

2021 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Pacific Electric Railway Substation 14



For over 40 years the Pacific Electric Railway Substation No. 14 in Santa Ana played a critical role in supporting the extensive streetcar system that served millions of commuters in Southern California in the first half of the 20th century. It was built in 1907 to provide electric power to the 34-mile Santa Ana Line of the Pacific Electric Railway that ran between Los Angeles and Santa Ana. It also powered the Santa Ana-Orange Line, and the Santa Ana-Huntington Beach Line. It is the only remaining substation in Orange County and one of only a few remaining in the state.

After Substation 14 closed in 1950, its equipment was removed, and the building was sold to a private owner who used the building until it was boarded up in 1980. In 1988, Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) acquired the Substation and other property to build Garfield Elementary School. The building was used as storage and over the years had fallen into disrepair.

The community recognized the significance of Substation 14, designating it as a city landmark and listing it on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. However, the building's condition and lack of funds prevented it from being accessed and fully appreciated. In 2019, SAUSD collaborated with agency and community partners, including Santa Ana Historic Resources Commission and

Vecindario Lacy en Accion community group, to develop a rehabilitation plan to use Substation 14 as the Garfield Elementary School Wellness Center. Funding was provided by SAUSD as well as the Family and Community Engagement Fund and the City of Santa Ana Redevelopment Fund.

The exterior of Pacific Electric Railway Substation No. 14, including its brick walls, wood cladding, windows and doors, and other distinctive features, were restored to their original condition. The interior retains the building's open floor plan, exposed wood truss system, brick walls and concrete floor finishes. A new kitchenette was added on the east wall and new air conditioning was installed along with new plumbing and electrical systems. The aged roof was replaced with a new standing seam metal roof that is compatible with the historic appearance and industrial character of the building. The proposed improvements were reviewed and approved by the City of Santa Ana's Historic Resources Commission and the work followed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Community engagement was a cornerstone of this project. School district staff and the leadership of Garfield Elementary School met with parents and community members on a recurring basis to discuss community needs at the school. The community feedback in support of a neighborhood-based Wellness Center was undisputed, providing further impetus to school district staff to pursue rehabilitation, and reuse of the building. Special accommodations were made to incorporate permanent functionality for the St. Joseph/St. Jude Mobile Health Clinic, which uses the facility to provide low/no-cost medical and dental services for the surrounding neighborhood.

The Substation 14 project represents an outstanding effort by the Santa Ana Unified School District to bring together a variety of community partners to offer support and services resulting in the preservation of a historic resource and tangible benefits in the lives of neighborhood residents.