

# 581 and 691 Race Street, San José Historic Resources Evaluation Report



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January, 2020







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## **Introduction and Summary of Findings**

Avenues Silicon Valley proposes to construct a new toddler through 12<sup>th</sup> grade private school for approximately 2,744 students and 480 employees. The school will be constructed on an 11.87-acre property north of Parkmoor Avenue between Race Street and Meridian Avenue, in San José, Santa Clara County, California.

The project area includes eight parcels (APN 264-08-060, -63, -66, -67, 71, -72, -77, -78). It is currently developed with a parking structure, three office buildings (550 Meridian Avenue, 570 Meridian Avenue, 1401 Parkmoor Avenue), three warehouses (691, 581, 529 Race Street), and associated landscaping. The project will adaptively reuse the two existing office buildings facing Meridian Avenue, retain the parking structure, and demolish the other buildings. The new school campus will include three new buildings and athletic field facilities.

The City of San José requires that project proponents consider whether a proposed project might cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. Four buildings over 50 years of age – 529 Race Street, 581 Race Street, 691 Race Street, and 1401 Parkmoor Avenue – will be demolished as part of the proposed project. 529 Race Street and 1401 Parkmoor Avenue were been previously evaluated and found not eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources (Crawford 2013). This report, then, focuses only on 581 and 691 Race Street. We find that although these warehouses possess excellent integrity, neither building is eligible to California Register under Criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4. The demolition of these buildings, therefore, will not affect historic resources as defined in the CEQA Guidelines.

