



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 14, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-030

HEARING DATE: September 28, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #1 – 820 Fort Stockton Drive**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Mission Hills Heritage; represented by IS Architecture

OWNER: Affordable Development 820 LLC

LOCATION: 820 Fort Stockton Drive, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 444-411-0700

DESCRIPTION: Required consideration of the designation of the property located at 820 Fort Stockton as a historical resource due to receipt of nomination from the public.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 820 Fort Stockton because it does not meet any of the adopted HRB Criteria.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in accordance with SDMC Section 123.0202 and Section II of the Historical Resources Board Procedures because a nomination was filed by Mission Hills Heritage (Nominator) to designate the property, owned by Affordable Development 820 LLC, located at 820 Fort Stockton as a historic resource. The property is located in the Mission Hills neighborhood of the Uptown Community on the northeast corner of Fort Stockton Drive and Goldfinch Street and consists of a one-story, Craftsman style residential duplex constructed in 1912. The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey and given a Status Code of 5S3, "appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation." This was a cursory determination made during a reconnaissance survey and is either confirmed or rejected based on a subsequent, detailed site-specific analysis and historic report.

The property was previously reviewed by Heritage Preservation staff in conjunction with two separate preliminary review applications submitted by the property owner to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The first preliminary review application was submitted in May of 2021, at which time staff required a historic report to evaluate the resource. A draft report prepared by Urbana Preservation and Planning was submitted, which concluded that the building was potentially eligible under HRB Criteria C and D. The report was not deemed complete, and after three total rounds of review, the preliminary review concluded without producing a complete report. In February of 2023 the property owner submitted a new preliminary review application that included a report prepared by Nexus Planning and Research. The report concluded that the property at 820 Fort Stockton is not eligible for designation. After three total rounds of review, the report was deemed complete and the City determined that the property is not historic and is ineligible for designation on June 27, 2023. This conclusion was based on a lack of significance under HRB Criteria A, B, D, E and F, and a lack of integrity under HRB Criterion C.

The property owner then submitted a demolition permit for the property and the application was deemed complete on July 28, 2023. On August 1, 2023, Mission Hills Heritage submitted a nomination to designate the property as a historical resource. As discussed in the analysis section below, the information provided in the nomination is not new and does not change staff's determination that the building is ineligible for historic designation. However, SDMC Section 123.0202 requires that nominations for historic designation be reviewed and considered by the Historical Resources Board. Additionally, under SDMC Section 143.0250(c), once a complete nomination has been submitted, the demolition permit cannot be issued for a time period of at least two scheduled Board meetings, but in no event more than 90 calendar days. The nomination was docketed for the first available HRB meeting following submittal of the nomination, and staff is recommending that HRB not designate the property.

## ANALYSIS

Mission Hills Heritage submitted a Historical Resource Research Report (HRRR) prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. To assist in the Board's review and consideration of the significance of the property, all complete historic reports, namely the IS Architecture report (Attachment 1) and the Nexus Planning and Research report (Attachment 2), have been provided for review. Staff disagrees with the conclusions of the IS Architecture report, and reaffirms the prior determination that the property is not eligible for designation due to a lack of significance under HRB Criteria A, B, D, E and F, and a lack of integrity under HRB Criterion C. Staff's determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

*CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.*

The subject resource does not meet this criterion. The subject resource is located within the Mission Hills neighborhood of the Uptown Community. The HRRR prepared by IS Architecture concluded

that the property is eligible for designation as a special element of the historical, economic, and architectural development of the City, the Uptown Community, and the Mission Hills neighborhood.

The 820 Fort Stockton property was constructed in 1912, just prior to the 1915 Panama-California Exposition held in Balboa Park. The Exposition was expected to draw millions of visitors to San Diego and developers responded by constructing new residential structures in the areas surrounding Balboa Park to accommodate these guests. While the subject resource was built just prior to the Exposition, there is no evidence that it is distinct among other residential structures of this era as a special element of development, as required under HRB Criterion A. Therefore, staff is not recommending designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical development of the City, the Uptown Community, or the Mission Hills neighborhood related to an association with the 1915 Panama-California Exposition.

