

Historic Preservation Report for
1144 Chorro Street, San Luis Obispo,
San Luis Obispo County, California

OCTOBER 2018

PREPARED FOR

**Jamestown Premier SLO Retail, LP
Copeland Properties**

PREPARED BY

SWCA Environmental Consultants

SWCA

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REPORT FOR
1144 CHORRO STREET,
SAN LUIS OBISPO, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for

Jamestown Premier SLO Retail, LP
Copeland Properties
P.O. Box 12260
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Attn: Mark Rawson

Prepared by

Paula Juelke Carr, M.A.
SWCA Environmental Consultants
1422 Monterey Street, Suite C200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
(805) 543-7095
www.swca.com

SWCA Project No. 52154

October 2018

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Background	1
Review of City Files: 1144 Chorro	2
Summary of Development of Downtown Historic District	2
Evaluation Criteria for Consistency with Historic Preservation Ordinance	4
Evaluation Criteria for Consistency with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Rehabilitation)	6
Additional Guidance from the U.S. Department of the Interior.....	7
Professional Commentary on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.....	7
Analysis and Conclusions	7
References Cited	10

This page intentionally left blank.

INTRODUCTION

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) has prepared this Historic Preservation Report to satisfy Condition 3 of City of San Luis Obispo (City) *ARCH-1687-2018 & USE-1688-2018 – Completeness Review #1* for the Marsh & Chorro Development Project (project) located at 1144 Chorro Street, San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo County, California. This report includes a review of the proposed project plans and assesses the project's conformance with City policies and guidelines.

BACKGROUND

The 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 provided for the establishment of a Certified Local Government Program to encourage the direct participation of local governments (in partnership with the State Office of Historic Preservation [SHPO] and National Park Service [NPS]) in the identification, evaluation, registration, and preservation of historic properties within local government jurisdictions and promote the integration of local preservation interests and concerns into local planning and decision-making processes.

The City became a Certified Local Government in 2012, thereby assuming responsibility for the following historic preservation roles:

- Enforce appropriate state and local laws and regulations for the designation and protection of historic properties;
- Establish a historic preservation review commission by local ordinance;
- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties;
- Provide for public participation in the local preservation program; and
- Satisfactorily perform responsibilities delegated to it by the state.

The City has a number of interrelated resources available to assist it in carrying out its mandates as a Certified Local Government. Among these are:

- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 1500 et seq.);
- *City of San Luis Obispo Historic Preservation Ordinance* (Municipal Code Chapter 14.01);
- *City of San Luis Obispo Historic Preservation Program Guidelines* (adopted by City Council Resolution No. 10229 [2010 Series]);
- *City of San Luis Obispo Community Design Guidelines* (adopted by City Council Resolution No. 9391 [2002 Series], amended May 2003, October 2004, March 2007, November 2007, and June 2010);
- The Cultural Heritage Committee (historic preservation advisory body to the City Council);
- *City of San Luis Obispo Citywide Historic Context Statement* (Historic Resources Group 2012); and
- *City of San Luis Obispo General Plan, Chapter 6: Conservation and Open Space Element* (adopted by City Council Resolution No. 10586 [2014 Series], last revised December 2014); Section 3: Cultural Heritage.

REVIEW OF CITY FILES: 1144 CHORRO

SWCA began with a review of City Community Development Department files relating to the Marsh & Chorro Development Project site at 1144 Chorro Street, along with further review of the archived Cultural Heritage Committee (CHC) agenda packets available online. The agenda packet prepared for the regularly noticed June 22, 2015, CHC hearing included a staff report for the Discovery San Luis Obispo project, which proposed to remodel the exterior and interior of the commercial building at 1144 Chorro Street (the Marsh & Chorro Development Project location) (City of San Luis Obispo 2015). The *Project Information* section of the staff report described the subject property as “a non-historic structure located with the Commercial Downtown (C-D-H) zone at the border of the Downtown Historic District” (City of San Luis Obispo 2015:CHC1-2). The assumption that the project site is not a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA is based on the above information stated in the City’s CHC agenda packet. No further evaluation of the building is therefore required.

Although the earlier Discovery San Luis Obispo project did not propose demolition of the existing structure, the June 22, 2015, staff evaluation and analysis of the proposed Discovery San Luis Obispo project (excerpted here) nevertheless provides useful comparative material for the evaluation and analysis of the currently proposed March & Chorro Development project. This earlier documentation also provides valuable suggestions for enhancing conformity.

