

Historic Landmark Nomination

119-127 S. D Street, Oxnard, Ventura County, CA

26 August 2024

Prepared for:

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Prepared by:



County of Ventura
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Item 7b
Exhibit 1 – Historic Resources Report,
dated August 26, 2024

Executive Summary

This report was prepared for the purpose of assisting the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Board, acting as the City of Oxnard Cultural Heritage Board, in determining the eligibility of the property located at 119-127 S. D Street (APN 202-0-044-020) for designation as a City of Oxnard Landmark. The property owner, Teresa Spear, intends to apply for a Mills Act Contract. The 0.32 acre parcel consists of a 8-unit, one and two-story courtyard apartment building with attached garages. [Figure 1]

This report assesses the historical and architectural significance of the property in accordance with the City of Oxnard landmark criteria. This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for the property owners. The evaluation is based on a field investigation and research conducted in May and June 2024.

San Buenaventura Research Associates provides qualified Historian and Architectural Historian services, in accordance with *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications* (36 CFR 61). The conclusions contained herein represent the professional opinions of San Buenaventura Research Associates, and are based on the factual data available at the time of its preparation, the application of the appropriate local, state and federal regulations, and best professional practices.

Summary of Findings

This property appears to be individually eligible as a Oxnard City Landmark under Criteria 1 and 3. It also appears to be eligible as part of a discontinuous district comprised of the remaining seven U-plan courtyard apartment complexes in Oxnard built between 1920 and 1950.

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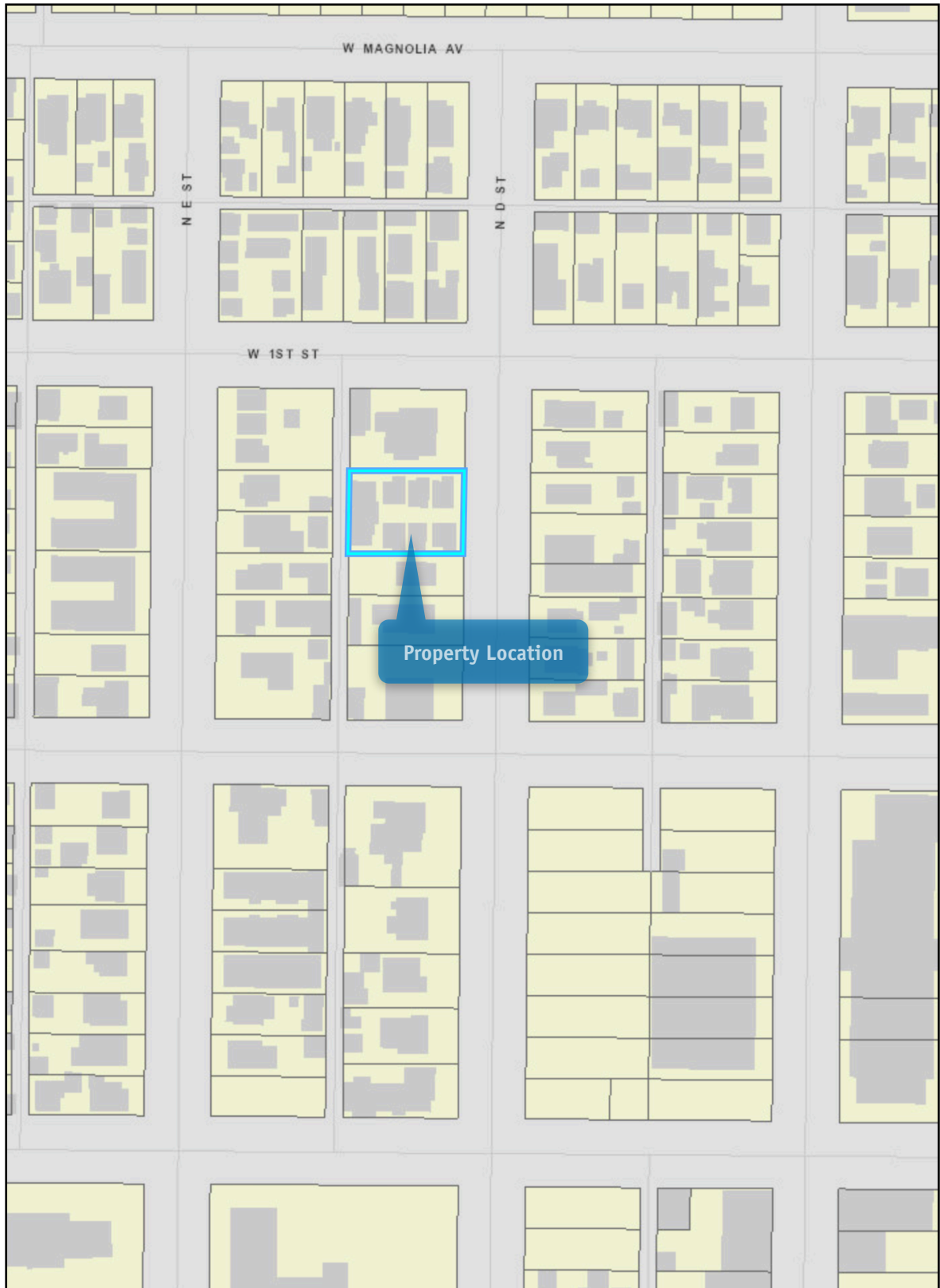


