United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Christiansen and Grow Filling Station
Other names/site number: Don Clark Mobil Station
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 305 South Main Street
City or town: Orange State: California County: Orange
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___nomination ___request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ____meets ___does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Christiansen and Grow Filling Station — Orange, California
Name of Property — County and State

Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	x
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	x
District	
Site	

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE/TRADE/business
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER/vernacular

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Stucco
Roof: Asphalt
Other: Wood

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station was constructed in 1928. Designed in a vernacular idiom that makes loose reference to the Storybook Revival style, this two-story commercial building is located along a heavily trafficked corridor in the City of Orange. The building is constructed of wood frame, is small in size, and has a compact rectangular footprint. Exterior walls are clad in stucco. The building is capped by a steeply-pitched gabled roof with composition shingles. The roof has extremely wide flared eaves that project outward from the building, forming vehicular canopies which shelter the location of pump islands below. Each canopy is supported by squared wood post supports that are finished in stucco. Ingress, which is provided on the west and east elevations, consists of multi-light glazed Dutch-style wood doors. Fenestration consists of large multi-light wood windows at street level and smaller, single-paned wood windows up above. Given its vernacular style and utilitarian function, the building has relatively few decorative details. Details include gable vents, knee brackets at the eave line, and faux shutters flanking the upper-story windows. While its setting has changed dramatically with the postwar suburbanization of Orange County, the building itself has not been substantially altered and thereby retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance and associations.

Narrative Description

Exterior

Located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Palmyra Avenue in Orange, the Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is a two-story gas station building constructed in 1928.[1] The building is slightly set back and has frontage on both Main Street and Palmyra Avenue; however, it is primarily oriented toward Main Street. The building is constructed of wood frame, sits on a concrete slab foundation, and is small in size and rectangular in plan. It is vernacular and is not a clear expression of any particular architectural style, though its design makes loose reference to a Storybook Revival style with its dramatic roof form and faux window shutters.

The building is capped by a steeply-pitched gabled roof with composition shingle cladding. The roof is notable for its extremely wide flared eaves that project outward from the building, forming vehicular canopies which shelter the location of pump islands below. Each canopy is supported by a wood beam and two slender wood post supports, all of which are finished in textured stucco. Other roof features include flared wood rafters, flared wood fascia boards, and wood knee brackets. Exterior walls are clad in textured stucco.

By virtue of the building's corner setting and diminutive footprint, each of its elevations is publicly visible to some extent. However, the west elevation is the most publicly visible and reads as the primary elevation. The west elevation is oriented toward Main Street, which was historically signed as State Highway 101 and carried large volumes of vehicular traffic between Los Angeles and San Diego via Orange County prior to the construction of Interstate 5. In this way, this elevation bears a particularly strong visual and associative relationship with the former highway. The other elevations (east, north, south) read as secondary elevations.

Features on the primary/west elevation are roughly symmetrical. Positioned at the center of this elevation is a single wood door. The door emulates the appearance of a Dutch door, with multi-light glazing in the upper panel and faux cross-bracing in the lower panel. On either side of the door is a single multi-light wood window. Metal address numbers are affixed to the stucco wall above the door. Slightly offset above the door is a single-paned wood window with faux wood shutters.

The east elevation is similar, but not identical to, the west elevation. It also has a centrally positioned wood door that is flanked on each side by a multi-light wood window. At the south end of the upper story is a solid wood door. A wood ledge projects from beneath the door.

Pump islands are located adjacent to the west and east elevations. Each pump island is composed of painted cinder blocks and is anchored on each end by a wedged-shaped concrete cap. The pump islands historically contained gasoline pumps, which have since been removed.

[1] Original building permits are not available for the property. The date of construction is estimated based on mortgage documentation dated 1928, which indicates that the building was completed that year.

The north elevation faces Palmyra Avenue. It has a large, multi-light fixed wood picture window at street level and a smaller, single-paned wood window on the upper story. The upper-story window is flanked by faux wood shutters. Located above the upper-story window is a small louvered attic vent. Utility boxes and ductwork are affixed to the stucco wall. The south elevation is identical to the north elevation except for that there are no utility boxes or ductwork.

The building is surrounded on all sides by an asphalt parking lot. Landscaping is limited to a modest buffer between the west pump island and the Main Street right-of-way at the far northwest corner of the property. Related features include a freestanding metal light standard and mast arm sign at the west lot line, and a freestanding metal pole sign at the north lot line. The face of the pole sign features imagery of a Mobil-branded gasoline canister, connoting the property's historic use as a gas station and its longtime association with the Mobil oil company. Metal bollards are installed around each sign and around the building perimeter. Building permit records indicate that these signs were installed after World War II and are not original features.

Located to the south and east of the gas station building are three ancillary structures, which are associated with the gas station but are located on separate legal parcels. All are constructed of wood frame and are vernacular in appearance, lacking distinguishing characteristics of any architectural style. The northernmost ancillary structure is capped by a flat roof and secured by a paneled wood door. The center structure features a shed roof, wood lap siding, a paneled metal door with a fanlight, and a sliding aluminum window. The southernmost structure features a flat roof, stucco siding, and four garage bays. Historic aerial imagery indicates that the ancillary structures are later additions to the gas station and are not original features.

Interior

Interior spaces were neither visible nor accessible at the time this nomination was prepared. However, recent photographs of the building indicate that the interior is divided between two principal spaces – one on the lower story, and another on the upper story – and that these two spaces are connected via an interior wooden ladder. These photographs further indicate that the ground-story interior space features painted plaster walls and vinyl composition tile flooring.[2]

Alterations

The following alterations are reflected in the building permit record for the subject property, accessed via the City of Orange's E-TRAKIT online permit database.

- 1952. Electrical permit issued to install Mobilgas sign
- 1960. Replacement of old sign
- 1975. Relocation of two existing pole signs
- 1980. Repair of office, damaged when an automobile crashed into the building

[2] Recent photos of interior spaces (taken 2017) are included in "Cultural Resources Assessment, Collins/Glassell Northern Gateway Project, 887 North Glassell Street, City of Orange, Orange County, California," prepared by LSA Associates, Nov. 2020.

Other alterations that were noted from site inspection and visual observation are listed below:

- Application of textured stucco to exterior walls
- Replacement of original doors with Dutch-style doors
- Boarding up of windows and doors for purposes of security
- Removal of gas pumps from pump islands
- Modification of the drive approach from the north (via Palmyra Avenue)

A historic photo of the subject property dated 1974 shows that at this time, the canopy and pump island to the east of the building were enclosed. However, this enclosure has since been removed.

