

September 17, 2013

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**Review of Expert Technical Analysis Report for Chula Vista Sears,  
Chula Vista, San Diego County, California**

Dear Ms. Tessitore-Lopez,

This letter report provides the results of ASM's review of the Expert Technical Analysis Report (ETAR) prepared by Heritage Architecture (HA) for the Chula Vista Sears building, located at 565 Broadway in Chula Vista, San Diego County, California. Heritage Architecture was hired by SNR Denton US on behalf of the property owners in May of this year to conduct an intensive analysis and evaluation of the building subsequent to ASM's evaluation of the building in 2012. The letter report provides background for this review, a summary of HA's findings, and ASM's reevaluation and conclusions. A continuation sheet for ASM's prior Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 site record form prepared for the building is included as Attachment B.

**BACKGROUND**

ASM previously evaluated the Chula Vista Sears building as part of the *Chula Vista Historic Resources Survey* completed by ASM for the City of Chula Vista (City) in November 2012 (Davis et al. 2012). The historic resources survey was undertaken to help achieve the goals and objectives of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and new Historic Preservation Program, and to specifically identify those buildings, structures, and landscapes eligible for the City of Chula Vista Local Register of Historical Resources. During preparation for Phase One of the survey, the Chula Vista Sears was recommended through public input as a potentially historically significant building for its association with the 1960s commercial development of the Chula Vista Center. San Diego County Assessor's information on the parcel also indicated it was constructed prior to 1970. During a Historic Preservation Commission meeting in the spring of 2012, the Sears building was also recommended for inclusion in the survey as a property that the community felt to be historically significant. As such, the Chula Vista Sears was included in the more than 12,000 parcels surveyed during Phase One, and as a result, recommended for evaluation in Phase Two.

During Phase Two of the *Chula Vista Historic Resources Survey*, ASM evaluated the Chula Vista Sears for eligibility for listing in the Chula Vista Local Register of Historical Resources (Chula Vista Local Register), California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). ASM recommended that Chula Vista Sears was eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register, CRHR, and NRHP for its association with commercial development during the City's Maturation Period, and also as an excellent local example of the Modern Commercial style. It was one of only three commercial buildings recommended eligible under these criteria of the 12,000 buildings surveyed citywide.

### **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE'S FINDINGS**

HA was hired by SNR Denton US on behalf of the property owners in 2013 to conduct a more intensive evaluation of the building (Heritage Architecture and Planning 2013). HA conducted extensive site-specific archival research for the property, including a title search, architectural plans and drawings, building permits, newspaper articles, historic photographs, and Assessor's building records. As a result of their research and analysis, HA recommended that the Chula Vista Sears was not eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register, CRHR, and NRHP. HA established that the Chula Vista Sears was completed in 1966, and as such must be evaluated for the NRHP under Criterion Consideration G for resources less than 50 years of age. HA did not find that the building met the level of exceptional significance to be eligible for the NRHP. HA did not find that the Chula Vista Sears was associated with any historic events or individuals significant in history, and as such did not recommend it eligible under CRHR or Chula Vista Local Register Criteria 1 or 2. Because of alterations to the building since its original date of construction, HA concluded that the building had lost too many distinctive features of the Modern style and as such was no longer a good example of any particular architectural style. HA further argued that the Chula Vista Sears did not retain enough overall integrity to be eligible under CRHR Criterion 3 nor Chula Vista Local Register Criterion 3.

### **REEVALUATION OF THE CHULA VISTA SEARS**

ASM's Senior Architectural Historian, Shannon Davis, conducted a thorough review of the documentation and research compiled by HA. Ms. Davis, M.A., has 16 years of experience in historic preservation, 10 of which were spent as a Historian with the NRHP, and is qualified as Architectural Historian and Historian under the Secretary of the Interior's professional qualifications standards. Ms. Davis particularly focused on the original drawings and historic images located in newspaper articles at the time the Sears building was completed. ASM had not previously obtained or considered this historical documentation at the time of our original evaluation due to the limited scope of research ASM was able to conduct for each property during the citywide survey.

As a result of our review of the ETAR prepared by HA, ASM continues to recommend that the Chula Vista Sears building is eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register, although no longer recommends it as eligible for the NRHP or CRHR. ASM continues to recommend that the building is related to significant events in history—the commercial development of Chula Vista during the City Maturation period and is an excellent local example of the Modern style as well. As such, the building has the potential to be eligible for the NRHP and CRHR under Criterion A/1 and Criterion C/3. However, as the building is less than 50 years old, it does not possess such exceptional importance to warrant consideration under NRHP Criterion Consideration G. Properties that are potentially eligible for the CRHR similarly must be more than 50 years of age, unless it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to obtain a scholarly perspective. ASM does not feel that such scholarly perspective has been achieved.