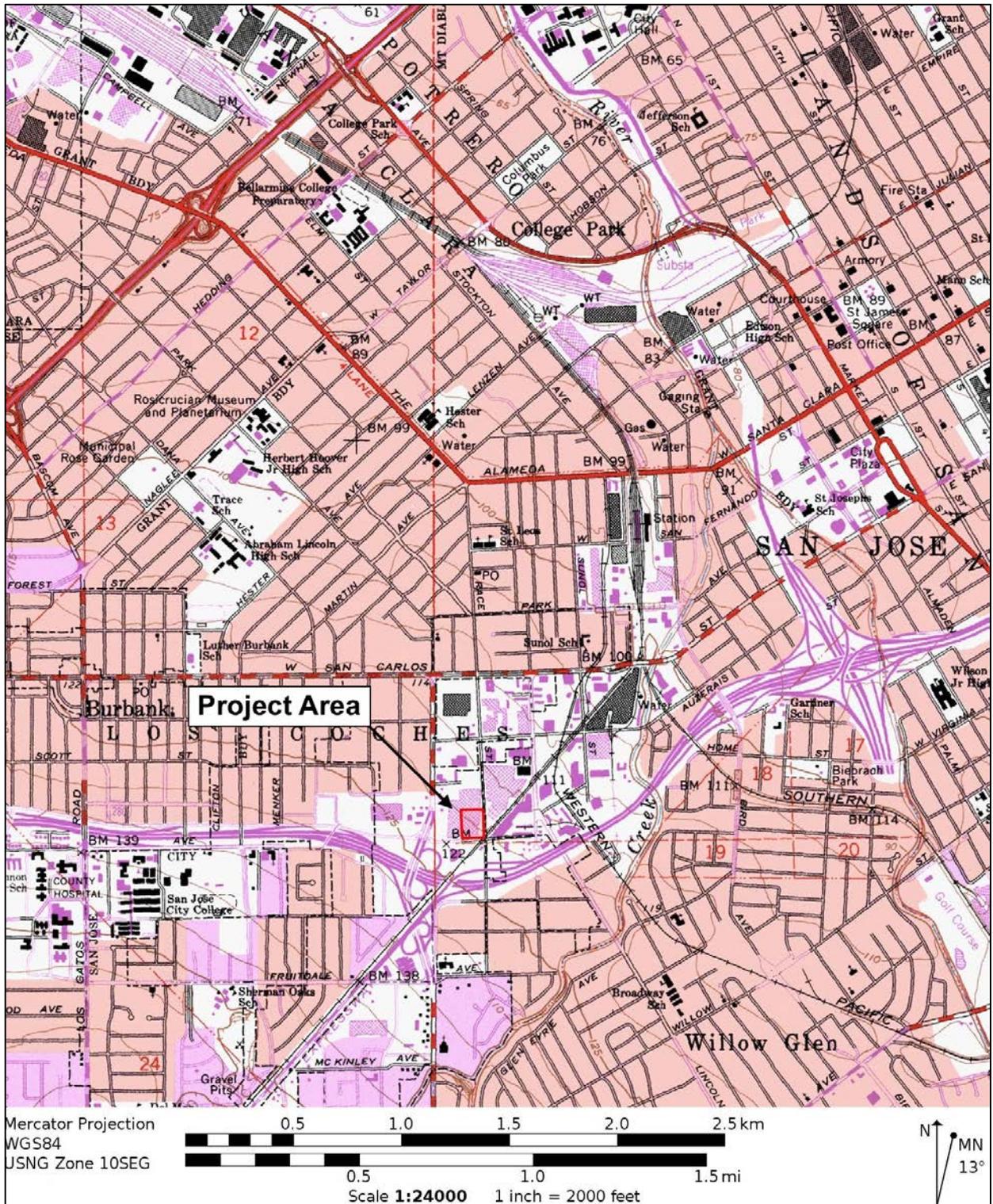


Figure 1: Location Map, 581 & 691 Race Street (USGS/Caltopo)