Evaluation of Integrity

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance and associations. Alterations that have been made to the building are generally not substantive. Alterations like the application of textured stucco and the replacement of doors have resulted in minor changes to the exterior of the building, but have not significantly changed its appearance or obfuscated its historic use. Though gas pumps have been removed, the canopies and pump islands remain intact, and the building's historic use as gas station remains clear and legible. Most of the building's original architectural features and materials remain intact, and overall the building continues to express its original design intent and exudes a strong sense of time and place. It therefore retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It also retains integrity of location since it has not been moved from its original location.

The building's integrity of setting remains intact, though this aspect of integrity has been compromised. Originally located in a semi-rural setting at the edge of Orange, the building is now surrounded by suburban development, most of which dates to the post-World War II period and reflects contemporary trends in development and design. However, the building retains an integral association with Main Street, which was the historic alignment of State Highway 101, and continues to read as a business associated with early roadside commerce along this route.

Character-Defining Features

The following have been identified as character-defining features of the subject property:

- Prominent corner location
- Orientation of the building to the west, toward a former State highway
- Compact, rectangular footprint
- Symmetrical massing
- Gabled roof with extremely wide flared eaves and knee brackets
- Canopies with squared wood post supports
- Concrete pump islands
- Centrally positioned entrance (west, east elevations)
- Multi-light (ground story) and single-paned (upper-story) wood windows
- Faux wood window shutters (upper-story)
- Louvered gable vents

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE
TRANSPORTATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1928-1960

Significant Dates
1928 (original construction)
1960 (completion of Interstate 5 through Orange County)

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A , in the areas of Commercial Development and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The resource is associated with patterns of events in commercial history related to the rise of the car, car culture, and roadside commerce in Southern California amid the early years of automobile travel. It is a rare vestige of roadside commercial development patterns that once flanked State Highway 101, an important early transportation artery between Los Angeles and San Diego (Criterion A). The resource also embodies distinctive characteristics of a historic type and period – specifically, of a "house-type' gas station characteristic of the early years of automobile travel (Criterion C). House-type stations were designed to blend into their environs by incorporating design elements that characterized the local vernacular, and represented operators' attempt to build stations that were less obtrusive and more compatible with adjacent development. There are very few remaining examples of this historical period and type remaining in Southern California generally, and Orange County specifically. The period of significance begins in 1928, the original date of construction, and ends in 1960, when the final leg of Interstate 5 was completed through Orange County. The construction of Interstate 5 brought an end to earlier patterns of roadside commerce alongside early highways and ushered in suburban commercial development.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of the Christiansen and Grow Filling Station

Original building permits for the subject property are not available. However, mortgage documents dated June 1928 make reference the property for the first time, listing the Marine Refining Corporation as mortgagee and F.J./Edith Christiansen and Carl Grow as mortgagers.[3] Orange County historian Phil Brigandi also notes that the property was constructed in 1928, a date that is corroborated by historic aerial imagery and visual observation of existing conditions.[4]

Little information is available about original proprietors Christiansen and Grow. Fritz Johan Christiansen (1879-1969) was born in Denmark and immigrated to the United States in 1905. The 1930 U.S. Census lists his vocation as proprietor of a filling station; city directories and other source materials indicate he later worked as a carpenter and cabinet maker.[5] Carl Emerson Grow (1899-1959) was born in Illinois and resided in Montana prior to arriving in Orange County. Census records, city directories, and other source materials alternatively list his vocation as grocery store proprietor, truck salesman, and salesman for the Gilmore Oil Company.[6]

[3] Gleaned from a document titled "Mortgage," 1928, provided by the Orange County Archives.
[4] Phil Brigandi, *A Brief History of Orange, California – The Plaza City* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2017).
[5] Information gleaned from Ancetry.com (various databases), accessed Mar. 2021.
[6] Ibid.

Christiansen and Grow appear to have operated the filling station as an income-producing property, taking full advantage of its advantageous setting alongside State Highway 101, which connected Los Angeles and San Diego by way of Orange County. When it was built, the filling station occupied a somewhat peripheral location just outside of Orange, which consisted of a small commercial strip between the communities of Orange and Santa Ana. Historic aerial photos indicate that at this time, the site was surrounded largely by agricultural and citrus groves.

By the mid-1930s, Christiansen and Grow no longer appear to have been associated with the property. Subsequent operators include Oscar Stoller (1901-1983), whose vocation is listed as both salesman and dairy farmer, and Donald T. Clark (1912-1990), a third-generation Orange County resident.[7] Clark took over operation of the filling station circa 1952, entering into a contract with the Mobil Oil Company to sell its brand of gasoline from the small roadside station. Clark continued to operate the filling station until the late 1980s, at which time Mobil Oil neglected to renew his contract because the station was not selling enough gasoline. "[Mobil] said they would stop [Clark's] gasoline supply when their contract ends and take away their rusty old Mobil sign and credit card equipment," notes a *Los Angeles Times* article dated July 1988.[8]

In the time that the filling station was operated by Clark – between approximately 1952 and 1988 – it was known as the Don Clark Mobil Station. After Mobil neglected to renew Clark's operating lease in 1988, the station closed and was subsequently used for other retail functions. Most recently, the building was occupied by a flower shop. It is currently vacant.

Criterion A: Commerce, Transportation

Summary Statement of Significance

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Commercial Development and Transportation, for conveying important patterns of commercial development that reflect the early ascent of the car and car culture in Southern California. Constructed in 1928, the building conveys how commercial development evolved in the formative years of automobile travel to accommodate the needs of itinerant motorists and the vehicles they operated. The building's size, scale, and spatial relationship with the street are indicative of how commercial development evolved in concert with advances in transportation. It is also one of very few extant commercial resources in Orange County that bear a direct association with State Highway 101, the primary vehicular artery between Los Angeles and San Diego in the first half of the twentieth century prior to the construction of Interstate 5.

Advent of the Automobile

At the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the car was seen as a luxury item that was attainable only to affluent Americans and remained out of reach for most. In 1906, then-President of Princeton

[7] Information gleaned from Ancetry.com (various databases), accessed Mar. 2021.
[8] Lynn Smith, "Gas War: Mobil Wants to Cut Supply to Landmark 1927 Station in Orange But Owner Says He's Pumped Up for a Fight," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 31, 1988. This article lists the construction date of the property as 1927; however, as per this analysis the date of construction appears to be 1928.

