



**City of Santa Barbara**  
Planning Division

**Memorandum**

**MEETING DATE:** February 3, 2021

**TO:** Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC)

**FROM:** Nicole Hernandez, City Architectural Historian

**SUBJECT:** Proposed mural relocation, demolition and reproduction for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

**ADDRESS:** 604 Ortega Street, Ortega Park

**PROJECT:** As part of a project to redesign Ortega Park, Mural Conservator Consultants, Site and Studio Conservation, LLC. evaluated the significance of the murals and prepared a report for the HLC review. The consultants found seven of the existing murals were found to have historic significance. Parks and Recreation Department proposes to relocate two murals and reproduce five murals as part of their project to renovate the park. The project proposes to relocate the *Cosmic Unity* and *Blue Whale* murals and to demolish and reproduce the five other historically significant murals. Because the project would cause five of the significant murals to be reproduced the project is considered to have a Class II impact to the identified resources: Class II is a significant impact unless mitigated. The relocation of two murals and reproduction of five murals within Ortega Park meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction and there are proposed mitigation measures to reduce the impacts to the resources to below a level of significance. As recommended by mural and art consultants Site and Studio Conservation, LLC., the project includes provisions for using projection, virtual reality, and using a high-resolution photograph to reproduce on vinyl or aluminum, or re-creation by the original artist. If re-creation is chosen, it is recommended to use projections and/or reference photographs to increase accuracy. It is also recommended to use higher quality materials and appropriate coating(s) to protect from graffiti and UV radiation to increase the longevity of the murals and ongoing maintenance, and other infrastructure to highlight the importance of the murals and their tradition in the community. The plan would include didactic signage and complimentary lighting.

The City Architectural Historian prepared this evaluation to assist the Historic Landmarks Commission in the review of the proposed project. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) defines historic resources as any "object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript determined historically significant." As per CEQA Guidelines 15064.5(b): Determining the significance of impacts to archaeological and historic resource, a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. A substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means physical

demolition, destruction, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surrounds such that the significance would be materially impaired. As five of the original murals would not feasibly be able to be retained in their original iteration, the project is considered to have a Substantial Adverse Change.

As per CEQA Guidelines 15126.4(b): A lead agency shall identify potentially feasible measures to mitigate significant adverse changes in the significance of an historical resource. The lead agency shall ensure that any adopted measures to mitigate or avoid significant adverse impacts are fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other measures.

**Proposed Mitigation Measures:** Because of the surfaces on which the original murals are located, five significant murals would be need to be reproduced and two of the murals would be able to be relocated within the park. Replicating the murals would extend the life of the murals as a historic resource.

1. Document all seven historically significant murals with archive quality photographic documentation prior to demolition. Copies shall be provided to the following:
  - a. Community Development Department, Architectural Historian for file archives
  - b. Gledhill Library for public access
  - c. Central Library for public access.
2. Reproduce murals based on photographic documentation and projection, using a high-resolution photograph to increase accuracy. It is also recommended to use higher quality materials and appropriate coating(s) to protect from graffiti and UV radiation to increase the longevity of the murals and include an ongoing maintenance plan, including graffiti removal. A plan has been developed to show where the reproduced murals and relocated mural would be located and shows the informational signage and lighting.
3. Relocate *Cosmic Unity* and *Blue Whale* mural.
4. Commemoration of the demolished murals in original state with a display of text and photographs on the site. Commemoration to be approved by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Display should include the photographs of the originals being painted that are available to highlight the importance of the murals and their tradition in the community and to distinguish the reproduced murals are not original.
5. Include complimentary lighting.

In review of the project with the Environmental Analyst, Julia Pujo, the proposed mitigation measures would mitigate the impacts of the project to a less than significant level if the HLC accepts the measures. The report would be added to the cultural section of the Mitigated Negative Declaration, (that is already being prepared for the project). This would allow the public adequate time for review of the project and mitigation measures proposed. The approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration would be by Santa Barbara Planning Commission.

**When mitigation measures meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards, it is considered mitigated to a less than significant impact (Class II).**

1. *Reconstruction would be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.*

The murals would be documented carefully and reproduced using projection techniques so they can be reproduced by artists, some murals may be able to be reproduced by qualified artists to permit accurate reproduction. The murals would be reproduced within Ortega Park, where they currently are located, with minimal conjecture. Plans include provisions for higher quality materials, ongoing maintenance, and other infrastructure to highlight the importance of the murals and their tradition in the community.

- 2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

As the murals are not archeological artifacts, no archaeology is required to identify or evaluate features for accurate reconstruction.

- 3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.*

The reproduction of the murals would include an effort to relocate the *Cosmic Unity* and *Blue Whale* murals and these remaining historic materials and features would be preserved. The mural of the underwater *Atlantes/Toleca* would be reproduced in a location surrounding the new pool, as it currently is surrounding the existing pool, so the spatial relationship of it relating to the pool would be retained. The other historically significant murals would be reproduced in key sites in Ortega Park so they would still be a means of communicating collective visions that exemplify the Chumash/Chicano/Mexican fabric of the neighborhood, which is so unique to Santa Barbara. The project would allow them continue to express their message to the community and would allow them to be used as they were historically. The relocation in the Ortega Park would allow the murals to continue to have integrity of association with the park and integrity of setting within the park.

- 4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture.*

The murals would be documented using a high-resolution photograph to reproduce on vinyl or aluminum and reproduced using projections and/or reference photographs to increase accuracy so the reproduction would not be conjectural. The reproduced murals would create the appearance of the non-surviving murals in materials, design, color and texture.

- 5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.*

Signage at the park would clearly identify the murals as reproduction of the originals so that they are identified as a contemporary re-creation. Signage would include photographs of the original murals being painted as well as original location of original murals.

- 6. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.*

New designs that were never on the historic murals would not be painted.

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN SUMMARY COMMENTS.** The proposed reproduction of the murals meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction. The character-defining murals found to have historic significance would remain within Ortega Park and continue to be associated with Ortega Park so they would still be a means of communicating collective visions that exemplify the Chumash/Chicano/Mexican fabric of the neighborhood, which is so unique to Santa Barbara. The project would allow them to express their message to the community and would allow them to be used as they were historically. The significant impact of the project would be mitigated to a less than significant impact (Class II) to the resource, if the HLC accepts with the above evaluation and conclusions.

**REQUESTED HLC ACTION:** Review the evaluation and accept the evaluation and conclusions of the report to be added to the Mitigated Negative Declaration Cultural Section to be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission.

**ATTACHMENT:** Mural Concept Plan