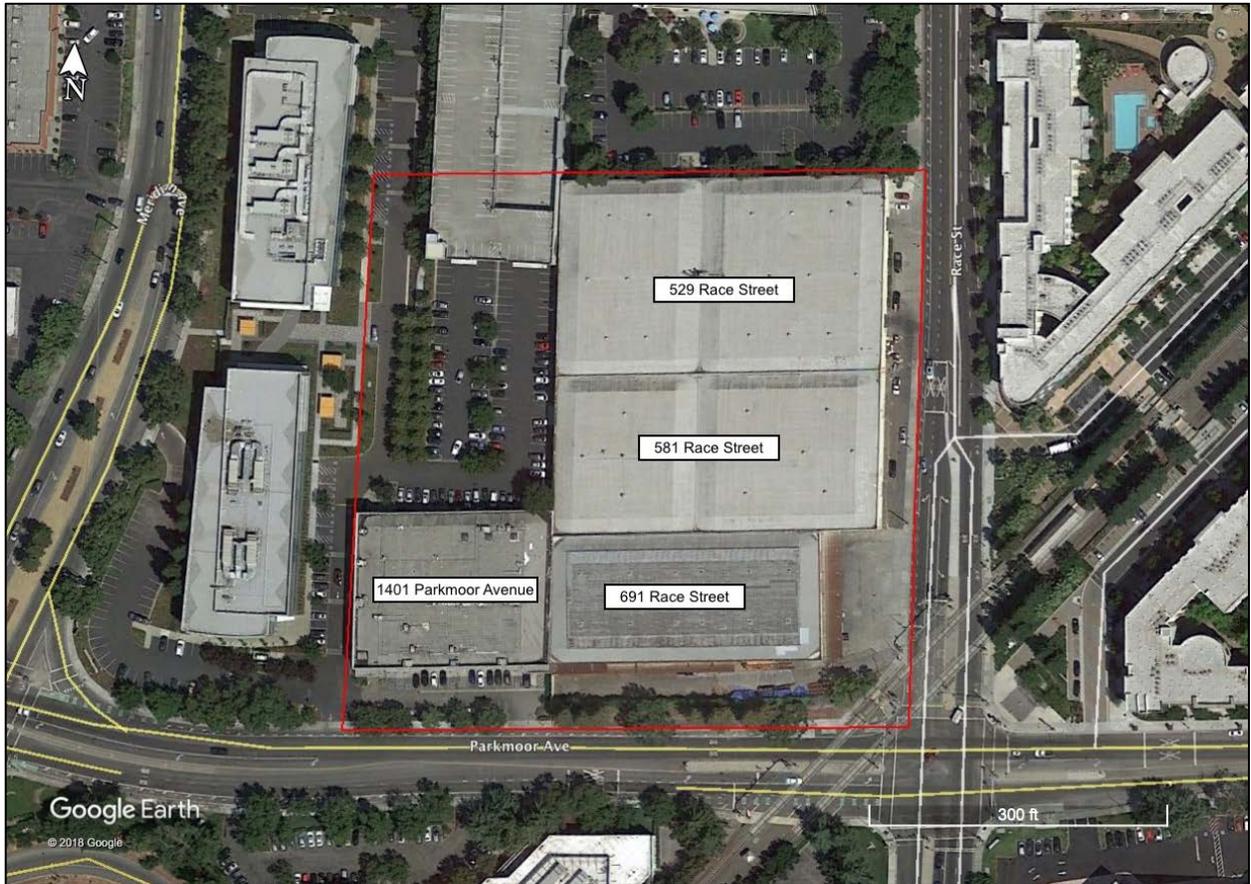


Figure 2: Buildings to be demolished in the scope of the project. This report discusses 581 and 691 Race Street only.

## Research Methods

Research for this report used resources from the San José Public Library, San José Building Department, San José Fire Department, aerial photo archives at the University of California, Santa Barbara, previous studies provided by the client, and online city directory resources at Ancestry.com.

In July 2019, Holman and Associates completed a record search at the Northwest Information Center for the project area (NWIC File #18-2217; Psota 2019). The record search found no previously recorded historic-period or prehistoric archaeological resources in the project area but identified the vicinity as moderately sensitive for buried Native American resources. It also identified the area as having moderate to high potential of historic-era archaeological deposits.

## Description of Historic Resources

### 581 Race Street

This building is one of three warehouses in a row — at 529, 581, and 691 Race Street. All three are similar in their structure, materials, and general appearance. Two of the three, #529 and #581, are nearly identical in appearance, save that the former is 30 feet wider than the latter. The two look like a single structure, though they are not. The third building, #691, is set back from the street a considerable distance relative to the other two, but it is otherwise roughly similar in its structure, materials, and appearance.

581 Race Street was built in 1957. It is rectangular in its footprint and measures about 160 feet in width by 340 feet in depth. It is set back from the front property line about twenty feet, which allows for parking and maneuvering of vehicles on the paved area in front. The one-story building rises about 30 feet in height. If one stands back from the building a sufficient distance, it is evident that the roof is pyramidal in shape, but the pitch of the roof is so slight that it is almost flat.



Figure 3: 691, 581, and 529 Race Street (left to right)



Figure 4: 581 Race Street, front (east) façade

The building has reinforced concrete walls that rest upon a concrete slab. It is unknown whether the walls are tilt-up concrete or were poured in place. The walls are buttressed on all four sides by vertical concrete piers that project from the walls on the inside by an inch or two. The piers are spaced about 25 feet apart in the front and rear walls and about 20 feet apart in the side walls. Although these piers are only visible from inside the building, their placement is lightly marked on the exterior by pairs of shallow vertical incisions. These incisions divide the front wall into six barely discernible bays.

The front of the building is smoothly coated in either paint or stucco. Openings in the front include two large steel roll-up doors for vehicles and one steel door for pedestrians. In the ivy-covered rear wall there are two openings: a roll-up door for vehicles and a steel pedestrian door. There are no windows in either wall. Aside from the door openings and the light incisions that divide the front into bays, there is no ornament or other detailing in either façade. A band of red paint across the top, in the frieze area, provides some visual relief to the front.

