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Planning CHC &lt;chc@lacity.org&gt;

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## Pig'N Whistle MFR Report - Cultural Heritage Commission Agenda

1 message

**Mike Shawn** [REDACTED]

Wed, May 11, 2022 at 1:41 PM

To: "chc@lacity.org" &lt;chc@lacity.org&gt;

Cc: "lambert.giessinger@lacity.org" &lt;lambert.giessinger@lacity.org&gt;

Hello,

This is Michael Callahan. I'm a life-long resident of the City and I am deeply bothered by the willful destruction of many of our historic resources. Watching the events that have taken place at the Pig'N Whistle (aka Mr Tempo) restaurant unfold, the total lack of respect to the building and the public demonstrated by the tenant is appalling. What's more, much of the work has been conducted without permits, bypassing the laws enacted to protect our resources and provide public notice.

Since the issuance of a stop-work order, the Office of Historic Resources has taken the lead in resolving this matter. The OHR directed the building owner to submit a Memorandum for the Record (MFR) report and that report was recently submitted to the CHC. The OHR described this report as final and the impact of the work as minimal. It is my contention that the MFR report, as presented to the CHC, is far from final. The report fails to identify historic artifacts known to be present on-site prior to the start of construction. The report does not present an accurate view of all work performed to date. The report even fails to meet the scope of work set by the OHR.

To support my contentions, I ask that the attached report be provided to the Commissioners for their review and consideration. I also ask the Commission to please place this issue on their agenda calendar so that the public may be given an opportunity to provide comment. In accordance with CHC Rule 4.3a Initial Submissions, three (3) copies of the attached report are being sent to the attention of the Commission Secretary today.

Thank you so much for your time and help in this matter.

Mike Callahan

**Pig & Whistle Comments - Callahan 2022-05-11.pdf**

2429K

Michael Callahan



May 11, 2022

City of Los Angeles  
Cultural Heritage Commission  
200 N Spring St, Room 272  
Los Angeles CA 90012

Re: **Agenda Item 4 – General Public Comment**

Dear Commissioners,

I call on you to take on as an agenda item the matter of restoring the unpermitted damage done to the Pig & Whistle (aka Pig'N Whistle) restaurant located at 6714 Hollywood Blvd. The public deserves a clear and accurate accounting of the damage done and the actions to be taken to rectify this matter.

I have reviewed the recent findings report prepared by the owner's consultant Sapphos Environmental Inc , and I find the report to contain many errors and omissions. As it stands, the report gives one the false impression that all is okay since the modifications are either reversible or they do not impact historic features. I disagree.

If anything, the consultant's report shows permits being filed without Cultural Heritage Commission review or public hearings, as required by law. When a structural change is made, permits are not filed, so again there is no review. Using readily available on-line data, I find the building history provided in the report to be inaccurate and that significant modifications have occurred to date.

In closing, I urge you all to please place the Pig & Whistle restaurant on your agenda calendar. The public deserves an opportunity to be heard. Both the City and the public deserve a full and accurate accounting of the work performed and the measures to be taken to effect repair. The Memorandum for the Record report should not be accepted as FINAL. Attached are my comments for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Callahan".

Michael Callahan

enc: Submitted in compliance with CHC Rule 4.3a., Initial Submission  
cc: Office of Historic Resources  
[lambert.giessinger@lacity.org](mailto:lambert.giessinger@lacity.org).

## 1.0 SITE HISTORY

The building erected at 6714 Hollywood Blvd opened to the public in 1920 as a retail store. For several years it operated as Dunn's "Clothes for the Discriminating Man." Then, in 1926, the building was taken over by the newly formed Pig'N Whistle Corporation. The new corporation merged the operations of three existing subsidiaries and raised capital through the sale of stock to the public. The remodeled building was designed by the master architecture firm of Morgan, Walls, and Clements.