University Woodrow Wilson remarked that "possession of a motor car was such an ostentatious display of wealth that it would stimulate socialism by inciting envy of the rich."[9] The Automobile Club of Southern California was organized in 1900 but initially only had a couple thousand members in its ranks, mostly well-heeled Angelenos who took to their cars for periodic pleasure drives.[10] Most Southern Californians relied on trains and electric streetcars at this time.

However, this would soon change, and it would change profoundly. A watershed event in automotive history occurred in 1908, when industrialist Henry Ford introduced the Model T line of cars.[11] Widely considered to be the first affordable automobile, the Model T was manufactured using assembly line techniques in lieu of individual handcrafting, which drove production costs significantly down. These cost savings were then passed along to the consumer, which made vehicular travel attainable to middle-income Americans for the first time. Ford's pioneering mass production methods led his company to become the single largest auto producer in the nation.[12] This, in turn, allowed Ford to continually lower the price of his cars. Other manufacturers followed Ford's lead, and the emergence of a market for used vehicles and the ability to purchase cars on credit further democratized the auto industry. In 1926, a new Ford Model T could be purchased for $290, seventy dollars less than what it cost ten years prior.[13]

Car travel gained traction nationwide and especially in Southern California, where it was arguably met with more enthusiasm than anywhere else. Myriad factors unique to the region coalesced to make this embrace of automobile travel possible. Southern California's temperate climate allowed unpaved roads to remain in operation most of the year and made driving in open cars a relatively comfortable experience. The region's predominantly flat topography lent itself to the development of a orthogonal street grid that did not require extensive engineering prowess. The tar needed for asphalt paving was locally abundant, and several major local oil discoveries provided an ample supply of fuel and helped keep the cost of driving low. The region's single-family neighborhoods provided ample space to store and maintain cars, in contrast to the denser, urbanized environments of eastern cities. Southern California's abundant natural recreational destinations encouraged pleasure driving, and organizations like the Automobile Club of Southern California promoted car ownership and advocated for road improvements and safety.

In 1910, there were 20,000 cars registered in Los Angeles County; that number had risen to 141,000 by 1919 and to 777,000 by 1929.[14] In the mid-1920s, Los Angeles had one car per 1.8 residents – compared to the national statistic of one car per 6.6 residents – and by 1924, Los

[9] John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 29.
[10] Ginny Pace, "Automobile Club of Southern California, 1900-1990," *Southern California Quarterly* 72.4 (Winter 1990), 393-403.
[11] Ford, "The Model T," accessed Mar. 2021.
[12] Ibid.
[13] SurveyLA, Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, "Context: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Theme: Commercial Development and the Automobile, 1910-1970," prepared by Daniel Prosser, Aug. 2016, 5.
[14] Robert M. Fogelsen, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 92; Richard Longstreth, "The Perils of a Parkless Town," in Martin Wachs and Margaret Crawford, eds., *The Automobile, The Building Environment, and Daily Urban Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 142.

Angeles had the highest percentage of auto ownership in the world.[15] Similar trends were seen in Orange County. By the 1920s, the car had become a way of life in Southern California, permitting people to travel conveniently and freely between destinations and relinquishing them from the proverbial chains imposed by the fixed, finite routes of streetcar lines and mass transit.

The Automobile's Impact on the Commercial Landscape

The ascent of the car had a profound impact on the form and character of commercial development in Southern California. The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is a good example of how the architecture of commercial buildings was adapted to accommodate cars. It is a rare surviving example of early auto-oriented commercial development in Orange County. Prior to the mass production of cars, commercial development patterns in Southern California were dictated by the availability of public transit, and particularly by the region's network of streetcars that connected central Los Angeles with peripheral destinations. A network of local streetcar lines similarly served the Orange-Santa Ana area. Commercial activity generally consisted of mixed-use buildings that were clustered in central business districts or in smaller neighborhood commercial nodes – areas that were accessible by streetcar. In these traditional commercial settings, consumers could patronize retail stores, shops, restaurants, and other essential services on foot. These areas exhibited a strong pedestrian orientation, wherein businesses were densely concentrated within a contiguous network of rectilinear city blocks.

However, as more people took to the car, the essential shape, form, and character of commercial development across the region evolved accordingly. The automobile hastened the decentralization of businesses and other commercial services. As consumers were no longer encumbered by the fixed routes of streetcars and other modes of public transportation, businesses were able to relocate outside of the traditional confines of downtown business districts and set up shop on abundant, low-cost commercially zoned properties along major boulevards and highways. In these decentralized settings, businesses could stretch out over large areas to make sure that their auto-inclined consumers had plenty of space – a deviation from more conventional models of commercial development that were rooted in urban environments.[16]

The architecture of the commercial landscape also evolved in concert with the advent of the car. Rather than conforming to the dense, vertical environments of the downtown central business district, auto-oriented commercial development tended to be lower in scale and more accommodating of the needs of passing motorists. As such, these auto-oriented commercial properties deviated from the mold of conventional urbanism, introducing design features like sprawling building forms and ample on-site parking to accommodate the motoring public. Often, commercial buildings would incorporate design features like bold signage or mimetic architectural forms to attract the attention of motorists approaching at a fast rate of speed.

In addition, a new, separate category of auto-centric commercial properties also emerged at this time to accommodate the specific needs of cars and the motorists who operated them. This

[15] Longstreth, "The Perils of a Parkless Town" (1992), 142.
[16] SurveyLA, Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, "Context: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Theme: Commercial Development and the Automobile, 1910-1970," prepared by Daniel Prosser, Aug. 2016, 9-11.

included an array of new commercial property types including gasoline filling stations, car washes, repair garages, roadside food stands, and motor camps and motels. These new commercial property types catered to the automobile by incorporating design features like canopies, show windows, ample on-site parking, bold signage, and other elements that explicitly accommodated the car and allowed for easy maneuvering of the automobile. These features helped to differentiate auto-centric businesses from the commercial properties of previous eras.[17]

State Highway 101

Generally, these new, auto-centric commercial property types were strung along the open road and were constructed along major streets and highways. The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station exemplifies this pattern of development. It was constructed alongside State Highway 101, a major highway that served as the primary vehicular route between Los Angeles and San Diego prior to the construction of an expansive network of freeways in the post-World War II period.

This highway was conceived under the State Highways Act, which was introduced in 1909 and approved by California voters in 1910. The Act authorized the sale of $18 million in bonds "to construct and maintain a connected and continuous system of state highways to link all county seats."[18] The California Highway Commission was also instated to oversee the planning, construction, and maintenance of the system, which included some 3,100 miles of new highway across the state.

