



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION**

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT CITY COUNCIL
DESIGNATE AS A CITY LANDMARK
THE JOSEPH KNOWLES MURAL
34 WEST VICTORIA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
039-610-014**

RESOLUTION 2014-8

OCTOBER 8, 2014

WHEREAS, Section 22.22.050 of the Municipal Code of the City of Santa Barbara grants the Historic Landmarks Commission the authority to initiate a designation process to recommend to the City Council the designation as a City Landmark of any structure, natural feature, site or area having historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural or aesthetic significance; and

WHEREAS, the historic research found in the Historic Structures/Sites Report by Post/Hazeltine Associates, that was accepted by the Historic Landmarks Commission on September 16, 2009, found the mural designed by the noted artist Joseph Knowles in 1958 significant for its historical and cultural influence on the heritage of the City; and

WHEREAS, on August 12, 2010, the City of Santa Barbara Planning Commission supported the City Landmark designation by passing Resolution Number 009-10 stating that the property owner shall submit an application to the Historic Landmarks Commission for designation of the mosaic mural as a City Landmark based on the conclusion of the Historic Structures/Sites Report that if the mural is preserved and relocated on site the impact of the demolition of the 1958 commercial building and the parcel improvements will be less than significant (class III) as per the California Environmental Quality Act; and

WHEREAS, in Spring 2014, the construction of the new building and preservation and relocation of the mural was complete and on May 27, 2014, the property owner, Margaret L. Cafarelli of Victoria Street Partners, LLC, sent a letter supporting the City Landmark designation; and

WHEREAS, on September 24, 2014, the Historic Landmarks Commission adopted Resolution of Intention 2014-8 to hold a public hearing to consider a recommendation to City Council for designation of the Joseph Knowles Mural located at 34 W. Victoria Street as a City Landmark; and

WHEREAS, the proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation is the six panels of the mural and excludes the 1914 building upon which it is hung.

WHEREAS, under the provisions of Article 19, Section 15308 of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines and the City List of Activities Determined to Qualify for a Categorical Exemption (City council Resolution Dated November 10, 1998), staff has determined that designation of the Joseph Knowles mural as a City Landmark is eligible for a Categorical Exemption; and

WHEREAS, Section 22.22.050 of the Municipal Code of the City of Santa Barbara states that the City Council may designate as a City Landmark any structure, natural feature, site or area having historic, architectural, archeological, cultural, or aesthetic significance by adopting a resolution of designation within 90 days following receipt of a recommendation from the Historic Landmarks Commission, and;

WHEREAS, in summary, the Historic Landmarks Commission finds that the Joseph Knowles mural at 34 West Victoria Street, Assessor's Parcel No. 039-610-014, meets the following City Landmark criteria (A through K) listed in section 22.22.040 of the Municipal Code:

- A. Its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation;
- C. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, the State, or the Nation;
- F. Its identification as the creation, design, or work of a person or persons whose effort significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State, or the Nation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that on October 8, 2014, the Historic Landmarks Commission of the City of Santa Barbara hereby recommends to the City Council that it designate the Joseph Knowles Mural located at 34 West Victoria Street, Assessor's Parcel No. 039-610-014, as a City Landmark and makes findings based on the historic and cultural significance of facts presented in the Staff Report.

**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION**

Adopted:

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
LANDMARK DESIGNATION
STAFF REPORT**

**THE JOSEPH KNOWLES MURAL
34 WEST VICTORIA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
039-610-014
OCTOBER 8, 2014**

Background:

The mural at 34 W. Victoria represents the largest, mid-twentieth, century public art piece in Santa Barbara. The mural was designed in 1958 to extend approximately 120 feet along a *Safeway* Grocery Store's south elevation. The mural was divided by vertical piers into six panels, each panel 13 feet in height by 18 ½ feet in width. The mural was made out of polychromatic tiles. The panels depict six historic epochs in the history of Santa Barbara County. The first panel depicts the area's first inhabitants, the Chumash, the successive periods are represented by the Spanish explorers, Mission Santa Barbara, the California rancho, the American settler, and finally the modern era. When the grocery store building was demolished, the mural was carefully removed, cleaned and installed on the west elevation of the new Public Market building facing Chapala Street. The mural was added to the City's List of Potential Historic Resource in 2013 and noted as eligible for designation as a City Landmark and for inclusion on the California Register of Historical Resources and National Register of Historic Places based on the findings of the Historic Structures/Sites Report. The Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) Designation Subcommittee selected the mural to be designated a City Landmark as it is one of the few prominent and noteworthy historic murals in the City.

The designation of the mural as a City Landmark will honor and recognize the efforts of Victoria Street Partners, LLC to restore and integrate the mural with the new project to the high standards required by the HLC. The Joseph Knowles mural will join the elite list of important structures contributing to the City's unique historical traditions.



Above: The mural sits in its new home facing Chapala Street.

New Location of Mural on Site Plan and Elevation



The new location of the Joseph Knowles Mural (1914) on the West Elevation of the new Public Market building facing Chapala Street.



Historic Context:

The Joseph Knowles mural was designed to be on the south elevation of a mid-twentieth century modern grocery store. The store’s design included references to Santa Barbara’s history and architectural heritage, most notably the narrative mural designed by local artist, Joseph Knowles, and the extensive use of local sandstone for planters and wall cladding. The store’s architectural scheme clearly reflected the type of “industrial modernism” that characterized much of California’s commercial development during the mid-twentieth century. Because much of downtown Santa Barbara had already been developed in the pre-World War II period, before the advent of Postwar Modernism, relatively few Modernist style buildings were constructed in Santa Barbara’s downtown core during the apex of Modernism (circa 1945 to 1965). The establishment of El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District was to create a cohesive urban landscape that would preserve and enhance Santa Barbara’s heritage of Mediterranean style architecture. Following the establishment of the El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District, the construction of Modernist style buildings largely ceased in Santa Barbara’s downtown district.