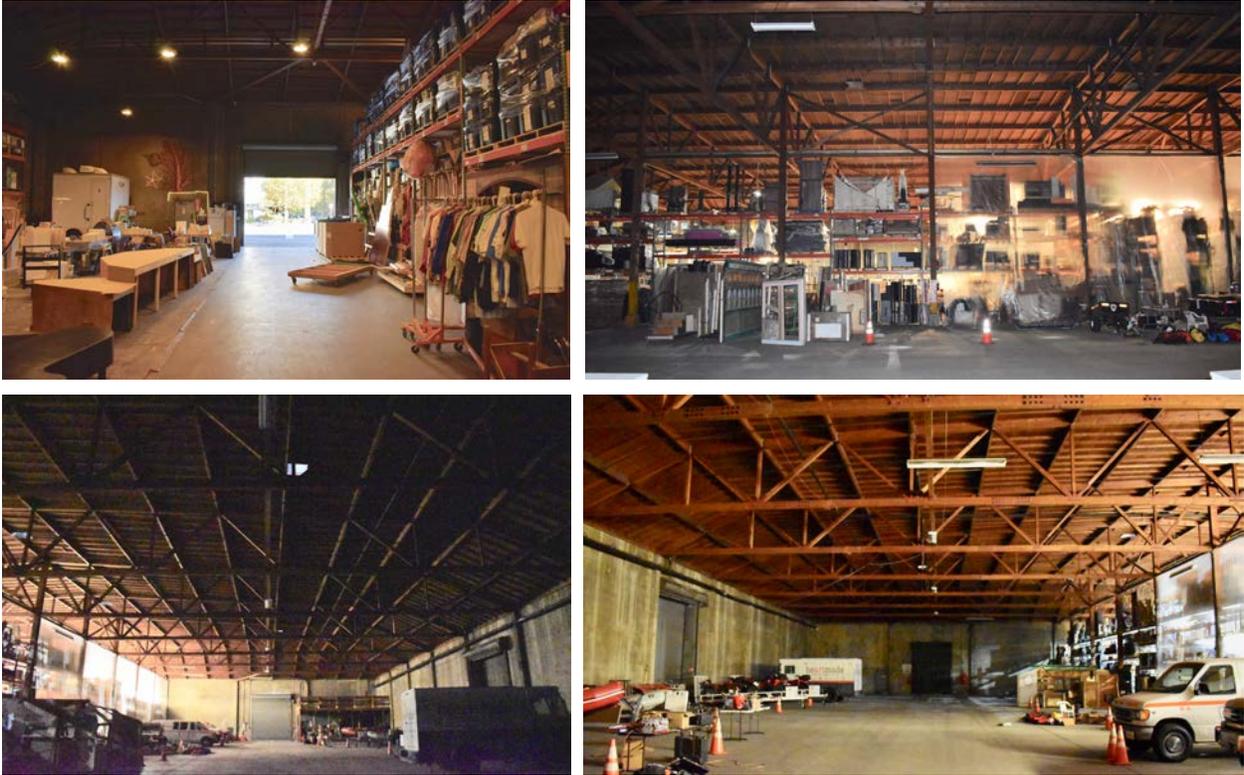


Figure 5: 581 Race Street pedestrian door (left) and front roll-up door (right)

The interior is divided by a row of eight wooden posts between the east and west walls. Shelving and sheets of clear plastic placed against these posts further contribute to the division of the interior into two large spaces, southern and northern, each of which have their own roll-up door and are occupied by different tenants. These spaces are spanned by wooden roof trusses that rest upon the wooden posts and the concrete piers embedded in the side walls. In each truss, the lower chord is not a continuous piece of wood but is composed of multiple pieces that are bolted together by metal straps. The vertical and diagonal pieces in the truss are also bolted to the bottom chord by metal straps. (Please see photographs, below.)

The interior is lit by lamps that are suspended from the roof trusses and also by daylight if any of the roll-up doors is open.

As far as can be discerned from a visual inspection, no alterations of note have been made to this building, except for the planting of ivy that obscures almost all of the rear wall.



*Figure 6: 581 Race Street, Interior*

*Upper left: northern bay of warehouse, looking east toward front of building*

*Upper right: View south onto of plastic partition at center of warehouse*

*Lower left: southern bay of warehouse, looking east toward front of building and showing roof truss*

*Lower right: southern bay of warehouse, looking west toward rear of building*

### 691 Race Street

This building is set back from the front property line by about 75 feet and from the front of the adjacent building, 581 Race Street, by about 55 feet. This setback allows a considerable amount of space for parking and maneuvering of vehicles in front of the building.

The building is rectangular in shape, roughly 120 feet in width by a little less than 300 feet in depth, and is about 30 feet in height. Like 581 Race Street, it has a pyramidal roof that is so shallow in pitch as to be almost flat. The building has walls that are very similar to those of #581, namely, reinforced concrete, smoothly coated with paint or stucco. In both the front and side walls of this building, buttressing piers project one inch from the exterior wall. (This is in contrast to #581, where the wall is flush.) In the front wall the piers are spaced by distances of 18', 21', 21', 21', 21', and 18', creating five bays. On the side (south) wall, these buttressing piers are spaced roughly 25 feet apart, creating twelve bays.