The operation was very successful with the soda fountain and candy retail space expanding to include a dance hall permit in 1933 and an alcohol (beer only) license in 1951. The Pig'N Whistle was a beloved place visited by major celebrities, tourists, and local families alike. The Pig'N Whistle closed sometime in early 1953 with the restaurant rebranded as Valler's Café Di Lusso. A major modification made at that time was moving the kitchen area forward from the back of house to the center.

It is not known for how long Valler's Café Di Lusso's Restaurant remained open. The building may have been converted to retail space in 1955 or 1956. This is when the interior of the Pig'N Whistle was gutted and much of the furnishings and fixtures removed. No building permit for this demolition is presented in the MFR report permit history (Table 1). Table 1 does show a permit issued on 9 December 1963 for relocating an entry and a change in occupancy. An ad in the Los Angeles Times dated 22 April 1964 shows the site as a Masters Mart retail outlet.

Master's Mart closed for business sometime after July 1971. The next ad appears in March 1972 for an offer to lease the building. No tenant data is available until January 1983 when Numero Uno Pizza returns the building to restaurant use. It is interesting to note that the permit clearly shows review by the Cultural Heritage Commission. This is two years prior to the 1985 listing of the site as historic per the MRF report.

In 1987, a fire broke out in the kitchen area and a building permit was filed in June to repair the damage to the suspended ceiling, wall finish, and roofing. As before, the permit is clearly stamped "Cult Her" indicating Cultural Heritage Commission review. Numero Uno Pizza operated from this building for many years, closing sometime in 1999.

Following Numero Uno Pizza, the building owners are listed as the Fuller Trust with Alan Hajjar (Pig & Whistle) as tenant. Subsequent permits list the Fuller Trust as owner with Chris Breed as tenant and Alan Hajjar sometimes listed as owner or as authorized agent. Alan Hajjar is involved in the current project but the exact working arrangement between Alan Hajjar (Sunset Entertainment Group), Jorge Cueva (Mr Tempo Cantina), and the Fuller Trust is unclear.

One interesting building permit associated with the original renovation project is dated 8 January 2001 and is not listed in Table 1 of the MFR report. It is for the reframing of existing fire damage in the attic area so that this space can be used as an office and for storage. Was this existing damage related to the 1987 fire or was there another fire prior to, during, or after the modification work? What impact, if any, did this fire have on the mezzanine area, an original feature of the Pig’N Whistle? The MFR report is silent on this matter.

## 2.0 EVENTS LEADING TO TODAY

It has been reported by others that the new Pig’N Whistle underwent a number of closures and hardships during the recent pandemic. Then, in August 2021, photos started circulating on social media showing that extensive remodeling work was being done on the interior. Kim Cooper, on The Esotouric Blog dated 3 November 2021 with periodic updates, reported that she was told that preservation groups informed Mitch O’Farrell’s staff and the Office of Historic Resources (OHR) that the Pig’N Whistle was being illegally altered, but nothing was done. A search on the LADBS website found no issued permits.

Then in late October, photos showing the erection of plastic signage for a Mr Tempo Cantina over the 1920s façade circulated on social media. The photo showed the removed neon signs dropped carelessly onto the sidewalk below. In response, several online media groups raised the red flag and got their followers to submit complaints to Lambert Giessinger at OHR and Daniel Halden at CD 13 asking them to file a stop work order and protect this designated historic resource. At the end of the day, a stop-work order was finally issued. This was followed by the update presented below from the OHR to Kim Cooper as reported on her blog:

*“Craig Bullock and Dan Halden [from Mitch O’Farrell’s office] coordinated a meeting at the property yesterday with the business owner, building department and me. I have attached some photographs. I’ve asked the business owner to prepare a document to discuss the original restoration work they did in 1999, changes to the space over time, and the most recent work they have done so we can better assess the condition. It appears that most of the new finish work is cosmetic. The Pig’N Whistle cartouches on the facade have been covered with foam and were not removed. I suspect the alterations to the sign require a permit and will require OHR and Planning review. I’ve also attached the municipal code section that triggers review of work when a permit is applied for. The building department has indicated that the restaurant TI work for mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems requires permits. – Lambert.”*

### **3.0 THE MFR REPORT**

Sapphos Environmental, Inc. (Ms. Carrie Chasteen) was retained by the Sunset Entertainment Group (Alan Hajjar) to document the current condition of the building, review historic building permits, and assess the project for conformance with the Standards. Ms. Chasteen is included in the City's list of qualified consultants. She conducted a site visit on 24 February 2022 and documented the public spaces and basement, including the women's restroom, using digital photography.