One of the routes proposed under the Act would traverse California from north to south, connecting San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Located squarely in between the latter two destinations, Orange County stood to benefit from the highway and thereby sought to exert influence over its future alignment. In 1911, Orange County officials submitted their recommendations for the highway. They specifically called for an alignment that veered southeast from Los Angeles and zigzagged from town to town in Orange County in somewhat circuitous fashion, as to pass through most of the County's communities. This route approximated the historic alignment of El Camino Real, the route that was traveled by the Franciscan missionaries who helped to colonize Alta California in the mid-eighteenth century.[19]

Construction of the highway through Orange County began in 1914 and was completed in 1915. By 1916, the highway reached its southern terminus in San Diego.[20]

When it opened, the route was referred to locally as "the State Highway," as it was the only roadway of its kind at the time. (It was later assigned the number 101 in 1926). Area historian Phil Brigandi describes the alignment of the State Highway through Orange County as follows:

[17] Ibid.
[18] "An Act Authorizing the Construction, Acquisition, Maintenance and Control of a System of State Highways in the State of California," Mar. 22, 1909.
[19] Phil Brigandi, *Orange County Chronicles* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 41.
[20] Ibid.

> It entered the county on Whittier Boulevard, turning south on Harbor through Fullerton down to Anaheim, where it jogged over to Anaheim Boulevard and continued southeast to meet what is now Manchester Boulevard. The highway turned east at Chapman Avenue and then south on Main Street to First Street in Santa Ana, which carried it east to El Camino Real in Tustin. The rest of the highway basically followed the route of today's I-5 freeway.[21]

Brigandi also remarks that with respect to the highway alignment, some Orange County communities fared better than others. "In some communities, the highway ran right through downtown," he notes, while "others had to satisfy themselves with a near miss."[22] Orange was among the communities that got short shrift. The State Highway passed down Main Street, which skirted the far edge of the town and was located about a mile west of its commercial core.[23] Thus, in Orange roadside businesses – including the Christiansen and Grow Filling Station – were not concentrated in the city center, as they were in a number of other Orange County communities, but were rather located on the outskirts of town as to be oriented to the highway.

As automobile travel became more commonplace, the demand for roads and vehicular infrastructure intensified, and additional routes were added to the state inventory of highways. In the 1920s an alternative to the State Highway was constructed, passing through the beachfront communities of Seal Beach, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, and Dana Point. The coastal highway (called the Roosevelt Highway) and the inland State Highway collectively served a substantial amount of vehicular traffic between Los Angeles and San Diego. Both routes played an important role in the early history of vehicular travel throughout Southern California.

Both routes continued to serve as major regional highways until the construction of an expansive freeway network – and specifically Interstate 5 – through Orange in the postwar period. In Orange County, Interstate 5 was completed incrementally during the 1950s. Coming south from Los Angeles, the freeway reached Buena Park, at the northern edge of the county, in 1950; it was extended to Santa Ana in 1953; and the final stretch to San Clemente was completed in 1960.[24]

Christiansen and Grow Filling Station

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station exemplifies these patterns of auto-oriented commercial development – specifically, development that exhibited deference to the automobile as it came of age, and clustered alongside early highways as to cater to the needs of motorists.

Built in 1928, the property was constructed at the zenith of early automobile culture in Southern California. Its location and design are both reflective of broad patterns of commercial development that derived direct influence from the rise of the car at this time. The building's size, scale, and spatial relationship with the street are indicative of how commercial development evolved in concert with the rise of the automobile. Specifically, the building incorporates

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid, 42.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Orange County Board of Supervisors, "Orange County Freeways," accessed Jul. 2021.

features like prominent street frontage, dual vehicular canopies, and curb cuts and ample on-site space for parking and maneuvering vehicles. This model of commercial development marked a sharp deviation from traditional models of commercial development in which buildings were oriented toward streetcars and pedestrians, and helped usher Orange County into the modern age.

The property's location along the historic alignment of State Highway 101 is also imperative to comprehending its significance under Criterion A. In the early years of automobile travel, auto-oriented commercial properties like gas stations tended to be geographically distributed alongside major state highways and other vehicular routes. The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is indicative of this trend. Instead of being located amongst other commercial properties in Orange – whose core was located about a mile to the east – the subject property was deliberately sited alongside the original route of the State Highway/Highway 101, and as such it catered to those motorists who were passing by while route between Los Angeles and San Diego, or vice versa. The property is demonstrative of the effects that the advent of the car and associated infrastructure like roads and highways had on the geographical distribution of commerce. It deviated from conventional molds of commercial development in favor of new patterns of growth that were oriented around the car and came to define commercial development across Southern California – and particularly in the auto-oriented bastion of Orange County.

The subject property was located in a small commercial district that sat roughly mid-way between the communities of Orange and Santa Ana and was known as Orana, a portmanteau of those two communities' names.[25] Orana existed because the route of Highway 101 skirted Orange, whose commercial core was located about a mile east of the highway alignment. The station provided a location at which motorists traveling along the highway could conveniently stop and refill their tanks prior to reaching their destination. Its location along a major highway and convenient automobile access were typical of the type of auto-oriented commercial development that was becoming prevalent in Southern California in the early days of car travel.

Vestiges of the former Highway 101 have become extremely rare as Orange County has experienced extensive development and suburbanization in the post-World War II period. With the construction of the Santa Ana Freeway/Interstate 5 through Orange County in the 1950s, portions of the historic highway – particularly those south of Tustin – have been all but erased, as Interstate 5 has taken the place of what was once Highway 101. North of Tustin, much of the alignment remains, but its historic association has been all but completely obscured as contemporary development has transformed the adjacent cityscape and the highway alignment has been decommissioned and incorporated into local street networks.

This is true of Main Street in Orange, which is now an arterial street flanked by office buildings, fast food chains, strip malls, and other contemporary modes of commercial development. There are very few remaining examples of development associated with the former State Highway/Highway 101, both in the City of Orange and in Orange County generally.[26] The subject property, then, stands out as a very rare vestige of the association between commercial

[25] Brigandi, "Three Road Trips," 2019.
[26] Rarity of type is addressed in more detail later in this section of the nomination.

development and transportation technology in Orange County – a region that has long been, and continues to be defined by its accommodation of, and deference to the car.