City planning staff found that the Discovery project’s proposed exterior and interior modifications to the 1144 Chorro commercial building were consistent with Policy 3.2.1 of the City’s Historic Preservation Guidelines, which requires that “New structures in historic districts shall be designed to be architecturally compatible with the district’s prevailing historic character as measured by their consistency with the scale, massing, rhythm, signature architectural elements, exterior materials, siting, and street yard setbacks of the district’s historic structures . . . ” (City of San Luis Obispo 2010:7).

The staff analysis went on to state:

The proposed remodel maintains the scale, mass, and overall rhythm of the existing structure and would remain compatible with the form, scale, and massing of nearby development and the overall Downtown Historic District. The subject location (which is one floor plus mezzanine in height) abuts single and two-story structures and there are a range of two to three story structures in the area. No exterior additions to the height or mass are proposed . . .

The Downtown Historic District has a variety of architectural styles but most structures appear to be constructed with high quality materials and attention to detail. The contemporary design of the proposed project does not detract from defining features of adjacent historic buildings or from other historic resource within the Downtown Historic District because the modifications have a limited scope, which do not change the massing and overall architectural form of the structure . . . (City of San Luis Obispo 2015:CHC1-4).

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

The proposed building site at 1144 Chorro Street is located on the southeast margin of the City’s designated Historic Downtown District. As described in the City’s Historic Preservation Guidelines, the district “encompasses the oldest part of the city of San Luis Obispo and contains one of the City’s highest

concentrations of historic sites and structures” (City of San Luis Obispo 2010:38–40). The Downtown Historic District also includes some of the City’s most disparate resources in terms of construction dates, historic context, and building materials. Examples include Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, Mexican-era adobes, and examples of American-period frame and brick buildings. The majority of the district’s surviving buildings date to the 1870s–1920s.

The district, which encompasses more than 60 acres and approximately 100 designated historic buildings, is characterized chiefly by the commercial buildings that grew up in the latter part of the nineteenth century along the city’s commercial corridors (Higuera, Monterey, and Marsh) and the main cross streets that connected them (Chorro and Garden). Other streetscape characteristics include buildings that face the street, sidewalks, grade-level recessed entrances, and street trees. As discussed in the *Historic Preservation Program Guidelines*, “the district’s commercial architectural styles reflect the increasing wealth of the times. Architectural styles . . . include examples of Classical Revival, Italianate and Romanesque structures, and more modest early American commercial. Although a few structures were designed by outside architects (specifically from San Francisco and Los Angeles) the majority of Downtown buildings were designed and built by local builders. Predominant architectural features include:

- A. One to two stories (occasionally three)
- B. Flat or low-pitched roof, often with a parapet
- C. Wide entablature or projecting cornice that often includes classical architectural details such as dentils, brackets and molding
- D. First-floor windows are horizontally oriented storefront windows, often with display space facing the street. In multi-story structures, windows are vertically oriented, typically with double-hung wood sashes, and symmetrically arranged so that they are dimensionally taller than their width
- E. Structures follow simple rectilinear or ‘boxy’ building forms
- F. Masonry or smooth stucco wall siding
- G. Contrasting bulkheads along base of street façade
- H. Use of awnings, historic signs, second-story overhangs and canopies; and
- I. Use of transom windows above storefronts” (City of San Luis Obispo 2010:38–39).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps of the Marsh & Chorro Development Project area document the transition of the built-environment in the project vicinity through 1970. Although Higuera Street had become an established commercial street by the 1880s, the project vicinity of Marsh Street retained its early residential streetscape of one-story frame dwellings, along with a smattering of churches, until the 1910s. The project site itself still had the same one-story frame residences until at least 1926.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the construction of several large-scale building projects within a one-block radius of the project area. These included three commercial buildings (the 1901–02 Bank of America Building, the 1903–04 Johnson Block, and the 1904 H. M. Warden Block), the First Presbyterian Church built in 1905 (from stone quarried from Bishop Peak), and the four-story Masonic Temple built in 1906 across Marsh Street from the project site. By 1926, the project area was undergoing further commercial development: Although the subject parcel and neighboring parcels on Marsh Street remained entirely residential, Chorro Street had a commercial building shared by the Santa Maria Gas Company and a “pipe shop and office,” and a former residence on the southwest corner of Chorro and Marsh Streets housed an office of the US Weather Bureau. Farther south on the corner of Marsh and Garden Streets were two-story stucco buildings—the Struver Building (1913) and the Snyder Building (1925). North on Marsh Street, at the corner of Morro Street, was the newly built U.S. Post Office (also a