The current project is the rehabilitation of the former space known as the Pig'N Whistle restaurant for continued use as a Mexican-themed restaurant known as Mr. Tempo Cantina. Jorge Cueva, restauranter and entrepreneur with 160 restaurants, is the proprietor of the replacement business. The project was completed prior to the preparation of the MFR Report.

The project removed the cloth panels and wall sconces that were installed in the 1999–2001 renovation and replaced them with sculpted fiberglass panels. Additional speakers and lighting were installed in the dining room ceiling. The ceiling was repainted white to “open up” the feel of the space. The bar was relocated from the central western end of the dining room to the southern edge of this space. The southern wall of the dining room was accented with contemporary tiles. The flooring that was installed during the 1999–2001 remodel was removed and replaced with contemporary tiles.

Exterior alterations included removing the channel letters that now read “Mr. Tempo Cantina,” a font change in the channel letters on the marquee, the Mr. Tempo logo in marquee fins, removing the wall-mounted signage and replacing them with the Mr. Tempo Cantina–branded image, covering the flute-playing pig medallions with skull-themed medallions, and painting the facade white. Additionally, the spiral staircase in the dining room will be removed.

### **4.0 COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS**

In my opinion, the major focus placed on the signage is too narrow in scope and it fails to address the protection of the historic storefront. Though portions of the original Pig'N Whistle storefront no longer exists, the 1999 storefront served as a faithful representation of a historic time period, with some modern adjustment. As such, the 1999 storefront is the key defining feature, not just the signage. This position is clearly stated in National Park Service Preservation Brief 11 – Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts. According to the NPS brief: “The storefront is the most important architectural feature of many historic commercial buildings.”

The original Pig'N Whistle storefront is a classic design from the period. The entry doors are set in the center of the storefront and recessed back from the sidewalk. The two enclosed areas form a

short hallway with patrons passing by product displays or diners, if used for seating. The effect is to be inviting, to draw people in, to get people away from the busy street and into the shop.



**Figure 1** - MFR Report Figure 6 “shows the 1927 storefront, which consisted of a pair of small outdoor spaces that functioned as patios and the original signage on the marquee.”

The next graphic (Figure 2) shows Masters Mart retaining the classic storefront configuration. The major changes involve the enclosure of the patio areas with sheet glass, thus providing areas for product display, and a change in signage. It is likely safe to assume that the Pig’N Whistle tile on the two exterior walls did not survive the change. It is not known how much, if any, of the entrance way tile shown in Figure 1 survived the change.



**Figure 2** – Sale ad for Masters Mart on Hollywood Blvd. Source: Los Angeles Times dated 22 April 1966.



**Figure 3** - MFR Report Figure 8 “shows the Pig’N Whistle circa 1960 when it was converted to a Masters Market. SOURCE: Photo provided by Sunset Entertainment Group.”



**Figure 4** – View of the Egyptian Theater and a partial view of the Numero Uno Pizza storefront dated 24 February 1989. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Moving ahead to the next major tenant, Numero Uno Pizza operated at this address from 1983 to slightly before 2000. A photo of the Egyptian Theater taken in 1989 shows the eastern edge of the building. While it is hard to make out, it appears that Numero Uno retained the enclosed glass frontage with recessed doors. The glass windows will be removed, and the area returned to open-air patio in the 1999 – 2000 renovations. Where are the permits and site plans for this demolition work?

