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# MEMO

TO: AO
ATTN: JEFF RABBITT
RE: 237 WEST CHAPMAN AVENUE
DATE: JANUARY 14, 2026

## Introduction

This memorandum (Memo), prepared by Historic Resources Group, LLC (HRG), is in reference to City of Orange (City) Design Review Committee (DRC) case no. DRC25-0025. The purpose of this Memo is to support certification of a project (Project) that would rehabilitate and adaptively reuse the superstation at 237 West Chapman Avenue (Project Site) as a restaurant and bar (The Win-Dow).

The superstation is composed of two one-story utilitarian buildings: a 1924 auto services building with an attached canopy added between 1939 and 1947 (Building A) at the rear (northeast corner) of the Project Site; and a 1924 filling station with two attached canopies added between 1939 and 1947(Building B) at the front (southwest corner) of the Project Site.

237 West Chapman Avenue is a contributing property in the Old Towne Orange Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources; and the locally designated Old Towne Orange Local Historic District. Therefore, the Project is subject to review for conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Guidelines for Rehabilitation, and the City's Historic Preservation Design Standards. 237 West Chapman Avenue is also located within the City of Orange Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan area. Therefore, the Project is subject to review for conformance with the Santa Fe Depot Specific Plan's Design Guidelines for Historic Buildings.

The Project includes the adaptive reuse of Building A as a kitchen and construction of restrooms beneath the canopy attached to its west (North Lemon Street) façade. In order to

accommodate these uses, the Project requires the installation of roof-mounted mechanical equipment. To ensure that the equipment is fully concealed from view from the public right-of-way, a rooftop mechanical screen is proposed. This Memo is in response to comment no. 073, received from the City, which pertains to the screen:

> Per the Historical [sic] Preservation Design Standards, roof mounted equipment can only be permitted if the screening is original. Please consider other locations for mechanical equipment. If there are no other options, please have the historical consultant provide a memo/statement to justify the location and the appropriate design of the screening.

As part of the analysis applied in this Memo, HRG reviewed technical drawings of the proposed screen provided by AO on January 6, 2026. Analysis in this Memo is based on guidance from the National Park Service, the California Office of Historic Preservation, and the City of Orange; and was performed by John LoCascio, AIA, Principal Architect; and Adam Rajper, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist, of HRG. Both are qualified professionals who meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for their respective fields.

## Description of Project Site

Buildings A and B are freestanding one-story, L-shaped utilitarian buildings arranged around an irregularly-shaped asphaltic surface parking lot. Building A is located at the rear (northeast corner) of the Project Site. It has concrete block perimeter walls finished with smooth cement plaster and a low-pitched roof concealed by a shallow flat parapet and adorned with a Streamline Moderne stepped metal cornice. On the west (North Lemon Street) façade, there is an attached metal canopy. Building B is located at the front (southeast corner) of the Project Site. It has metal panel perimeter walls and two attached canopies—on its south (West Chapman Avenue) and east façades—that are of similar design to the canopy on Building A.

## Analysis

The Project would adaptively reuse Building A as a kitchen and construct restrooms beneath its attached canopy. To accommodate these new uses, the Project requires roof-mounted mechanical equipment on the building which would not extend to the canopy. The equipment would be fully concealed from view from the public right-of-way behind a mechanical screen. While alternative equipment locations were studied, they were deemed infeasible due to site constraints, including the proposed conversion of the existing parking lot between Buildings A and B into a seating and recreation area, as well as dedicated space for back-of-house operations such as loading and trash collection.

The Historic Preservation Design Standards state that "Roof-mounted equipment is only appropriate on flat roofs with existing parapet walls to fully screen the equipment." Building A's parapet is not high enough to screen the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment. Therefore, the Project does not meet this Standard. However, the rooftop screen would still be compatible with the superstation on the Project Site for the following reasons:

- **Location:** Due to Building A's deep setbacks along West Chapman Avenue and North Lemon Street, any alterations to the roof would not be highly visible and conspicuous from the public right-of-way. The required rooftop mechanical equipment would be sensitively designed, set back from street-facing facades, and fully concealed from view behind a screen of compatible design.

- **Design:** The Project would incorporate a simple, unadorned perforated metal screen that would be compatible with but differentiated from the utilitarian design of Buildings A and B, including the former's smooth cement plaster cladding and the latter's metal panel perimeter walls.

- **Setbacks:** The screen would maintain setbacks of approximately 8'-8" and 5'-5" from the south and west façades, respectively. Placement of the screen out of plane with these street-facing façades would minimize its visual impact and ensure that Building A continues to read as a one-story utilitarian building with a shallow parapet.

- **Height:** To ensure full concealment of the required rooftop mechanical equipment at the lowest possible height, the screen would be approximately 4'-6" to 5'-0" tall. This low profile would further reduce visibility from the public right-of-way.

- **Reversibility:** All roof alterations completed under the Project would be reversable.

Moreover, the National Park Service's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings do not prohibit rooftop mechanical equipment; and they recommend "Installing mechanical equipment on the roof, when necessary, so that it is minimally visible to preserve the building's historic character and setting." As noted above, the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment would be fully concealed from view behind a screen and would not be highly visible from the public right-of-way. Therefore, the Project would comply with the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings pertaining to Mechanical Systems.

## Conclusion

The Project's proposed adaptive reuse of the superstation at 237 West Chapman Avenue as a restaurant and bar requires the installation of rooftop mechanical equipment on Building A, and no other location for the equipment is feasible. In order to fully conceal the equipment, a mechanical screen is necessary. While the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment and screen would not comply with the Historic Preservation Design Standards, it would still be compatible with the superstation and would not materially impair the property such it would no longer convey its significance, and by extension, the significance of the historic districts it contributes to. Moreover, the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment and screen would comply with the National Park Service's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings pertaining to Mechanical Systems, as the equipment would be fully concealed from view behind a screen and would not be highly visible from the public right-of-way.