El Rancho Vegas in Nevada. Of similar motels in the area constructed after World War II, it is one of the more “designed” examples and is distinctive within this local pattern of development that occurred along the major entries to downtown San José. Although originally one of the most distinctive, changes that occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s have compromised the initial design. The elimination of the carports and filling of these spaces with additional motel rooms has sufficiently harmed the integrity of the design that it no longer conveys adequately its origins. The changes were not done in a way that maintained the original detailing, and lack sensitivity to materials and building components that adorned the building in its early form during the late 1940s and early 1950s. These changes do not appear reversible from a practical point of view. Reducing the room count to restore the original carports does not appear to be a likely renovation option given the scale of the complex. Other changes, such as the retrofit of modern window materials is possible, although many of the windows in the added rooms were not created to match the original design.

Because the motel lacks integrity to its original design, it would not appear to qualify for the California Register of Historical Resources. Other motels exist in the area, especially along Monterey Road, that retain more of their original design, and better represent this era of development of auto oriented lodging in the San José area.

The barn and tank house were also reviewed for eligibility. They are not distinctive individually, as they are vernacular in style. Because they no longer are related to their original context when used as a part of a working farm, they do not convey a sense of time and place necessary to establish historical significance. They, like the motel, do not appear to qualify for the California Register of Historical Resources under any of the specified criteria.

The City of San José can determine to be historically significant any building, structure, site, or object even if the resource does not meet the criteria for listing on the California Register. The City of San José Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement reviews properties in this context, and has generally determined that any resource that scores 67 or higher using the City’s Evaluation Rating System, or that meets the specific criteria for listing in the California and/or National Registers, would also therefore be a significance historic resource as defined by CEQA.

Palm Tree Inn, barn and tank house, were evaluated using the City of San José Evaluation Rating System. The evaluation (attached) indicates that the Palm Tree Inn would meet the threshold for listing as a Structure of Merit, scoring 47.26 using the city rating system. The rating for the barn and tank house is 15.76, indicating that these structures do not qualify for listing in the Inventory.

4.6 Potential Impacts

Under the California Environmental Quality Act, a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired. The significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in the California Register, or in a local register of historical resources as defined by Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(g).

Because the Palm Tree Inn appears eligible for listing on the San Jose Historic Resources Inventory, the City of San Jose policy is to encourage preservation of the resource. However, because the Palm Tree Inn motel does not appear to qualify for the California Register of Historic Resources, demolition of the buildings would not appear to create a significant effect on the environment as defined by CEQA.

4.7. Mitigations

The City of San José can require feasible mitigations to address unavoidable adverse environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the proposed project. These mitigations would be intended to either avoid or reduce the effects of the project on historic resources, and may include but are not limited to: modification of the project or an alternative project, use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures, photo-documentation according the standards of the Historic American Building Survey, educational exhibits for public use, an offer for salvage of building elements to be demolished, or relocation of structures. Because the motel, barn and tank house do not appear to qualify for the California Register, mitigations to avoid unavoidable adverse environmental impacts are not required. Other city policies encourage preservation of resources that have local value, and may be considered as a part of the review process of the proposed project.

5.0 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

5.1 Architectural Drawings

None were located. Original construction was done within the jurisdiction of the County of Santa Clara.

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5.3 Supplemental Material

See Appendix.