Figure 1. Property Location [Source: County of Ventura]

1. Administrative Setting

In April 1991, the City of Oxnard adopted the Ventura County Cultural Heritage ordinance (§§1360-1374, as amended) by resolution (City of Oxnard Resolution No. 10135), including eligibility criteria and procedures, substituting references in the ordinance to the County of Ventura with the City of Oxnard. Since that time, the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board has acted as the city's cultural heritage board. The criteria for designating properties for listing are:

- a. Landmarks - Satisfy one or more of the below criteria of significance, in addition to retaining sufficient *integrity*. In evaluating *integrity*, the authenticity of the resource's physical identity shall be established by evidence of lack of deterioration and significant survival of the characteristics that existed during its *period of significance*. This shall be evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, consistent with applicable National Register of Historic Places Bulletins for evaluating historic properties.
 - (1) It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County history;
 - (2) It is associated with the lives of significant persons in Ventura County's past;
 - (3) It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
 - (4) It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

2. Historical Setting

General Historical Context. This property consists of two lots of the North Addition to the Town of Oxnard combined into a single assessor parcel. This subdivision recorded in 1901 by the Colonia Improvement Company was the first significant expansion of the original Oxnard townsite after its recordation in 1898. In the first two decades of the century the subdivision filled in with single family residences. Many became the homes of employees of the Oxnard Sugar Beet Company and merchants serving the booming new community.

With the next major period expansion in the 1920s, multifamily housing units began to appear in significant numbers in downtown Oxnard, with courtyard apartments becoming a favored form of construction, as it was throughout Southern California. Some of the courtyards and other types of multifamily residences built in Oxnard displaced older single family residences, particularly after World War II with the suburban push of single family subdivision towards the city's ever-expanding periphery. The popularity of courtyards derived from their ability to replicate some of the amenities enjoyed by homeowners, including green spaces with lawns and gardens, and in some cases, detached units with individual entries. Between 1920 and 1950 approximately

fifteen courtyard apartments were constructed throughout the downtown area of the city of Oxnard. Today, seven of these are known to remain.

Property Specific Context. The subject property is a 0.32 acre parcel located on the west side of S. D Street. A 7-unit courtyard apartment complex was completed on this parcel in 1942 by and for general contractor Albert E. Schuster and his wife Amanda Egbert Shuster. They purchased these two lots of the North Addition in late 1941, with a small single family residence located on it. The western-most one-and-two-story building in the complex (123 S. D Street) was originally constructed as a single unit residence, which the owners occupied until selling the property to Albert J. and Elise Jourdan of Santa Paula in 1944. They apparently also lived in the unit at 123 S. D Street. The property was sold again in 1953 to Harry J. and Louise Savage, who split the rear building into two units in 1955, bringing the total number of units to eight. It appears to have been maintained entirely as a rental property since that time and through numerous subsequent changes of ownership.