Criterion C: Property Type (Gasoline Stations)

Summary Statement of Significance

The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for embodying distinctive characteristics of a historic type and period – specifically, of an early gas station predicated on the "house-type" model, an important historical type and period of commercial architecture in Southern California. House-type gas stations, as defined by historian Chad Randl in *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations*, are expressions of how the owners of early gas stations sought to assuage concerns and criticisms over the visual impact associated with station design. The domestic, individualistic appearance of "house-type" stations typified gas station design in the early years of automobile travel. This model of gas station contrasted with later (post-1930) approaches to gas station design, which favored standardized prototypes with streamlined design features. The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is a good example of this historical type and period. Its distinctive flared roof, bracketed eaves, multi-light windows, and decorative shutters evince the sense of domesticity that so strongly defined the "house-type" gas station model. The resource is notably one of very few remaining examples of this commercial property type in Orange County, as almost all other local examples of this property type have given way to new development.

Early Gasoline Stations

In the earliest days of automobile travel, the process of refueling was less than convenient. Initially, motorists would purchase gasoline at bulk depots on the outskirts of town, where petrol "was transferred from large storage tanks to smaller glass or metal dispensers and then poured by hand."[27] The process of refueling by hand – which was known as the "bucket and funnel method" – was arduous, messy, and often dangerous, given the flammable qualities of gasoline.

As the automobile became increasingly popular, the need for a safer and more efficient method of refueling was of utmost concern to motorists. In 1905, inventor Sylvanus Freelove Bowser introduced the first gasoline pump, adapting technology that had been previously developed to dispense kerosene for lamp fuel.[28] Bowser's patented "Self-Measuring Gasoline Storage Pumps" caught on. Originally, pumps generally "consisted of a square metal tank with a wooden cabinet equipped with a suction pump operated by a hand-stroked lever action."[29] A hose attachment allowed motorists to dispense gasoline directly into the fuel tank, minimizing the potential for spills and combustion. A "clamshell cover" secured the gas pump when it was left unattended.[30]

[27] Chad Randl, *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, Sept. 2008), 1.
[28] American Oil and Gas Historical Society, "First Gas Pump and Service Station," accessed Mar. 2021.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

Gasoline pumps were initially installed outside of businesses like car dealerships, drug stores, hardware stores, and blacksmith shops, which sold fuel to motorists curbside. This model is often referred to as the "curbside filling station." However, the shortcomings associated with the curbside filling station quickly became evident. Given their diminutive size, these stations were prone to crowding and attracted long lines of cars that snarled traffic. The proximity of gas pumps to the sidewalk also made them extremely vulnerable to damage and presented a fire risk.

By the mid-1910s, as car ownership was on the rise, oil companies began to move away from curbside filling stations and toward drive-in gas stations, freestanding structures that were erected for the express purpose of refueling. What is typically considered to be the nation's first drive-in gas station was erected in 1913 by the Gulf Refining Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was a novel concept. "Unlike earlier simple curbside gasoline filling stations, an architect purposefully designed the pagoda-style brick facility" to cater to the needs of vehicles and those who operated them.[31] In addition to fuel, the Gulf station "offered free air, water, crankcase service and tire and tube installation…and sold the first commercial road maps in the United States."[32] The station was fully staffed with attendants to assist with refueling and repairs.

Drive-in gas stations supplanted the earlier ad-hoc curbside filling stations by about 1920. Reflecting significant increases in automobile ownership, new gas stations were being constructed across the country at a rate of about 1,200 per year at this time and were becoming an ever-more-ubiquitous element of the commercial landscape. The freestanding, purpose-built gas station was a significant innovation, and its emergence marked a momentous occasion in the history of automobile travel. Historian Richard Longstreth notes that "despite its mundane purpose, modest size, and utilitarian appearance, the filling station was a revolutionary work that gave birth to the drive-in concept, whereby providing space for cars became the principal determinant of the setting, configuration, and sometimes even the internal layout" of buildings.[33]

The architecture of drive-in gas stations took on many forms and evolved considerably over the next century, "reflecting the ebb and flow of popular design trends, the growth of the petroleum industry, and a procession of new services and formats."[34] Early examples of drive-in gas stations – loosely defined as those constructed in the 1910s and early 1920s – tended to be purely functional and lacked much in the way of architectural detail. The typical station of this vintage consisted of "rudimentary frame shacks with wood or corrugated metal exteriors. More substantial designs featured prefabricated metal panels, industrial steel windows, and limited ornament."[35] The small shack was used to house the station attendant as well as for on-site storage; gas pumps were placed adjacent to the structure, often beneath a protruding roof or porte cochere. Stations were oriented so that motorists could enter, refuel, and leave without snarling

[31] Kat Eschner, "A Short Picture History of Gas Stations," *Smithsonian Magazine*, Dec. 1, 2017, accessed Mar. 2021.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 8.
[34] Randl, *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations*, 2.
[35] Ibid.

traffic. These "amorphous and architecturally undistinguished little shacks and sheds" proliferated in urban environments because of their utility and relatively low construction costs.[36]

"House-Type" Gas Stations

By the early 1920s, the number of registered vehicles on the road had significantly increased and the car was unequivocally coming of age as a dominant mode of transportation, particularly in Southern California. Oil companies responded in kind by constructing a substantial number of new gas stations to meet demand. In 1921, there were roughly 12,000 drive-in stations nationwide; by 1927, that number had increased to 116,000 by 1927, and to 143,000 by 1929.[37]

While earlier stations had largely been relegated to central business districts, new stations were increasingly located in suburban settings and were often adjacent to neighborhoods. "As business increased, so did local complaints about the intrusion of gas stations into residential areas," putting pressure on oil companies to invest in improving the design quality of their gas stations.[38] Major oil companies responded by embracing "conventional forms to make their stations look less like shacks and more like houses," resulting in stations that were more contextual and better suited to their suburban environs.[39] In *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations*, historian Chad Randl refers to this typology as the "house-type station."[40]

As implied by their name, house-type stations were deliberately designed to exude a domestic quality, often taking cues from the vernacular of adjacent neighborhoods. In Southern California, these house-type stations tended to incorporate features associated with the Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Tudor Revival, and other Period Revival styles, often in a loose and eclectic manner. They were typically located on corner lots in predominantly residential settings.[41] This model of station design reached its zenith in the mid- and late-1920s.

Designing stations that were more compatible with their environs not only helped to assuage concerns from nearby residents; it also lent oil companies a competitive advantage and in some instances, worked toward establishing a company's brand identity. As the number of gas stations exponentially grew in the 1920s, competition for business and for customers also increased, and companies embraced the idea of using the station building as a way to advertise business.[42] The incorporation of contextual architectural details resulted in an attractive backdrop for an otherwise-mundane component of the commercial landscape to attract the attention of passersby.