prominent stucco building). The post office was flanked by the Presbyterian Church on one side and the Christian Science Church on the other. The Masonic Temple—a bulky building with stucco coating, distinctive engaged pilasters, and a prominent cornice and entablature, which remained the tallest and most substantial building within view—had been joined by the Elks Lodge, on the northwest corner of Marsh and Morro Streets.

New construction between 1926 and 1970 on Chorro Street, between Marsh and Higuera Streets, included the three-story Wineman Hotel stucco remodel in 1931 and the two-story brick-faced Riley’s Department Store building, constructed at 1144 Chorro Street in 1955 and in operation at that location from 1956 through 1992.¹ Other commercial buildings constructed on Marsh Street between Garden and Morro Streets include additional two-story stucco structures.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CONSISTENCY WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The City’s *Historic Preservation Ordinance* is codified as Chapter 14.01 of the Municipal Code.² The subheadings of the chapter relevant to the Marsh & Chorro Development Project are the following, which incorporate, by reference, CEQA regulations, *Community Design Guidelines*, and the City’s *Conservation and Open Space Element*:

14.01.010 Findings and Purpose

14.01.010.A.3. *The California Environmental Quality Act requires special treatment of historic resources and the establishment of clear local guidance for the identification and preservation of such resources lends [sic] clarity and certainty to the review of development applications involving historic resources.*

14.01.010.B.1. *Identify, protect, preserve, and promote the continuing use and upkeep of San Luis Obispo’s historic structures, sites and districts.*

14.01.010.B.4. *Implement the historic preservation goals and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan.*

14.01.010.B.7. *Establish the procedures and significance criteria to be applied when evaluating development project effects on historic resources.*

14.01.010.B.8. *Fulfill the City’s responsibilities as a Certified Local Government under State and Federal regulations and for Federal Section 106 reviews.*

The City’s *Historic Preservation Ordinance* also defines the Historic Preservation Report and other relevant terminology used in architectural evaluations:

¹ Building Permit No. A-475 for new construction, issued to C.C. Humphreys and H. A. Landeck; Maino Construction; June 23, 1955; project completed October 23, 1955.

² The City of San Luis Obispo CHC is delegated to review applications and development review projects, including new construction, additions, or alterations located in historic districts, and make recommendations to the Community Development Department Director, the Architectural Review Commission, the Planning Commission, or the City Council (14.01.030.C.4).

14.01.020 Definitions

14.01.020.2 Adjacent: *located on property which abuts the subject property on at least one point of the property line, on the same property, or located on property directly across right-of-way from subject property and able to be viewed concurrently.*

14.01.020.9 Character Defining Features: *as outlined in the US Department of the Interior's National Register 15 and Preservation Brief 17: "How to Identify Character Defining Features." The architectural character and general composition of a resource, including, but not limited to, type and texture of building material; type, design, and character of all windows, doors, stairs, porches, railings. Molding and other appurtenant elements; and fenestration, ornamental detailing, elements of craftsmanship, finishes, etc.*

14.01.020.20 Historic Context: *Historic context are those patterns, themes or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning and significance is made clear.*

14.01.020.21 Historic District/Historical Preservation District: *areas or neighborhoods with a collection or concentration of listed or potentially contributing historic properties...where historic properties help define the area or neighborhood's unique architectural, cultural, and historical character or sense of place. Historic districts are delineated on the official zoning map as Historic (H) overlay zone under San Luis Obispo Municipal Code Chapter 17.54.*

14.01.020.23 Historic Preservation Report: *A document which describes preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction measures for a historic resource, based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of historic Properties, and which includes standards and guidelines for recommended treatments for preserving the resource.*

14.01.020.32 Massing: *The spatial relationships, arrangement and organization of a building's physical bulk or volume.*

14.01.020.39 Preservation: *The act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain a historic site, building or other structure's historically significant existing form, integrity, and materials through stabilization, repair and maintenance.*

