



December 2, 2020

STATEMENT:

TO: Historic and Design Review Commission, City of San Antonio

RE: Item 18: 6439 De Zavala/Bacon-Steubing Farm

HDRC Case No.: 2020-516

City Council District 8

The Conservation Society of San Antonio supports a finding of historic significance for the remaining structures at 6439 DeZavala. The barn, feed room, and milk house are the last structures left to form a visible connection between the historic and economic contributions of the Bacon-Steubing dairy farm and the greater Bexar County community it served. Although the remaining structures stand within an altered setting, they satisfy the following criteria for historic significance:

Criteria 1: These farm buildings, which lie further west of the preserved Voelcker Farmstead on Buttermilk Hill, are valuable as a visible reminder of the cultural heritage of the dairy farming that once predominated in northwestern Bexar County, and which author Gayle Brennan Spencer describes as, “a part of San Antonio’s heritage almost erased”. The Bacon-Steubing farm took advantage of early 20th century developments in roads, vehicles, refrigeration and dairy equipment and expanded operations between 1917 and 1954. The improved barn and outbuildings coincided with the post WWII period of growth in the Texas dairy industry.

Criteria 3: This site is associated with both the Joseph V. Bacon and the Raymond Steubing families. The Steubing family helped to settle and advance the Helotes/Leon Valley community, including the establishment of one of the area’s first farms near Eckert Road, several area schools, and construction of the first Zion Lutheran Church Building in 1906. Due to the rigorous demands of dairy farming, the Bacons and the Raymond Steubing family had less time to become involved in civic and social activities. Nevertheless, the two families contributed through their labor to making Bexar County a “major player in the Texas dairy industry” in the years between 1920 and 1950.

Criteria 7: Of the remaining three buildings, the long, low masonry building is recognizable as a cattle barn, similar in basic form to the Voelcker dairy barn preserved at Phil Hardberger Park. Located at the northern end of a diamond shaped piece of land bounded on the east by J.V. Bacon Parkway and on the west by an unnamed road, these buildings are an established visual feature that can be seen from both roads, and by more people, as development increases in this area.

Criteria 11: The surviving barn, feed room, and milk house are of distinctive interest and value for exemplifying dairy farming as an important part of San Antonio’s economic and historical heritage. The barn retains distinctive interior features like built-in cattle troughs. Together, the buildings represent the mid-twentieth century phase of the Bacon-Steubing dairy farm’s evolution, exemplifying the expansion of operations made possible by product demand and innovations in technology and transportation. These



improvements increased production and opened markets at greater distances for the dairy farmers operating in northwestern Bexar County.

Until the 1950s, Bexar, Harris, Dallas, and Tarrant counties led the state in milk production, but little evidence of the local dairy farms that contributed to that effort remains visible in the built environment. The extant buildings at 6439 DeZavala provide a vital link to the last major period of prosperity and the first dawning days of decline for dairy farmers in Bexar County. We find they meet the criteria for historic significance and are worthy of retaining in any future development on the site.

Respectfully submitted,

THE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF SAN ANTONIO

Patti Zaiontz, President