3. Historic Resources

The property consists of seven detached, stucco-clad buildings organized in a u-plan, opening towards the street on the east, with a courtyard garden area running through the east-west center axis. The courtyard is set back and raised slightly above street level by a low concrete curb. The six buildings facing directly onto the garden area are identical in plan and elevation. The three on the northern and southern sides are mirrored on the opposite side in plan. [Photos 8-11]

Each of the six, one-story buildings facing each other in symmetrical rows are roughly square in plan with a medium-pitched hipped roof with intersecting medium-pitched gables. Eaves are shallow with exposed rafter tails. The entries facing the central courtyard garden area are slightly offset on this elevation and inset above a two-step concrete stoop. A pop-out around a double sash window is located to the left of the entry (southern units) or to the right for the northern units. Flat canopies featuring a drapery-pattern wood appliqué occur under the shallow eaves. The intersecting gable wing features a centered pair of casement windows and a tongue-in-groove wood drapery pattern appliqué under the gable end. The main entry doors features six recessed panels. [Photos 12-17, 20]

The windows originally featured one-over-one sashes with a single horizontal muntin dividing the lights. Most of these windows have been replaced with single-light sashes or casements within unaltered wood framed openings. The original window sash configuration can still be seen at unit 127B [Photo 16], and in historic photos taken by the Ventura County Assessor, probably in the mid-1950s. [Photos 1-7] The rear secondary elevations of the units feature low stoops and smaller sash windows. [Photo 19]

The larger one and two story duplex building forming the bottom (western) side of the u-site plan is irregular in plan. It features a projecting wing centered on the eastern elevation and an angled bay window consisting of a single fixed window flanked by sash windows. These windows were originally multi-pane [Photo 4]. Entries to the two units are located above three-step concrete stoops covered by small overhang supported by a square post. A pair of sash windows are found adjacent to the entries. A centered two-story portion of this building is set back from the eastern elevation adjacent to the alley at the rear of the property. Doors in this

building feature vertical panels and a center light, differing from the individual unit doors, probably as a result of the 1955 alterations converting this building from a single residence to a duplex. The building is covered with a combination of medium-pitched hipped and shed roofs. A row of two-car garage doors faces the alley. [Photos 18, 19, 22]

4. Eligibility of Historic Resources

City of Oxnard Landmark Eligibility

This property reflects special elements of the county's architectural history under **Criterion 1** as a scarce example of a housing type built primarily during the 1920s through the 1950s as a response to the demand for multifamily housing. The postwar boom and the lack of construction during the Great Depression and wartime created an urgent need for housing throughout Southern California, of both single family and multifamily types. Literally thousands of these housing types were built throughout Southern California, and Oxnard was no exception. A cursory review of Sanborn maps for this period suggests that roughly fifteen of these "u-par-ti" apartment courtyards complexes were built in Oxnard by 1950, with fewer than half of them remaining today.

The seven remaining courtyard apartment complexes in Oxnard include the subject property (1942), McColm Manor at 534-42 S. F. Street (1950), Olive Court at 401 W. Fourth Street (1923), Palm Court at 330 W. Palm Drive (ca. 1930), 308 W. Palm Drive (ca. 1950), 529 W. First Street (1950), and 531 S. F Street (1926). Two of these courtyard complexes are designated as Oxnard City Landmarks. The courtyard at 521 S. F Street was designated in 2010 and 534-42 S. F. Street in 2013 on the basis of their significance as a type of residential construction (courtyard housing).