From 1909 to 1929, the expansion of streetcar lines in San Diego had a significant impact on the development of suburban neighborhoods such as Mission Hills. The subject resource was constructed during this era of rapid expansion just one block from the streetcar line; however, there is no evidence that the property is distinct among the numerous residential structures constructed close to the streetcar lines at this period as a special element of development, as required under HRB Criterion A. Therefore, staff is not recommending designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical development of the City, the Uptown Community or the Mission Hills neighborhood related to an association with streetcar suburb development.

The resource's original owner, P.D. Griswold, maintained the property as a rental duplex. The Griswolds owned and constructed the P.D. Griswold Pharmacy (HRB #868) located at the intersection of Washington and Goldfinch Streets in 1912 as well as two other rental properties in addition to the subject resource. While the construction of the subject resource occurred during a period of rapid speculative growth, there is no evidence that the property is distinct among other rental properties constructed in the years prior to the 1915 Panama-California Exposition as a special element of development, as required under HRB Criterion A. While duplexes may have been a less common building type than single family, multi-family developments or apartment buildings prior to the Exposition; there is no contextual evidence to support that assumption. Therefore, staff is not recommending designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the economic development of the City, the Uptown Community or the Mission Hills neighborhood related to the property's development as a rental duplex in the years of rapid speculative growth prior to the Panama California Exposition.

The property was built in 1912 by the firm of McFadden and Buxton, as discussed in greater detail in the analysis of Criterion D. The firm is best known for the development and construction of the Burlingame Tract (HRB #526) as a "System Firm;" however, they also developed properties throughout North Park and in other areas of the City such as Pacific Beach and Point Loma. While the property is a product of a "System Firm" it is not distinct among other properties constructed by McFadden and Buxton under the "System." As illustrated in figure E.4-13 of the IS Architecture HRRR, McFadden and Buxton produced multiple properties outside of the Burlingame tract and there is no evidence to document that the subject resource is distinct among those properties, as

required under HRB Criterion A. Furthermore, changes to the resource's Fort Stockton Drive façade, as discussed in the analysis of Criterion C, result in an impaired integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling as it relates to architectural development under HRB Criterion A. Therefore, staff does not support or recommend designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the architectural development of the City, Uptown Community or the Mission Hills neighborhood related to the property's construction under McFadden and Buxton's "System."

*CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.*

The subject resource does not meet this criterion. The subject resource is a one-story, Craftsman style residential duplex constructed in 1912 by the firm of McFadden and Buxton. The property is located on the northeast corner of Fort Stockton Drive and Goldfinch Street and features an entrance to one of the residential units on each street façade. The duplex features a low pitched, cross gabled roof with wide, unenclosed eaves and an exterior clad in wood siding. Both entrances feature a partial width, half walled porch sheltered beneath a front facing gabled roof. Decorative beams are located in the gable ends of both porches as well as the main roof. The Goldfinch Street porch features square tapered columns that extend to the ground and are clad in wood siding. On the Goldfinch street elevation, two clinker brick chimneys are present. On the Fort Stockton elevation, the porch features square wood porch supports that rest upon the remnants of tapered columns. The main roof also displays an attic vent in the gable end on the Fort Stockton façade. Fenestration includes double hung and fixed wood windows.

Several modifications have been made to the property since its construction in 1912. Based off of historic photos submitted in the Nexus and IS Architecture HRRRs, staff estimates that modifications were made to the Fort Stockton porch sometime between 1943 and 1963, most likely around the time the property was converted to commercial use circa 1945. These alterations include the partial enclosure of the porch with wood windows, relocation of the door, demolition of the original front wall and replacement of the original siding-clad tapered columns with square columns. Other modifications include the enclosure of a porch on the rear façade prior to 1956, the infill of a rear courtyard between 1947 and 1964 and the addition of wooden bars over some of the windows at an unknown date.

Character defining features of Craftsman architecture include a low-pitched, gabled roof with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; exposed roof rafters; decorative beams or braces; full or partial-width porches supported by tapered square columns or pedestals; decorative attic vents; wood or stucco cladding; and wood frame and sash windows in fixed, double hung and casement varieties.