Gas station architecture underwent another significant shift after about 1930. Instead of designing stations that were intended to be contextual and seamlessly blend into their environs, oil companies embraced new design paradigms that embraced advances in industrial design and technology. In *Preservation Brief 46*, author Randl describes this new model of station design as

[36] John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1993), 54.
[37] Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930*, 92.
[38] Randl, *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations*, 2.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, 2.3.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station,* 54.

the "box-type station."[43] These stations were intended to stand out, not blend in. "Blending Art Moderne and International Style motifs, box-type stations featured flat roofs and unadorned exteriors of stucco, terra cotta, porcelain enamel steel, or structural glass panels," notes Randl.[44] The simple, standardized rectangular box had staying power. The ease of implementing standardized designs proved advantageous to oil companies, and standardization (as opposed to individualistic architecture and design) have defined gas station architecture ever since.

Christiansen and Grow Filling Station as an Example of the "House-Type" Station
The Christiansen and Grow Filling Station was conceived within the pre-standardization (pre-1930) period of gas station design.

Constructed in 1928 – at the zenith of the "house-type" station – the property exhibits an eclectic array of architectural features that provide the station with a whimsical appearance and were compatible with the prevailing scale, style, and overall character of development in the immediate vicinity. Specifically, the station is distinguished by its flared roof, bracketed eaves, multi-light windows, and faux wood shutters. Functional elements of the station, specifically, its pump islands, are thoughtfully incorporated into the station's design.

These features – and the domesticated aesthetic that they collectively produce – work to distinguish this particular gas station from other, more contemporary gas stations that are found across Orange County and throughout Southern California, which are generally defined by their highly standardized design. Expressed in the local context of Orange County, this station stands out as an excellent representative example of how gas station designers and proprietors used elements of architecture and physical design to respond to concerns about the visual impacts of gas stations and other banal elements of early roadside commerce and infrastructure.

Rarity of Type and Period

Extensive research about early auto-oriented development in Orange County, and about early gas stations in Southern California, indicate that the Christiansen and Grow Filling Station is an exceptionally rare remaining example of a built resource associated with patterns of early auto-oriented commercial development in Orange County (Criterion A), and an exceptionally rare remaining example of a pre-1930s "house-type" gas station in Orange County (Criterion C).

As discussed above, the "house-type" model of gas station design consisted of structures that were individually designed to bely their utilitarian purpose and be compatible with their environs, as opposed to the standardized, prefabricated designs that came to define gas station architecture beginning in the 1930s and continues to typify gas station design in the present-day.

Gas stations of this type and period were once an omnipresent part of Southern California's built environment. In Los Angeles alone, the number of gasoline stations "increased from about 170 in

[43] Randl, *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations*, 3-4.
[44] Ibid, 3.

1920 to almost 700 by 1925, and to more than 1,500 by 1930" as the number of registered automobiles exponentially increased during this time.[45] Similar trends were seen in less populous areas of Southern California, including Orange County and neighboring jurisdictions, with a substantial number of gas stations erected alongside major highways.

However, these once-ubiquitous commercial buildings have all but disappeared from Southern California's built landscape as the programmatic needs of gas stations have evolved and development patterns across the region have significantly changed. The subject property is among the oldest extant freestanding gas station structures in Orange County. Extensive culling of survey data from local jurisdictions within Orange County turn up very few comparable examples of filling stations of this vintage. Only three other known examples of pre-1930s filling stations were found. The first is located at 7204 Pacific Coast Highway in Newport Beach, along the historic alignment of the Roosevelt Coast Highway.[46] Its date of construction is not known but the building's scale, massing, and general appearance are consistent with those of a 1920s gas station. This property is a vernacular structure that consists of a simple, utilitarian box and a single canopy. It lacks the distinctive characteristics of the subject property, and in its current condition is barely recognizable as an early gas station. The canopy is the only distinguishing characteristic of the building that links it to its historic type and period.

The second example is the former Blue Lantern Fountain Lunch at 34091 Pacific Coast Highway in Dana Point. Constructed in 1927 and designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, this building served as a combination filling station and luncheonette.[47] While there were originally gasoline pumps placed in front of the building, serving motorists who were traveling on the Roosevelt Coast Highway, this building was first and foremost a restaurant building and was not purpose-built as a gas station. The vehicular bays have also been enclosed and all traces of the gas station removed, further obfuscating its association with car travel and roadside commerce.

The third example is located at 1793 South Coast Highway in Laguna Beach.[48] Built circa 1926, it was also located along the Roosevelt Coast Highway. The station is loosely designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It consists of a gabled stucco box with an appended canopy that shelters the pump island. A repair garage is also located on site. Of the few extant examples of 1920s gas stations in Orange County, this station is arguably most similar to the subject property.

All three of these comparable examples of 1920s gas stations are located along the historic alignment of the Roosevelt Coast Highway. The subject property, by contrast, is the only known example of a 1920s gas station along the inland alignment of former State Highway 101.
The subject property also appears to be an exceptionally rare property type beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of Orange County. Review of available historic survey data throughout

[45] SurveyLA, Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, "Context: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Theme: Commercial Development and the Automobile, 1910-1970," prepared by Daniel Prosser, Aug. 2016, 28.
[46] Pacific Coast Highway was originally constructed in the 1920s as the Roosevelt Coast Highway, another major north-south highway that connected Los Angeles and San Diego via a coastal route.
[47] "Historic Architectural Resources Inventory," prepared by Aegis for the City of Dana Point, 1997.
[48] City of Laguna Beach, "Historic Resources Inventory," 1981.