Above and below: Views of the Knowles mural in their original location and setting on the South Elevation of the grocery store facing Victoria Street. Photos taken from the Historic Structures/Sites Report dated September 8, 2009.



The post World War II era saw a number of new artists drawn to Santa Barbara, instilling a fresh vitality in the arts community. New exhibitions opened and organizations such as the Santa Barbara Art Association were reactivated. Joseph Knowles brought the art form of murals to Santa Barbara. It was an art form that became popular in the 1930s due to such influential muralists as Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, and Thomas Hart Benton, as well as the federally funded art programs of the Works Progress Administration.

Artist Joseph Knowles (1907-1980):

The artist of the mural was Joseph Knowles. He was born in Kendall, Montana on June 15, 1907. When just a few years old, Knowles moved with his family to San Diego where he lived until he was twenty. In 1927, he arrived in Santa Barbara to attend the Santa Barbara School of the Arts, one of the most prestigious art schools between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Studying under the school's



Above: The mural panel illustrating the Mission, photo taken August 2014.

director, Frank-Morley Fletcher, who proved to be particularly influential on his work, Knowles

learned the technique of woodblock printmaking. Knowles studies at the school until 1930. Knowles helped create the Santa Barbara Art Association, becoming its first chairman in 1933. As a leader in the local art community, Joseph Knowles was a magnet for his fellow artists, many of whom sought his guidance. Knowles was hired to teach art at Cate School in Carpinteria and at Crane Country Day School where he taught until 1960. In 1941, Knowles became the first director of education for the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Knowles' artistic versatility included designing china, ceramics, and glass (he designed two dinnerware patterns for Winfield China), and designing award winning floats in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses. Knowles was also elected to the California Watercolor Society, enjoying one-man exhibitions at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Fine Arts Museum of San Diego, Los Angeles' Cowie Galleries, and in San Francisco at the De Young Museum, the California Legion of Honor, and the Rotunda Gallery. In 1954, Knowles received his Masters of Fine Arts at Claremont Graduate School. He later taught at UCSB extension and for a number of years he was the consultant for art education for the County of Santa Barbara schools. In the 1960s he assisted in organizing the school of fine arts at the Brooks Institute of Photography. Some of Knowles most notable commissions as a muralist and stained glass maker were for Beckwith Instruments, Inc., Safeway Stores, Cottage Hospital, the La Rinconada Building, the Santa Barbara Girls Club, Ernest Righetti High School, Shell Oil Company, and Santa Barbara Bank & Trust. Knowles remained an active artist until his death in Santa Barbara in 1980.

Significance:

The City of Santa Barbara defines historic significance as outlined by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040. Any historic building that meets one or more of the eleven criteria (Criteria A through K) established for a City Landmark or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. The Joseph Knowles mural meets the following six criteria:

Criterion A: its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation;

The mural is Joseph Knowles' largest and most visually prominent public art in Santa Barbara. Its semi-abstract imagery incorporates iconic transportation related motifs drawn from local history, including Chumash canoes, Spanish galleons, carretas, wagon trains, automobiles, and rockets. Presented in chronological vignettes, the mural depicts the idea of progress, both culturally and technologically, through the lense of mid-twentieth century modalities. The mural embodies the distinctive characteristics of its type and represents the work of a regionally significant artist.

Criterion C: its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, the State, or the Nation;

Joseph Knowles was an important regional artist in Southern California between 1930 and the 1970s. During his career Knowles created hundreds of paintings and watercolors, of which over 400 are in private and public collections. Recognized not just for his works on canvas and paper, Knowles' artistic versatility included varied mediums. The mural is identified with Knowles who made notable contributions to the artistic heritage of the city.



Above and below: Views of the Knowles mural in their new location and setting on the West Elevation of the Mediterranean Style new Public Market Building facing Chapala Street, photos taken August 2014



Above: The mural panel illustrating the American Settler, photo taken August 2014

Criterion F: its identification as the creation, design, or work of a person or persons whose effort significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State, or the Nation;

The artist Joseph Knowles who designed the mural made significant contributions to the artistic heritage of the city and region through his public art projects and other artistic productions.

Historic Integrity:

Historic integrity is the ability to convey original appearance. There are essential physical features that must be considered to evaluate the integrity. Although the mural is no longer located on the original mid-twentieth century designed grocery store, it has been carefully saved and reinstalled on the west elevation of the new Mediterranean style Public Market building. The mural retains its essential character-defining features, including its original materials, original dimensions, chronological arrangement, division into six panels, as well as the original sandstone planter that was re-installed at their base. Although the mid-twentieth century location and setting are lost, the mural has retained its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling so that it can still convey their original appearance.



Above: The mural panel illustrating the Modern Era, photo taken August 2014.

Recommendation:

Staff Recommends that the HLC adopt a resolution to recommend to City Council that the Joseph Knowles mural be designated as a City Landmark. The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation includes the mural only and not, the new building on which it is displayed.

Works Cited:

Post/Hazeltine Associates. *Historic Structures/Sites Report for 34 West Victoria Street (APN: 039-131-016) dated September 8, 2009.* City of Santa Barbara Planning Division Files, 630 Garden Street.



Above: The mural panel illustrating the California Rancho, photo taken August 2014.