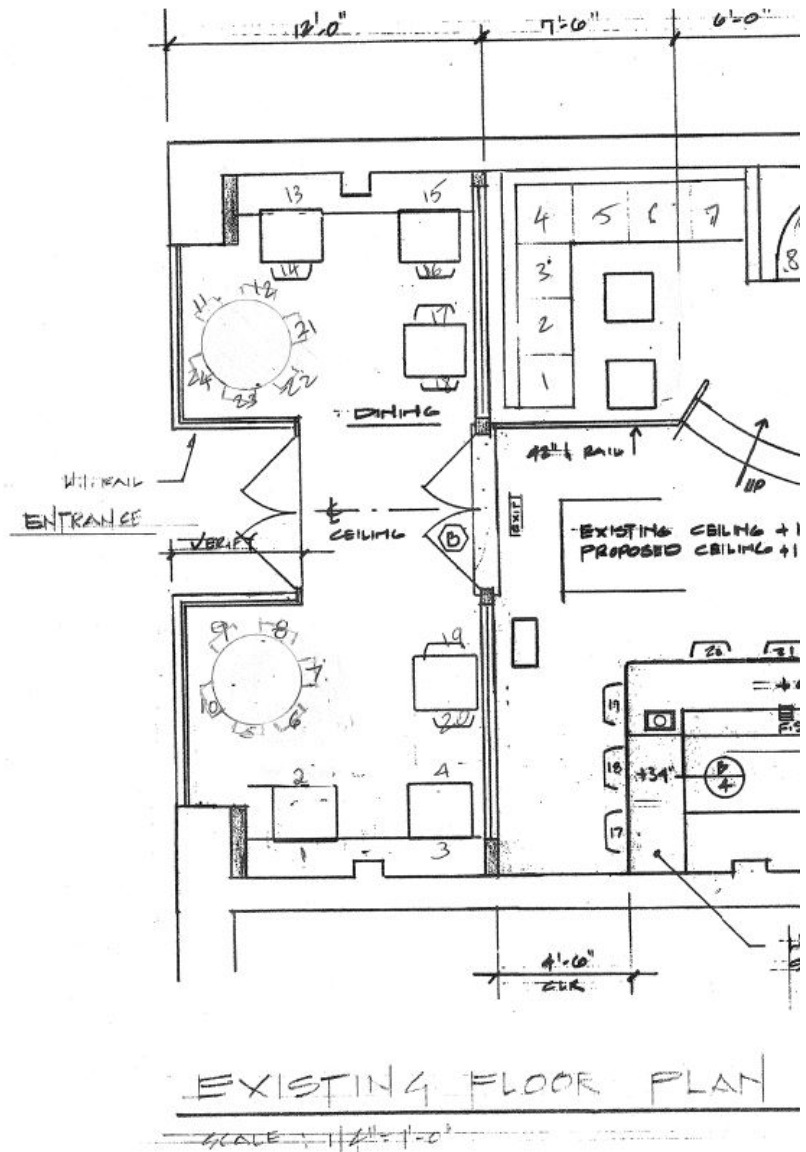


Figure 5 – Partial section of Existing Floor Plan per MFR Report Attachment Plans.

While the Pig’N Whistle floor plan provided in the MFR report is clearly labeled existing, it is highly unlikely that this is the floor plan showing existing conditions at the time of the project (the floor plan is dated 28 December 2000 revision). Notice the front wall along the sidewalk is shown as a

wrought iron fence with swinging gates. The wrought iron fence replaces the front walls and enclosed glass that led to the recessed doors. This drawing shows the two recessed doors located in the interior wall. While the drawing shows this wall as existing, it is unknown if this wall predates the renovations or not. Assuming this wall was truly existing, it should be assumed to be part of the original building.

Figure 5 also negates the position that only minor cosmetic changes were made to the building. The available permits do not list the demolition of the glass frontage nor the installation of an interior wall (though the original position of the doors might suggest that some type of wall was present). Who reviewed and approved this major work if a permit was not submitted for approval? While I personally find the 1999 – 2000 design with open-air patios to be more visually appealing and in some ways similar to the original design, such a major change to a historic building should have undergone public review.