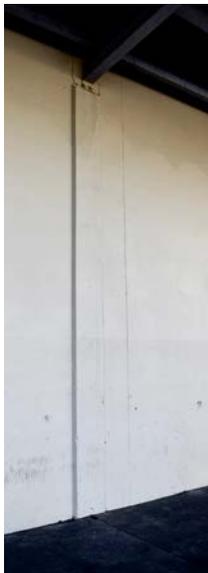


Figure 7: 691 Race Street, front (east) façade. Upper: front façade. Lower (left to right): concrete pier-buttress detail; pedestrian door; roll-up door on front façade



Figure 8: South façade, looking west (left) and looking east (right)

Awnings twenty feet in depth can be found at the top of both the front and side (south) walls. In front, the awning stretches across the entire facade, while on the south side, it stretches over eight of the twelve bays. In each awning, sheets of corrugated metal rest on wooden rafters which in turn are supported by steel I-beam purlins. These purlins rest upon the vertical concrete buttressing piers. Openings include two roll-up steel doors in both the front and side façades. Additionally, one steel pedestrian door can be found in the front wall.

The building was visited on two occasions in attempts to view the interior, but it was closed each time. The roofing system is thus unknown. However, there is a 1999 building permit for this building for the repair of a broken truss, and thus it seems likely that the building's roof is supported by trusses in a manner similar to that of #581. The north and rear walls of this building are obscured from view by adjacent buildings and so cannot be described here.

### **Construction Dates and Later Modifications**

All available permits for these two addresses were viewed at San Jose City Hall. No original permit to build nor original plan could be found for either building. The earliest available permit for either building is dated 1982, long after they were built. A Fire Department record supplied by the client states that 555 Race Street, now numbered 581, was built in 1957. This date is supported by a 1956 aerial photo that shows the site as vacant and a 1963 aerial that shows the building was present then. The 1966 Sanborn map labels this building as belonging to the U.S. Products Corporation, Ltd. 691 Race street was built between 1963 and 1966. The site is shown as vacant in a 1963 aerial photo, and in the 1966 Sanborn map the site is occupied by the present building. The building address then was 595 Race Street and it was used as a canned goods warehouse.

Building permits suggest that subsequent modifications to the buildings have consisted mostly of maintenance work. At 581 Race, electrical work was completed in 1994 (Permit #9433012) and a new sprayed-in-place polyurethane foam roof was added in 1995 (Permit #9512164). At 691 Race Street, electrical work was completed in 1982 (Permit #100), a broken roof truss was repaired in 1999 (Permit #9956859), and the warehouse was re-roofed in July 1995 (Permit #9508876). The permit record thus suggests that neither building has been significantly modified since its construction.

## Historic Context

### ***The Project Vicinity, 1870s-1950s***

The project area is located about one mile southwest of downtown San José on a portion of Rancho Los Coches. Race Street and Moorpark Avenue were laid out in their current alignments by 1876, when the project vicinity was subdivided into large lots ranging from 4 to 15 acres in size. The southern third of the block bounded by Moorpark Avenue, Race Street, Auzerais Avenue, and Meridian Road was then owned by H.A. Beckwith (Thompson and West 1876).

The area began to attract development by the late 1880s, when the Southern Pacific railroad line from downtown San José to Los Gatos was constructed through the area. By 1891, the southeast corner of the block, including the project area, had been subdivided into six lots, five of which were then developed (USGS 1889; McMillan 1906). The 1915 Sanborn map shows four residences and a possibly commercial building in the project area; across Race Street, a glassworks and fruit packing house were located along the railroad tracks.

A 1931 aerial photograph illustrates the increasing industrialization of agriculture in the Santa Clara Valley. The residences in the project area itself remained largely unchanged from early in the century, with small dwellings and backyard orchards. However, several large canneries had been constructed on the eastern side of Race Street across from the project area. By 1950, this cannery complex had expanded and included buildings operated by the US Products Corporation, Hershel California Fruit Products Company (formerly Contadina), and the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association (Fairchild 1931, 1939; Sanborn 1950). In 1950 Race Street was at the boundary of the City of San José; the western side of the street including the project area remained unincorporated.