14.01.020.42 Qualified Professional: *an individual meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 CFR Part 61 Appendix A) in history, architectural history, historic architecture and other designated categories....*

14.01.020.48 Scale: *The proportions of architectural design that relate to human size or other relative size measure.*

14.01.020.49 Secretary of the Interior's Standards: *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as published by the US Department of the Interior and as amended from time to time.*

14.01.020.50 Setting: *The physical area, environment or neighborhood in which a resource is located.*

14.01.020.53. Siting: *The placement of structures and improvement on a property or site.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CONSISTENCY WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES (REHABILITATION)

Four approaches to the treatment of historic properties are recommended by the Secretary of the Interior: Rehabilitation, Preservation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. Of these, Rehabilitation offers the most latitude in adaptive re-use of existing historic properties. In evaluating the current proposed project's compliance with the 10 Rehabilitation Standards, SWCA has considered the Downtown Historic District as a whole as well as the individual historic properties within the viewshed of the Marsh & Chorro Development Project. Standard No. 9 is the most relevant standard for the proposed project.

1. *A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.*
2. *The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
3. *Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.*
4. *Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*
5. *Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.*
8. *Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*
9. ***New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.***
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

Additional Guidance from the U.S. Department of the Interior

“As with new additions, the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of new construction on the site of a historic building must be compatible with those of the historic building. When visible and in close proximity to historic buildings, the new construction must be subordinate to these buildings. New construction should also be distinct from the old and must not attempt to replicate historic buildings elsewhere on site and to avoid creating a false sense of historic development” (National Park Service [n.d.]).

Professional Commentary on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards

At the 2007 National Preservation Conference, the distinguished architect and professor Steven W. Semes emphasized that new buildings in an historic setting should focus more on the “sense of place” than the “sense of time.” Semes’s point of view is that historic districts usually contain buildings in many different styles, but most follow an approach to design that reflects the sense of the specific place and create continuity over time rather than contrast and disruption. It is this continuity over time that is important to creating and maintaining the character of historic districts. Thus, from Semes’s point of view, any style would be acceptable in an historic district provided it draws on the influences of the place and harmonizes with, rather than ruptures, the continuity of architectural character (Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia 2007).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The issue of *compatibility*—with individual historical resources and with the Downtown Historic District as a whole—is the primary issue in determining compliance with the City’s *Historic Preservation Program Guidelines* (in particular Section 3.2.1) and with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (in particular, Standard No. 9) for development within historic districts and development adjacent to historical resources.

Some individual City-listed historic buildings located within the Downtown Historic District (e.g., Wineman Hotel, First Presbyterian Church, Masonic Temple) are sited in such a way that both the historic building and the proposed Marsh & Chorro Development project would be visible concurrently. The project is also proposed as a new addition to the Downtown Historic District, which is currently experiencing a resurgence of development and redevelopment projects. Several of these infill projects, either already in construction or still in the development pipeline, are undeniably large-scale in terms of their height and massing; their visual prominence is altering familiar downtown streetscapes and skylines. As part of the evaluation for compatibility, a pertinent historic preservation question is whether a given project, or the aggregate of these new projects, is consistent with the City’s historic preservation goals. City planning staff and the City Council are, of course, obliged to consider multiple (and often competing) points of view in their decision making. The cultural heritage section of the City’s General Plan specifically acknowledges the inherent difficulties in balancing historic preservation goals with other community goals:

Throughout California, older established neighborhoods are feeling the effects of growth and intensification due to contemporary development which often dwarfs or lacks the grace of older homes it replaces. Commercial areas are also feeling the impact of a changing economy with new uses, development patterns and economic realities.

Underutilized sites with historic resources are often prime targets for redevelopment projects, with the resulting loss of those resources. Moreover, some cultural resources have been lost due to unclear or conflicting public policies, incomplete information and the lack of funding. The loss of significant historic, cultural and archaeological resources can reduce the community's uniqueness and make it a less desirable place in which to live, work or visit.

As San Luis Obispo enters the 21st century, it is prudent to look into the future to anticipate problems which may lie ahead. We have already experienced some of these same pressures, and it is reasonable to expect that we will continue to face similar challenges in the near future. Through its General Plan policies and related implementation measures, the City intends to help balance cultural resource preservation with other community goals (City of San Luis Obispo 2014:6-14-6-15).