Figure 6 - MFR Report Figure 9 dated 2014. *“The marquee was restored as part of the 1999–2001 renovation, including reconstruction of the side fins with neon-lit channel signage. The extant channeled neon signage was added at that time. SOURCE: Photo provided by Sunset Entertainment Group.*



Figure 7 - Photo dated 13 March 2012 and posted on Yelp by Jeff B.



Figure 8 – Frame grab from Visiting with Huell (Season 9 Episode 9) aired 4 March 2001.

In the KCET program “Visiting with Huell” aired 4 March 2001, Huell Howser met with Robert Nudelman (Hollywood Heritage), Ken Burnstein (Los Angeles Conservancy), and owner Chris Breed to discuss the recent renovations made to the Pig’n Whistle. In this episode it is pointed out how historic tile from the basement was removed and reused to construct the center tile piece at the entrance, or it was used in the patio walls, and how broken pieces were used to construct tile tabletops for the patio area. Huell marveled as to how this historic tile was reused and will live on for all to enjoy. In reviewing the MFR report, there is no accounting for this historic tile. While the report clearly mentions the importance of the basement tile, the removed and reused tile is not addressed. Also notice the size and shape of the original wood doors in Figures 7 and 8. This issue will be brought up shortly.

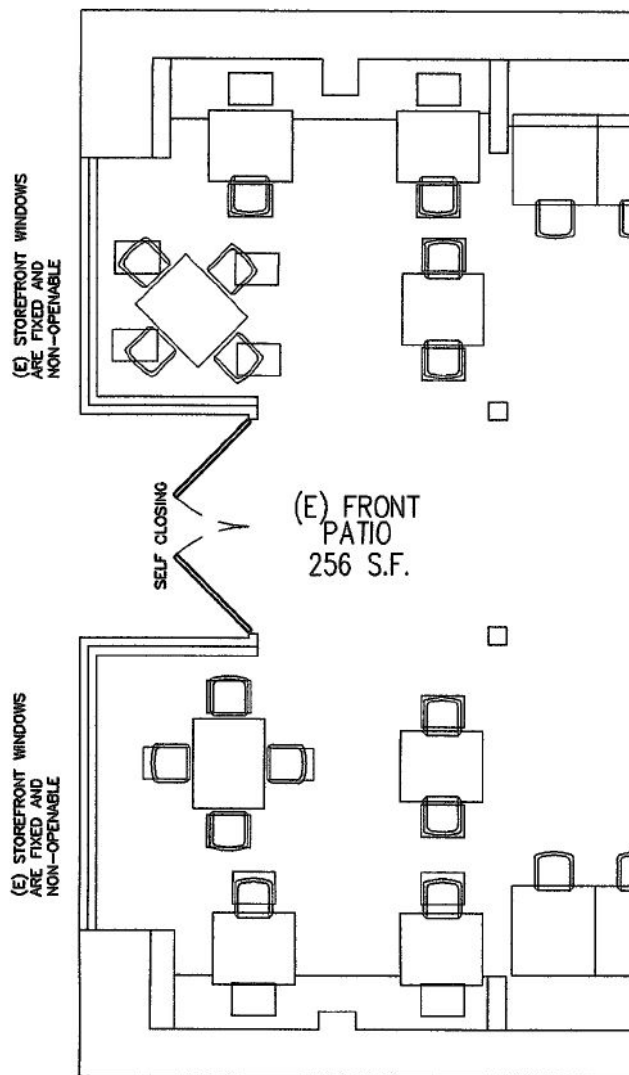


Figure 9 - MFR Report Attachment Plan K1.1 Front Patio dated 14 February 2022.

The site plan for the 2022 work shows the two swinging entrance doors relocated from the recessed wall position to the frontage wall. The frontage wall with metal storefront windows replaces the wrought iron railing. Please note the existing metal windows are shown on the drawing as non-openable and the interior wall is absent.