Review of city directories identified several residents of the project area before the construction of the project area warehouses. Edward Alario lived in a dwelling at 581 Race Street from 1930 to around 1957. Alario apparently operated the Club La Bamba tavern next door at 571 Race Street. Other residents during this period included Antonio Perez (591 Race Street, 1957-1962), Maude Schrum (595 Race Street, 1957-1963), and Race Roofing (599 Race Street, 1957-1963). Building permits for these structures were not available at the San José Building Department except for a 1954 permit for a one-story warehouse building in the rear of 575 Race Street. This may have been the building later used by Rush Roofing (San José Permit #19095; Polk-Husted 1930-1963).



Figure 9: Project Vicinity, 1950. Sanborn Map Company.

### 581 Race Street

581 Race Street is one of two adjoining similar warehouses, the other being 529 Race Street to the north. For a review of the history of the 529 Race Street warehouse, please see Crawford (2013).

A Fire Department record shows that 581 Race Street, then numbered 555, was built in 1957. This date is supported by a 1956 aerial photo that shows the site as vacant, and a 1963 aerial photograph that shows the building on its current footprint. From 1958 until at least 1966, the building was used a warehouse by the US Products Corporation, which operated the cannery immediately across Race Street. No city or telephone directory entries for the property were found after 1968, though US Products continued in operation at 560-570 Race Street through 1971, followed there by NCC Food Corporation through at least 1981. It seems likely that these businesses continued to use 581 Race Street for warehouse space during that time (Polk-Husted 1968-1979; Sanborn 1966).

By 1994, a building permit for electrical work lists the owner of 581 Race Street as Race Group. A 1995 permit for a sprayed-in-place polyurethane foam roof lists the owner as Robert Foster. (San José Permits #9433012, #9512164). No other information was found on the use of the property during the 1990s or 2000s.

In the 2010s, 581 Race Street was used for auto storage by Frontier Infinity, a nearby car dealership. The City of San José Search and Rescue squad also used a portion of the building to store vehicles, boats and trailer mounted equipment (Cornerstone 2014:8). In 2018-2019 the building was used by Children’s Musical Theater of San Jose for set building, painting and storage; by San José Search and Rescue for search and rescue equipment and vehicle storage; and by the San José Downtown Association for storing supplies for an ice rink (AEI 2018: 6,44).



Figure 10: Project Vicinity, 1965. Cartwright Aerial Surveys 130-11-84. UCSB Library.

### **691 Race Street**

No original building permit was located for 691 Race Street, though it must have been built between 1963, when site is shown as vacant in an aerial photo, and 1966, when the Sanborn map shows the present building. The address then was 595 Race Street, and the building was also used by US Products Corporation for cannery storage. Like 581 Race Street, the warehouse was likely used by US Products and later NCC Food Corporation through about 1981.

William Devich owned the property from around 1982 to the late 1990s. In 1982, he was issued a permit for electrical work (San José Permit #100). In 1986, Super Cocina Las Cazuelas was listed

in the telephone directory at this address (Pacific Bell 1986). In 1994 the building's roof was replaced (San José Permit #9508876).

In 1999, Western Appliance was listed as the property owner on a permit to repair a broken roof truss (San José Permit #9956859). It is unclear how long Western Appliance used the building, though their logo is still visibly painted on its north side. In 2000, Lora Oevich was listed in telephone directories at 691 Race Street (Pacific Bell 2000). In 2013, Planning Division Documents lists Green Valley Corp as owner of both properties. In 2018, the 691 Race Street warehouse was occupied by Garden City Recycle & Salvage for storage of salvaged architectural building components and reclaimed lumber (Cornerstone 2019).

**Discussion: The Canning Industry in San José**

The canning industry became significant in the Santa Clara Valley beginning in the 1870s, when railroad development and refrigeration technology spurred the growth of commercial orchards, box and can factories, food processing machinery, and canneries. By the 1920s, when fruit production in the valley peaked, horticulture was one of the main economic engines of the region. The industry entered a rapid decline after World War II as urban growth and industrialization displaced orchards (Laffey 1993:8-10; Archives and Architecture 2012:44).