Under **Criterion 2**, the property is not associated with the lives of persons or events who have made a significant contribution to the city of Oxnard. Little information was found on the first owner, builder-contractor Albert E. Schuster. He moved to Oxnard from Santa Barbara in 1938, and after selling this property moved to Camarillo where he remained until his death in 1961. He made no, known significant contributions to the city's development.¹

Under **Criterion 3**, this property embodies the architectural design, details and materials characteristic of the courtyard housing, a popular housing type from the 1920s through the 1950s, and is one of four surviving prewar examples of this type of courtyard housing in Oxnard. The architectural style is Minimal Traditional, a commonly employed style during the immediate prewar and postwar period. The Minimal Traditional style is a popularized form of the Modern style incorporating familiar design elements derived from historical architectural styles (e.g., Colonial, Cape Cod) into otherwise Modern buildings. The hipped roof with intersecting gables, shallow eaves and wood drapery patterns seen on this property are representative of this approach. The property does not represent the work of a master builder or designer. No architect is known to have been involved with its design. It was built by a contractor who advertised the production of his designs to his clients, and consequently very likely designed this project for himself.

¹ *Camarillo News*, 5-18-1961.

The property is an example of the “u-parti” form of courtyard apartment complex, as defined in the typology created by Polyzoides, et. al., 1992. One of the most common and characteristic of the courtyard types built in Southern California, the u-parti is defined by building masses enclosing a courtyard on three sides with an opening facing the street.²

As the courtyard apartment form evolved into the 1950s, elements of the basic form began to change. The central landscaped courtyard was often replaced with a swimming pool, and in two-story examples, individual unit entries tended to be replaced with common exterior balconies above the ground floor. As one of the last properties to be developed before the pause in construction created by World War II, this property preceded these transitional forms, as each building is accessed by an individual entry and the landscape courtyard remains the central focus.

Criterion 4 pertains to archaeological resources and is not relevant to this evaluation.

Integrity. The property has retained sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an example of courtyard housing in Oxnard. The property remains in its original location, and its design in the Minimal Traditional style has remained essentially intact, and its site plan, which is of particular importance to the character of courtyard housing. The changes to the window sash configurations are readily reversible. An appropriate period of significance for the property extends from when it was completed 1942 through the alterations made in 1955 to divide the rear building into a duplex.

Summary Conclusion. The property at 119-127 S. D Street appears to be individually eligible as a Oxnard City Landmark under Criteria 1 and 3. It also appears to be eligible as part of a discontinuous district comprised of the remaining seven u-plan courtyard apartment complexes built in Oxnard between 1920 and 1950. Further research and documentation would be required to establish the eligibility of this potential district.

Character Defining Features. The features defining the character of the property include:

- Plan and organization of units and open spaces between.
- Roof shapes and eaves.
- Concrete walkways, curbs, stoops and steps.
- Garden grass area between sidewalks and foundation planting areas.
- Window and door configurations and designs.
- Drapery patterns under eaves.
- Octagonal porch lights.
- Mail slots.
- Address number panels.

² Polyzoides, Stefanos, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice. *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992 (second edition), pp. 41-42.



Photo 1. Unit 119, from southeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 2. Unit 119, 119A, 119B from southeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 3. Unit 119A, from southeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 4. Central courtyard and units 123 and 123A from east. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 5. Unit 127A, from northeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 6. Unit 127, from northeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 7. Unit at 127B, from northeast. Ventura County Assessor, c. 1955.



Photo 8. Streetscape setting, viewed from southeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 9. Overall site, viewed from east. [5-15-2024]



Photo 10. Street elevation, viewed from southeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 11. Courtyard, viewed from east. [5-15-2024]



Photo 12. Unit 119, viewed from southeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 13. Unit 127, viewed from northeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 14. Unit 127A, viewed from northeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 15. Unit 119A, viewed from southeast. [5-15-2024]



Photo 16. Unit 127B, viewed from northwest. [5-15-2024]



Photo 17. Unit 127B, viewed from southwest. [5-15-2024]



Photo 18. Units 123 and 123A, viewed from east. [5-15-2024]



Photo 19. Rear of units 123 and 123A and garages, viewed from northwest on alley. [5-15-2024]



Photo 20. Entry door treatment for individual units, typical. [5-15-2024]



Photo 21. Rear stoop and door treatment for individual units, typical. [5-15-2024]



Photo 22. Entry door treatment for duplex units, typical. [5-15-2024]



Photo 23. 119-23 S. D Street, view from east, c. 1981. [Ventura County Cultural Heritage Survey Phase I — Oxnard]