Southern California indicates that there are very few examples of pre-1930s gas stations remaining in the region. South of Santa Barbara, only eight extant examples of pre-1930s gas stations appear to be extant of the thousands that once peppered the landscape. These include:

- 7201 W. Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles (1927)
- 1659 Colorado Blvd., Los Angeles (1919 – relocated here from Downtown Los Angeles)
- 2391 Colorado Blvd., Los Angeles (Cota Richfield Station, 1926)
- 507 Entrada Dr., Los Angeles (Marquez Filling Station, 1924)
- 762 W. Gardena Blvd., Los Angeles (Tepper Tire Service Station, 1922)
- 100 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles (1927)
- 729 S. Shamrock Ave., Monrovia (1927)
- 9670 Foothill Blvd., Rancho Cucamonga (Cucamonga Service Station, 1915)

Like the subject property, these comparable examples of pre-1930 gas stations exude a domestic quality and are reflective of the "house-type" model of gas station design that prevailed at the time of their construction. They are designed in architectural styles that were typically applied to residences: Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mission Revival. They are reflective of the architectural detail and individual craftsmanship that characterized this commercial property type prior to the streamlining and standardization of gas station design in the 1930s.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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SurveyLA, Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement. "Context: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Theme: Commercial Development and the Automobile., 1910-1970." Prepared by Daniel Prosser. Aug. 2016.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
_X_ Other

Name of repository: Los Angeles Public Library; USC Libraries; City of Orange Building Permit Records; Newspaper Archives; City Directories

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __less than one acre_____

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: 33.783870 Longitude: -117.867060

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 390-681-20. The property is located at the southeast corner of South Main Street and West Palmyra Avenue in Orange.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property lines are the legally recorded boundary lines.

---

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: __Andrew Goodrich, AICP; Krista Gelev_____
organization: _Architectural Resources Group_____
street & number: _360 E. 2nd Street, Suite 225_____
city or town: Los Angeles____ state: _CA_____ zip code: _90012_____
e-mail__a.goodrich@arg-la.com _____
telephone: _626.583.1401_____
date: _July 2021_____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Christiansen and Grow Filling Station
City or Vicinity:	Orange
County:	Orange
State:	California
Photographer:	Krista Gelev, Architectural Resources Group
Date Photographed:	March 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 6 West and south elevations, view northeast