*Figure 11: US Products Cannery, east side of Race Street, 1920s. Robert Bowdidge collection.*

The warehouses at 581 and 691 Race Street were both apparently constructed by US Products Corporation and were presumably used to store canned fruits and vegetables. US Products was founded in 1921 in San Francisco, but by 1922 was a subsidiary of Vlessing, a Dutch conglomerate. The US Products cannery on the east side of Race Street was constructed in 1924 (Bowdidge 2014a; McKay 2006). It joined a group of around two dozen canneries in west San José, mostly located along the Southern Pacific tracks just outside of the San Jose City limits. This cluster of canneries was active throughout the 1950s. However, as suburban, industrial, and office developments drove out orchards during the 1960s and 1970s, the canneries no longer were located near a convenient supply of fruit, which drove up costs and put many of them out of business (McKay 2006).

US Products operated at Race Street until 1971, when it was purchased by National Can Company (NCC) of Chicago as part of its move into the wholesale grocery market. By 1981, however, National Can had sold the division and closed the cannery (Bowdidge 2014b).

### ***Redevelopment in the Project Vicinity***

Land use in the project vicinity transitioned from industrial to commercial in the 1990s and early 2000s. Aerial photographs show that the Race Street Cannery building was demolished by 1993 and replaced by office buildings on the eastern side of Race Street. These buildings in turn were replaced by the Mosaic Apartments complex in 2011. To the north, the office building at 525 Race Street was built in the late 1990s. To the west of the Race Street warehouses, the two existing office buildings facing Meridian Avenue, along with the existing parking garage in the center of the block, were constructed between 2000 and 2002. In 2004, the VTA Race Street station was constructed along the former Southern Pacific tracks adjacent to the project area (Google Earth 2019).

## Significance Evaluation

### **Framework for Evaluation**

Under CEQA, local agencies must consider whether projects will cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, which is considered to be a significant effect on the environment (Public Resources Code §21084.1). A “historical resource” is a resource determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historic Resources, or local registers by a lead agency (14 Code of California Regulations §15064.5), while a “substantial adverse change” can include physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings” that impairs the significance of an historical resource in such a way as to impair its eligibility for Federal, State, or local registers.

### *California Register of Historic Resources*

Evaluation for the California Register is broadly similar to the Federal process, though evaluation should primarily consider the significance of the property in State and local contexts. The California Register uses four criteria, namely:

- 1) association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; or
- 2) association with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
- 3) embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
- 4) potential to yield, information important to prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

A property that meets one or more of these significance criteria must also possess sufficient integrity to convey that significance. Seven aspects of integrity are used in California Register evaluations: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity is based on a property’s significance within a specific historic context and can only be evaluated after its significance has been established.

### **Period, Scale, and Theme of Significance**

California Register evaluations must also establish a period of significance and geographic scale for evaluation. The period of significance for the 581 and 691 Race Street warehouses is the period of their use by the US Products Company: 1957-1971 for 581 Race Street, and 1963-1971 for 691 Race Street. The related theme is the cannery industry, and the geographic scale of the property’s significance is local, that is the Santa Clara Valley.

### **Integrity Analysis**

Integrity is a quality that applies to historic resources in seven ways: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Aerial photographs, building permits, and field visits suggest that both 581 and 691 Race Street have experienced few changes since their construction. They maintain the same location, appearance, building footprint, and overall use as warehouse space. Both buildings thus also retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. However, the warehouses were constructed as late additions to a cannery complex which is no longer extant, and the surrounding neighborhood has changed in use from largely industrial to a mixed commercial/residential area. Therefore, 581 and 691 Race Street both lack integrity of setting and association.

### **California Register Evaluation**

581 and 691 Race Street have not been previously evaluated under any local, state or Federal historic resource criteria and are not listed on the San José Historic Resources Inventory (San José 2019).

#### *California Register Criterion 1: Significant Events or Patterns of Events*

The canning industry is a major theme in the history of the Santa Clara Valley between the 1870s and circa 1950. The US Products cannery complex on Race Street was active from 1924 to 1971 and was a major producer of canned fruits and vegetables during that period. The 581 and 691 Race Street warehouses appear to be the last remaining parts of the US Products cannery complex.

The main functions of a cannery complex include receiving, preparing, cooking, canning, labeling, storage, and shipment. Of these, the Race Street warehouses are associated only with storage, a function that is common to most industries, and does not have an organic relationship with the essential activities of a cannery. Moreover, 581 and 691 Race Street were built late in the history of the complex (ca. 1957 and ca. 1963 respectively) and were therefore only active after the canning industry ceased being a significant historical theme in the Santa Clara Valley.