Architectural historians and other technical specialists, on the other hand, are expected to focus on the particular issues of their area of expertise. That is not to say that they should be unaware of or indifferent to other issues of concern. It is a standard analytical approach to look at overall historical context when considering historical resources. This approach has merit, though, only when it is understood in an organic way and not as a snapshot moment in time. Economic realities have always shaped the form, size, construction materials, aesthetic qualities, and use of San Luis Obispo's myriad architectural resources—no matter when they were built or where they were located. Over the past 150 years, the City has experienced episodes of economic downturn and economic recovery, accompanied respectively by building slumps and building booms. New construction has historically embraced contemporary architectural trends (which sometimes included architectural revivals of earlier styles). As part of this long-term general economic and construction trend, new construction has also often been larger and more substantially built than the majority of buildings already in place around it. The Masonic Temple, for instance, which has dominated Marsh Street for more than a century, was roughly three times the height and size of surrounding structures when it was built in 1913—at a time when the streetscape was predominantly one-story frame dwellings and vacant lots. During the past century, there have also been long intervals of limited growth during which a generation of residents might witness relatively few conspicuous changes. It should be pointed out, of course, that earlier episodes of large-scale construction generally happened long before the evolution of the modern regulatory environment and its concerns with historic preservation, but new construction has nevertheless always been indicative of prevailing historical trends.

The project clearly evidences the intent to incorporate numerous design elements to be compatible with adjacent and nearby architectural styles and materials. The massing of the building—though clearly tall and substantial—is nevertheless softened by subdued colors and fenestration of the lower stories, as well as the setback and change in surface material of the uppermost stories. Cornice trim is suitably incorporated at a respectful scale. The building is designed in an unobtrusive contemporary style that neither suggests a fictitious past nor attempts to dominate or compete with the more flamboyant architecture of the historic Masonic Temple across Marsh Street. Marsh Street is noticeably wider than Higuera and Monterey Streets, but the numerous mature street trees provide considerable screening of building mass on both sides of the street. Marsh Street at Chorro Street is also noticeably at a lower elevation than the uphill topography that characterizes the intersections of Higuera and Osos Streets or Chorro and Palm Streets, where buildings that are tall to begin with look even taller against the horizon. The City parking structure on the opposite corner of Marsh and Chorro Streets provides a tall visual counterpoint to the proposed Marsh & Chorro Development Project. Other nearby designated historic buildings within a one-block radius have limited views of the project site from the city street, generally because of the narrowness of the cross streets and screening provided by street trees.

With careful consideration of: (1) the historical development of the Downtown Historic District; (2) the character-defining features of adjacent and nearby designated historic buildings; (3) site topography, street width, and sightlines; (4) the district-wide distribution of multi-storied designated historic buildings, other multi-storied historic-period buildings, and recently constructed multi-storied buildings; and (5) the proposed materials, colors, massing, setbacks, ornamental detailing, wall recesses, bulkheads, canopies, balconies, railings, fenestration, lintels, ledges, window reveals, and other design elements of the proposed project, SWCA has concluded that the project, as currently designed, complies with the City's *Historic Preservation Program Guidelines* and with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Rehabilitation).

REFERENCES CITED

City of San Luis Obispo

- 2006 *City of San Luis Obispo General Plan, Chapter 6: Conservation and Open Space Element*. Adopted April 4, 2006, last revised December 9, 2014 (Council Resolution No. 10586, 2014 Series). Available at: <https://www.slocity.org/home/showdocument?id=6651>. Accessed October 2018.
- 2010 *City of San Luis Obispo Historic Preservation Program Guidelines*. November 2010. Available at: <https://www.slocity.org/home/showdocument?id=4144>. Accessed October 2018.
- 2015 San Luis Obispo Cultural Heritage Committee Minutes, Agenda Packet for ARCH-1376-2015, Hearing Item No. 1. June 22, 2015. Available at: <http://opengov.slocity.org/weblink/1,1,1,1/doc/42256/Page1.aspx>. Accessed October 2018.

National Park Service

- [n.d.] *New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic Properties*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Technical Preservation Services. Available at: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/new-construction.htm>. Accessed October 2018.

Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

- 2007 *Sense of Place: Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts*. Available at: http://www.preservationalliance.com/publications/SenseofPlace_final.pdf. Accessed October 2018.