2 of 6 South and east elevations, view northwest

3 of 6 East and north elevations, view southwest

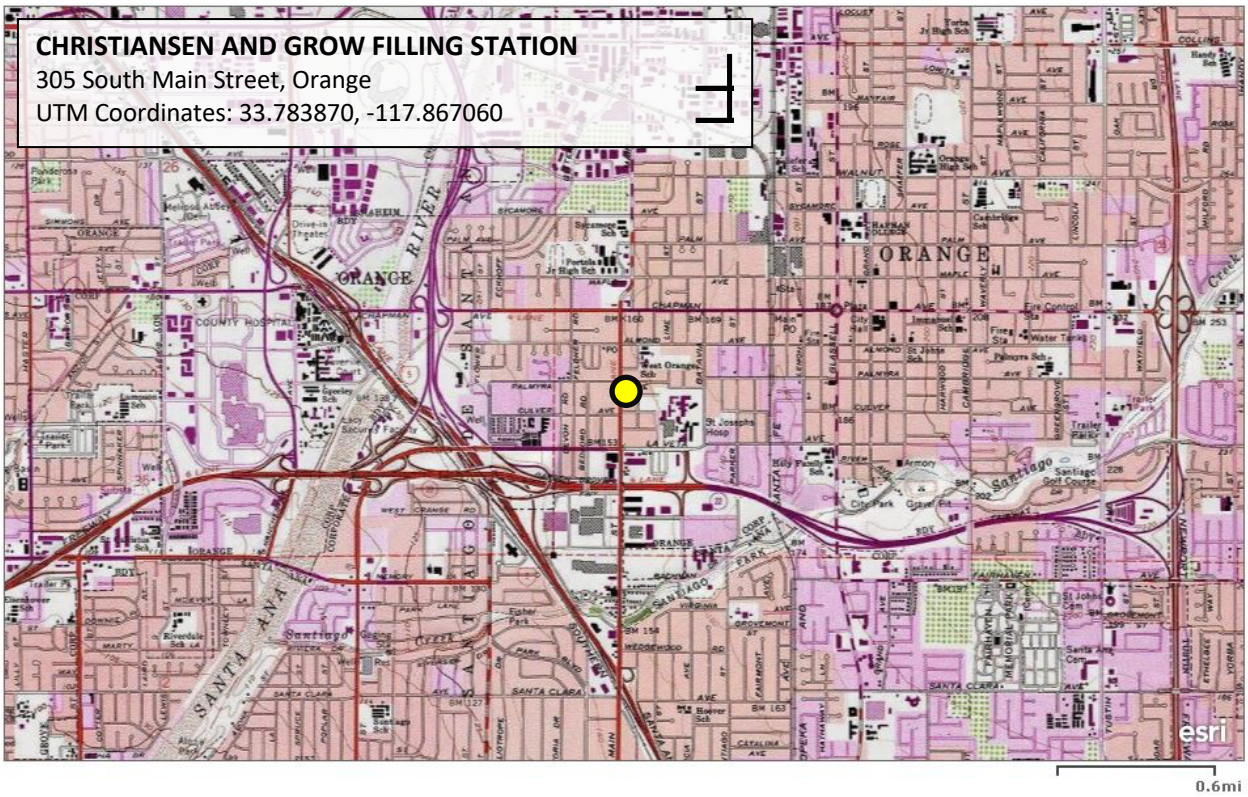
4 of 6 South elevation, view north

5 of 6 East elevation, view west

6 of 6 West and north elevations, view southeast

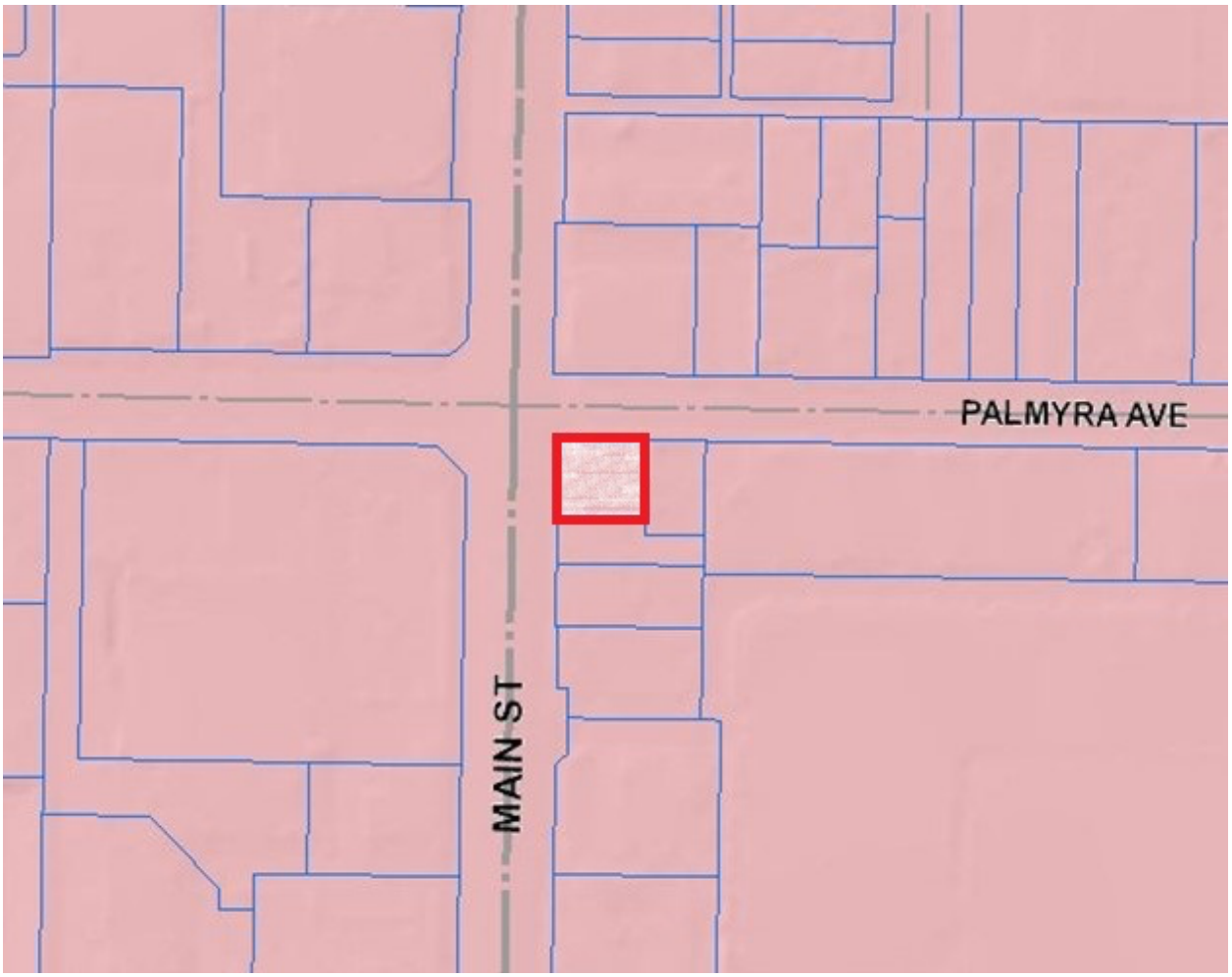
Location Map

USGS Map



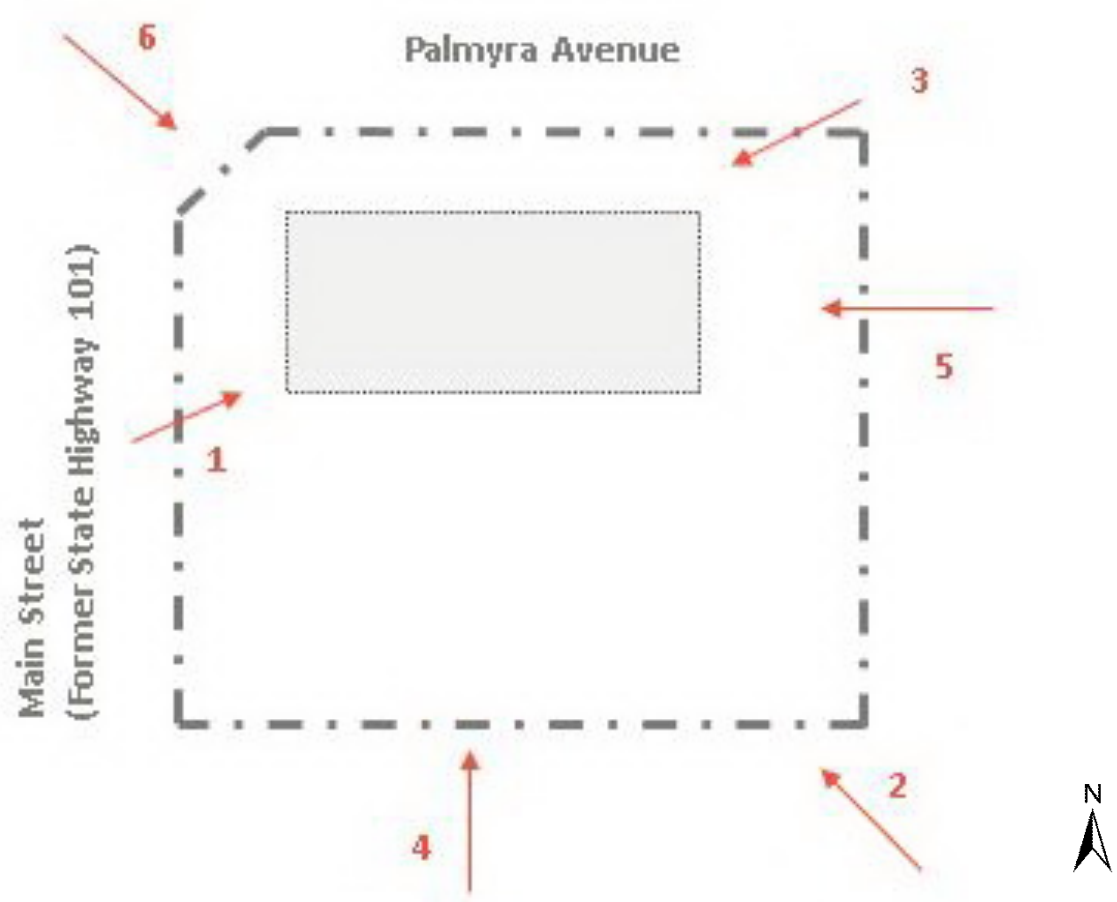
Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, 305 South Main Street, Orange. The location of the subject property is marked in yellow. Source: ESRI

Site Map



Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, 305 South Main Street, Orange. The parcel boundaries are delineated in red.
Source: Orange County Public Works

Sketch Map/Photo Key
Not to Scale



Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, 305 South Main Street, Orange. The location and direction of each photo is indicated by a red arrow. Source: Architectural Resources Group

Figure 1. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station (then known as the Don Clark Mobil Station), view southeast, 1974. Orange County Archives.

Figure 2. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, view northeast, 2008. RoadsideArchitecture.com.

Figure 3. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, view north, 2008. RoadsideArchitecture.com.

Figure 4. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, view north, 2013. RoadsideArchitecture.com.

Figure 5. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, view southeast, 2013. RoadsideArchitecture.com.

Figure 5. Christiansen and Grow Filling Station, view northwest, 2013. RoadsideArchitecture.com.