Consequently, 581 and 691 Race Street are not eligible for the California Register under Criterion 1 because they are not closely associated with significant historical patterns or events.

#### *California Register Criterion 2: Significant Persons*

Historical research did not identify associations between the 581 and 691 Race Street warehouses and any persons significant in San José, Santa Clara County, or California History. Therefore, 581 and 691 Race Street are not eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2 because they are not associated with persons of historical significance.

#### *California Register Criterion 3: Significant Design/Construction/Architecture*

581 and 691 Race Street are both rectangular reinforced concrete buildings set on a concrete slab and covered with wood truss roofs. They both lack distinctive architectural details and are examples of a functional mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial warehouse design that is very common in San José and throughout California. 581 and 691 Race Street are thus not eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 because they are not examples of significant design, construction, or architecture.

#### *California Register Criterion 4: Information Potential*

This criterion is usually used to evaluate archaeological sites. For discussion of the archaeological sensitivity of the project area, please see Psota (2019). In some cases, a built environment resource may contain useful information about construction techniques or use of materials by builders. However, 581 and 691 Race Street were built using very common methods and materials. They are therefore not eligible for the California Register under Criterion 4.

### **San Jose Historic Landmarks**

The City of San José maintains a list of City Landmarks designated by the City's Historic Landmarks Commission. Properties may be nominated for designation as a City Landmark by the City Council, the Historic Landmarks Commission, or the property owner. In order to qualify for nomination, the property should possess "historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering interest or value of an historical nature." The City's Code of Ordinances defines this quality (at Chapter 13.48.110) as a quality that derives from, is based upon, or related to any of the following factors:

1. Identification or association with persons, eras or events that have contributed to local, regional, state or national history, heritage or culture in a distinctive, significant or important way;
2. Identification as, or association with, a distinctive, significant or important work or vestige:
  - a. Of an architectural style, design or method of construction;
  - b. Of a master architect, builder, artist or craftsman;
  - c. Of high artistic merit;
  - d. The totality of which comprises a distinctive, significant or important work or vestige whose component parts may lack the same attributes;
  - e. That has yielded or is substantially likely to yield information of value about history, architecture, engineering, culture or aesthetics, or that provides for existing and future generations an example of the physical surroundings in which past generations lived or worked; or
  - f. That the construction materials or engineering methods used in the proposed landmark are unusual or significant or uniquely effective.
3. The factor of age alone does not necessarily confer a special historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic or engineering significance, value or interest upon a structure or site, but it may have such effect if a more distinctive, significant or important example thereof no longer exists.

As noted in the California Register evaluation above, 581 and 691 Race Street do not appear to possess "distinctive, significant, or important" qualities. With respect to factor 1 above, the buildings are identified with the San José canning industry, but are late examples that do not express any of the essential activities of a cannery and are not associated with any significant persons. With respect to factor 2, the buildings are architecturally undistinguished examples of typical reinforced concrete warehouse construction; they lack distinctive, significant, or important architectural qualities. With respect to factor 3, it is fair to say that older and more significant warehouse buildings exist in several parts of San José.

Given this, it does not appear that 581-691 Race Street possess sufficient "historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering interest or value of an historical nature" to be designated as City Landmarks.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, 581 and 691 Race Street area **not** eligible for the California Register because they do not meet any of the criteria of the register. Therefore, the demolition of these buildings will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5.

If previously unidentified cultural materials are unearthed during construction, work should be halted in that area until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance of the find.

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### City of San José Building Permits Consulted

<i>Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
19095	5/1954	575 Race Street (rear): build a one-story warehouse for \$31,600. This building appears to predate 581 Race St and is no longer extant.
100	7/1982	Electrical work at 591 Race Street (now #691)
9433012	3/1994	Electrical work at 581 Race Street.
9512164	1/1995	Sprayed in place polyurethane foam roof at 581 Race Street.
9508876	7/1995	Re-roof warehouse at 691 Race Street.
9956859	4/1999	Repair broken truss at 595 Race Street (now #691)