Figure 10 - MFR Report Figure 15 *“(Original Doors and Storefront Windows Extant). The patios were enclosed with contemporary storefront, and the original paired wood doors were pushed to the sidewalk to create a flat plane on the primary façade for security reasons in 2004. The interior arches were installed where the original primary façade plane was previously located. SOURCE: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2022. NOTE: Metal windows were added in 2001 for security.”*

This is where the MFR report fails to accurately describe the history of the building and the projects to date. Perhaps if the author addressed the storefront in-toto, rather than just the sign, she would catch the glaring errors. To support my claim, please refer back to Figures 6, 7, and 8.

The MFR report claims that the storefront was “*pushed to the sidewalk to create a flat plane on the primary façade for security reasons in 2004.*” This is clearly false as shown in Figure 6 (MFR Report Figure 9 dated 2014). The photo clearly shows the two patio areas enclosed by the wrought iron railing with the partition wall in back. It is unknown exactly when this major change took place, but it did not occur in 2004.

The MRF report continues “*In 2004, the storefront windows were installed to enclose the front patios, and the entry doors were pushed out to create a flat plane on the primary façade. This alteration was completed for security purposes. Permits for the 2004 work were not available from the Department of Building and Safety and were not provided by the property owner.*” Might the absence of permits be due to the fact that the work was not conducted in 2004 or that the work was performed without permits? Where are the building plans for this work?

I also call attention to the doors themselves. Figures 6, 7, and 8 clearly show two large doors with large glass inserts. The doors shown in Figure 10 (MFR report Figure 15) are narrow and mostly wood with small glass inserts at the top. If one can clearly see that these are different doors, why does the report claim that these are the original doors? One can see in Figures 6 and 10 (both from the MFR Report) that the doors have been changed.

The one statement I do agree with in the MFR Report (page 6) is “*The 1999–2001 improvements met the Standards and were completed in a competent manner, and the building better contributes to the National Register historic district as a result.*” I fully concur. The open patio, with recessed doors, is consistent with the original storefront design. Therefore, the 1999 – 2001 design should be restored.

Continuing, I also believe that the interior wall itself is a significant feature worthy of preservation. This wall gets little mention in the MFR report. In an LA Times article dated 26 April 2001, it is claimed that “*English-born (Chris) Breed has restored the Pig’s old ceiling beams, the plaster light sconces, the stained-glass windows and the original marquee showing a pig playing a fife.*” The MFR report fails to mention any stained-glass windows as a historic feature. It is known that the interior wall did contain a number of stained-glass windows, and what appear to be cut glass panes, as shown in the following photo.



Figure 11 - Photo dated 9 July 2019 and posted on Yelp by Andrew B. This view is from inside the restaurant, looking out towards Hollywood Blvd.

