

WPA PRESENTATION: HDRC MEETING, DECEMBER 7, 2016

Rachel Delgado, speaking on behalf of the WPA

Photos of 100 block of South Zarzamora taken by Rachel Delgado

The Westside Preservation Alliance wants to underscore that the proposed replacement project the 7-11 corporation presents to the HDRC for the historic landmarked Malt House, has to have special merit. It must contain elements of the existing structure and spatial configuration that retain the sense of place, visible reminders of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage that are the basis of the historic land-marking of the Malt House, and thus of its meaning to the people of the West Side. Accordingly, we cite key elements of the structure's social/cultural intangible heritage:

Cultural identity and cultural landscape where the language, values, social systems and folk ways of the working class bilingual/bicultural Mexican American community in which it is located were enacted. A cultural extension of home, where one could speak both English and Spanish, greet friends and family with an abrazo, where presentation of self was understood and respected, that nurtured a sense of family and community. It was the pivotal reference to one's physical location in the West Side, which everyone immediately understood precisely because everyone identified with the Malt House; it represented a common, community identity. The Malt House, the first and only restaurant that had canopied in-car dining and, for a long time, the only restaurant in the area to serve both American and Mexican food; elements that spoke to, helped shape, and nurtured the community's bicultural identity.

Feeling: The structure represents a sense of community well-being. A public place of business, it evoked a sense of home precisely because everything about it was like us.

It reflected our own working class aesthetic and cultural sensibilities; it was familial and familiar, an inseparable part of personal and family histories; it holds our memories.

Association: The Malt House is associated with many influential Mexican American politicians and community leaders, including Henry Cisneros and Mary Alice Cisneros (Pérez) who gathered there on a regular basis. It is associated with important leaders, campaigns and grass roots political activity from the 1950s to the 1970s.