The Chula Vista Sears is old enough for consideration for the Chula Vista Local Register without possessing exceptional significance, as the City of Chula Vista Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that a resource must only be 45 years old—the Chula Vista Sears is 47 years old.

ASM continues to recommend that the Chula Vista Sears is eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 1 for its association with the commercial development of Chula Vista during the City Maturation period (1940-1970). Sears was the final development project of the landmark Chula Vista Center (1962-1966), planned as the South Bay's anchor shopping center and Chula Vista's first example of this type of twentieth century retail destination. Shopping centers evolved nationally during the mid-twentieth century as a major departure from earlier commercial centers and strips—usually smaller store fronts concentrated along major avenues, evidenced in Chula Vista along Third and Broadway avenues. The Chula Vista Center was planned as a large-scale retail destination that would be anchored by large department stores connected by a series of smaller stores, incorporating pedestrian circulation that was separated from the large parking areas planned on the periphery of the center, with easy access from the major transportation arteries (Heritage Architecture and Planning 2013; Longstreth 2000).

ASM continues to recommend that the Chula Vista Sears is eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 3 as a good example of the Modern style within a local context. The Chula Vista Sears is one of only six commercial buildings identified in the citywide survey that represent good local examples of the Modern style, arguably the most influential national architectural style of the twentieth century. The other five commercial Modern style buildings that are eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 3 are Superior Auto Body (363 E St.), Aunt Emma's (700 E St.), Vagabond Inn Motel (230 Broadway), Chula Vista Fire Station #9 (266 E Oneida St.), and Parkway Community Center (385 Park Way). HA identified one other good local example—Macy's department store—which was not surveyed during the Phase One citywide survey as ASM did not believe it was old enough. Within the local context, 0.05% of all buildings surveyed were recommended as eligible for this architectural style. Because of the scarcity of Modern commercial style buildings in Chula Vista, it is acceptable for examples thereof to have experienced some loss of integrity yet still

be eligible (Andrus 1997). Although there has been some loss of integrity of the design, materials, workmanship, and setting of the Chula Vista Sears, it retains sufficient overall integrity (relative to the rarity of comparable examples within the local context) to be eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register.

As a result of the research conducted by HA, ASM also recommends that the building is eligible under Chula Vista Local Register Criterion 3 as it represents a unique local example of the work of master architects, Stiles & Robert Clements. The Chula Vista Sears is the only known example of the architects' work in Chula Vista, and one of Stiles Clements' last major designs. The firm of Stiles & Robert Clements Architects-Engineers was a Los Angeles firm that operated from 1955 to 1966, well known in the Los Angeles area, but with only a few examples of their work in San Diego County. Stiles Clements is credited for much of the commercial development along Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles known as the Miracle Mile (Heritage Architecture and Planning 2013). He was known in his early career for the design of supermarkets, and by the mid-twentieth century for his design of shopping centers. His son Robert Clements partnered with his father in 1955, and the two worked together until Stiles retired in 1965, with Robert continuing to practice until 1987, specializing in commercial buildings (Heritage Architecture and Planning 2013).

### **Integrity**

The Chula Vista Municipal Code also stipulates that a resource must possess historical integrity. The City of Chula Vista Historic Preservation Ordinance defines integrity as the authenticity of a Resource's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the Resource's historic or prehistoric period. There are seven recognized aspects or qualities that in various combinations define the concept of Integrity; Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. The NRHP publication *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, establishes how to evaluate the integrity of a property, and defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance (Andrus 1997). The evaluation of integrity must be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features, and how they relate to the concept of integrity. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a property requires knowing why, where, and when a property is significant. To retain historic integrity, a property must possess several, and usually most, aspects of integrity:

1. **Location** is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
2. **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
3. **Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property, and refers to the character of the site and the relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often refers to the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it

was intended to serve. These features can be either natural or manmade, including vegetation, paths, fences, and relationships between other features or open space.

4. **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period or time, and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
5. **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory, and can be applied to the property as a whole, or to individual components.
6. **Feeling** is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, when taken together, convey the property's historic character.
7. **Association** is the direct link between the important historic event or person and a historic property.