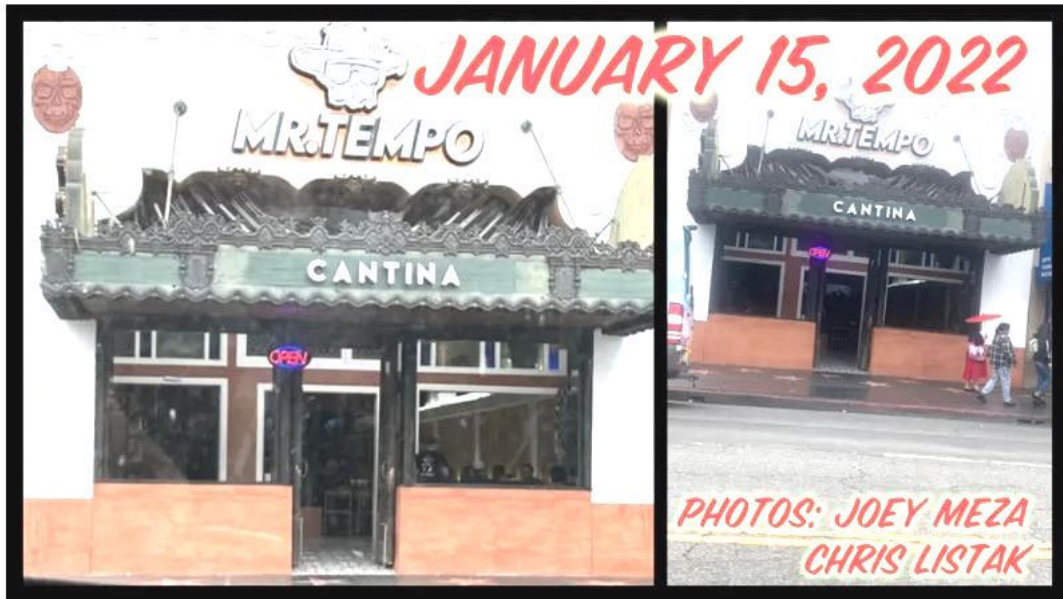


Figure 12 - Photo posted on The Esotouric Blog update dated 15 January 2022.

Comparing Figure 11 to Figure 12, it appears that the current project has replaced all of the stained-glass and cut glass in the interior wall. It is also unknown if any of this interior wall still exists since it is not shown in the Site Plan (Figure 9). Also note in Figures 11 (July 2019) and 12 (January 2022) that the existing metal storefront windows are open. This is counter to the site plan that shows the existing metal storefront windows as “*fixed and non-openable.*” This is just another discrepancy not identified, discussed, or even mentioned in the MFR report.

## 5.0 FINDINGS AND PROPOSED REVISIONS

On 26 April 2022, the Historic Resource Verification for the building permit was cleared by Lambert Glessinger. Mr. Glessinger reported at the 5 May 2022 Cultural Heritage Commission meeting that the unpermitted work issue had been resolved, and he offered to share the report commissioned by the property owner as part of this process. The MFR report requires:

- 1) the owner to remove the Mr. Tempo branded skull medallions on the facade and restore the flute-playing pigs they covered up;
- 2) the removed neon sign is stored at the Valley Relics Museum for the express purpose of allowing restoration at a future date;
- 3) some original Pig’N Whistle tiles and ceiling decoration in the basement survived the unpermitted demolition; and
- 4) repaint the primary façade a color that is complimentary to the Egyptian Theater (I added this requirement as stated in the MFR report but not listed).

While these four actions seem like a good start in repairing some of the physical damage done to the building and making up for the ill will created by the new tenant, they are by no means adequate. The findings report prepared by Shappos Environmental Inc. fails to identify specific events in the history of the building that may have an impact on restoration. The report contains a number of significant factual errors and does not satisfy its stated intent and purpose. The proposed requirements, items 2 and 3, are hollow and meaningless in that they only state the current situation. They provide no actionable requirements. Even worst, no action is listed to address the repeated lack of oversight and public review, as required. The Commission should consider the following viable actions:

- 1) the owner to remove the Mr. Tempo branded skull medallions on the facade and restore the flute-playing pigs they covered up;



- 2) the public shall be allowed to review any and all agreements made between the owner and Valley Relics Museum for the storage and future restoration of the removed signage. Certain legal conditions must be in place to insure the long-term care and protection of these artifacts;
- 3) some original Pig'N Whistle tiles and ceiling decoration in the basement survived the unpermitted demolition. The owner is required to ensure that no further damage occurs to any historic tile found onsite. The applies not only to the historic tile present in the basement, but at the entrance, in the patio walls, as well as the historic tile used to construct the patio tables. Any tile found missing shall be grounds for legal action;
- 4) repaint the primary façade a color that is complimentary to the Egyptian Theater. Painting shall be conducted by licensed contractor with color selection to be reviewed and approved by the CHC prior to work;
- 5) the Memorandum for the Record report must be revised, corrected, and updated so that it provides a clear and accurate description of all building modification made to date. A full set of HABS qualified photographs shall be produced and published documenting all historic resources in the building to be preserved and protected;
- 6) Meetings shall be held with the owner and appropriate preservationists as to how best to restore the store front to 1999 condition while meeting the security needs of the building tenant. This discussion shall address both exterior and interior walls; and
- 7) the Cultural Heritage Commission shall assign the Pig'N Whistle to their agenda calendar so that public comment can be heard and placed on file in the record.

# **SECONDARY SUBMISSIONS**

# **DAY OF HEARING SUBMISSIONS**