ASM continues to feel that the Chula Vista Sears retains a sufficient degree of integrity to be eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register. Some of the original design elements from its completion in 1966 (the period of significance for the property) have been lost or altered, most notably the original plate glass display windows, original signage, alterations to original entryways, and the interruption of the horizontality of the form by the 1980s canopies. However, the Chula Vista Sears still retains many features and elements of its original construction that are typical of the Modern style in Southern California including its two-story horizontal massing, flat roof, angular lines, brick and concrete block walls, lack of applied ornament, wide overhanging canopies, barreled canopy on the south façade, metal screen and charcoal gray Mirawal panels on the upper portion of the main/north façade, no upper floor windows, exterior circulation patterns around the periphery of the building shaded by the canopies, landscaping elements including planters and palm trees, and large expanses of surface parking on three sides of the building. Some of the elements that are missing are changes to the building that are reversible and could be restored, such as the plate glass windows and signage.

Although the loss/alteration of some of the Modern design elements does impact the integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, and there have been some intrusions to the original setting, those impacts are not significant enough to result in a complete loss of those aspects of integrity. The building still retains a significant degree of its building materials dating to the period of significance, the requirement for eligibility for commercial buildings from the City Maturation period as established by the *Chula Vista Historic Resources Survey* (Davis et al. 2012). Furthermore, the Chula Vista Sears retains good integrity of location, feeling, and association. A shopper who attended the grand opening of the Sears store in 1966 would most certainly recognize the building today. As the Chula Vista Sears is recommended eligible under Criterion 1 as well as 3, location, feeling, and association are among the most important aspects of integrity for a property to retain in order to be eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register. Some loss of design, materials, and craftsmanship is acceptable, as established by the

Ms. Lynnette Tessitore-Lopez  
September 17, 2013  
Page 6 of 7

eligibility criteria in the *Chula Vista Historic Resources Survey* (Davis et al. 2012). As such, ASM finds that the Chula Vista Sears retains good overall integrity.

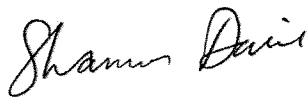
## CONCLUSION

After thorough review of the ETAR prepared by HA for the Chula Vista Sears building, ASM continues to recommend that the building is eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 1 for its association with the commercial development of Chula Vista during the City Maturation period and under Criterion 3 as a good example of the Modern style within a local context. ASM further recommends that the building is also eligible under Criterion 3 as a unique local example of the work of master architects, Stiles & Robert Clements. Although there has been some loss of integrity of the design, materials, workmanship, and setting of the Chula Vista Sears, it retains sufficient overall integrity (relative to the rarity of comparable examples within the local context) to be eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register.

ASM no longer recommends that the Chula Vista Sears is eligible for the NRHP or CRHR, as the building is less than 50 years old, and does not possess such exceptional importance to warrant consideration under NRHP Criterion Consideration G, nor has sufficient time passed to obtain a scholarly perspective for the CRHR.

Please contact me as needed, if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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Attachment A: References  
Attachment B: DPR Form

## **ATTACHMENT A: REFERENCES**

Andrus, Patrick, and Rebecca Shrimpton

1997 *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Davis, Shannon, Sarah Stringer-Bowsher, Jennifer Krintz, and Sinéad Ní Ghabhláin

2012 *Historic Resources Survey, Chula Vista, California*. Prepared for City of Chula Vista. November 2012.

Heritage Architecture and Planning

2013 *Chula Vista Sears Expert Technical Analysis Report; 565 Broadway, Chula Vista, California*. Prepared for SNR Denton US. May 2013.

Longstreth, Richard

2000 *The Drive-in, The Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941*. Cambridge, MIT Press.





**\*B10. Significance (continued):**

ASM continues to recommend that the Chula Vista Sears is eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 3 as a good example of the Modern style within a local context. The Chula Vista Sears is one of only six commercial buildings identified in the citywide survey that represent good local examples of the Modern style, arguably the most influential national architectural style of the twentieth century. The other five commercial Modern style buildings that are eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register under Criterion 3 are Superior Auto Body (363 E St.), Aunt Emma's (700 E St.), Vagabond Inn Motel (230 Broadway), Chula Vista Fire Station #9 (266 E Oneida St.), and Parkway Community Center (385 Park Way). HA identified one other good local example, Macy's department store, which was not surveyed during the Phase One citywide survey as ASM did not believe it was old enough. Within the local context, 0.05% of all buildings surveyed were recommended as eligible for this architectural style. Because of the scarcity of Modern commercial style buildings in Chula Vista, it is acceptable for examples thereof to have experienced some loss of integrity yet still be eligible (Andrus 1997). As noted above, although there has been some loss of integrity of the design, materials, workmanship, and setting of the Chula Vista Sears, it retains sufficient overall integrity (relative to the rarity of comparable examples within the local context) to be eligible for the Chula Vista Local Register.

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