The duplex features some of the character defining features of the Craftsman style including a low pitched roof with wide unenclosed eaves, wood siding, partial width porches, clinker brick chimney and wood windows; however, significant modifications to the property have resulted in a loss of architectural integrity. Specifically, the modifications to the Fort Stockton porch, a character defining feature of the Craftsman style, significantly altered the layout and appearance of the porch and resulted in the loss of original walls and materials on a primary façade. These modifications significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling to the point where the

building no longer conveys the historic significance of the Craftsman style as originally expressed in this building. While the modifications are estimated to have occurred over 50 years ago, neither resources nor additions gain significance simply by virtue of their age. The modification must speak to and be associated with the resource's significance. For example, an addition present on a home during a property's association with a historically significant individual would be considered part of the historic fabric because the addition has a documented association with a historically significant individual. However, the modifications to this property detract from, rather than contribute to, the building's original Craftsman design and character defining features, and have no architectural significance in their own right. Therefore, these modifications result in a loss of integrity and significance under HRB Criterion C. The property also reflects the duplex building type in a limited way by featuring two porches; however, it does not rise to the level of significance to be individually eligible for designation as a good example of the duplex building type. Therefore, staff does not support or recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The subject resource does not meet this criterion. According to the Notice of Completion, the property was constructed in 1912 by the developer/builder firm of McFadden and Buxton, who are proposed for establishment as Master Builders. Established Master Architect William Wheeler worked as the Chief Architect for McFadden and Buxton from May 1912 until October 1913.

William Henry Wheeler was born in Australia in 1878. In 1900, he moved to San Francisco and began studying engineering at UC Berkeley. He moved to San Diego in 1913. Wheeler designed in a variety of styles, including Spanish Eclectic, Italian Renaissance Revival, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, and Egyptian Revival. Wheeler served as the president of the California State Board of Architectural Examiners and the Architectural Association of San Diego. Wheeler was the father of Richard Wheeler, another well-known San Diego architect.

At least 10 of Wheeler's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include Balboa Theater (HRB #307), Eagles Hall (HRB #189), and the Percy Benbough/William Wheeler House (HRB #766).

While it is known that Wheeler worked for McFadden and Buxton, there is no conclusive primary evidence to link the subject resource to Master Architect William Wheeler. Although Wheeler served as Chief Architect for McFadden and Buxton during the construction of the subject resource between June and October of 1912, it is unclear how involved he was with the design of the resource and if it can be directly attributed to him. Furthermore, if the property could be attributed to Wheeler, the modifications to the Fort Stockton façade porch impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling to the point where the resource could no longer convey its significance as a notable work of William Wheeler. Therefore, staff does not support or recommend designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable example of the work of Master Architect William Wheeler.

The developer/builder firm of McFadden and Buxton was a joint venture between local realtor Joseph McFadden and his partner George Buxton. The partnership was short lived and only lasted from October 1911 to October 1913 but was notable due to its establishment as a "System Firm." Most notably, McFadden and Buxton developed and built North Park's Burlingame Tract which is designated as the Burlingame Historic District, HRB #526. Other McFadden and Buxton works listed on the San Diego Register include the A. Frank Reed House (HRB #1480) located at 3044 29<sup>th</sup> Street. The designation of the Burlingame Historic District did not establish McFadden and Buxton as Master Builders, nor have they been established as such with subsequent designations of properties associated with them.

The HRRR prepared by IS Architecture does not provide sufficient information or analysis to establish McFadden and Buxton as a Master Builder as required by the City's Designation Criteria Guidelines. Per the Designation Criteria Guidelines, the work of a Master may be established by a combination of one or more of the following:

- The scope and excellence of their overall body of work, as it is understood.
- Quality of design and detailing excellence.
- The use of new or traditional materials in a new way resulting in a special or unique design expression.
- Special attention to work while under construction, basing much of the design refinements on field work and experience.
- Publication in trade journals and/or the popular press.
- Publication in scholarly journal articles or books. Being the subject of Master's thesis or Doctoral dissertations.
- Acknowledgement by design peers through formal awards and citations.
- Acknowledgement by the general public through formal awards, citations and commendations.
- Favorable reviews by professional architectural critics.

The report does not provide a detailed or sufficient analysis of McFadden & Buxton's overall body of work and how that work would distinguish them as Master Builders. Additionally, if that documentation and analysis were present, the integrity of the subject resource has been significantly impacted to the alteration of critical character defining features and elements, as discussed in the analysis of Criterion C. These alterations have resulted in a loss of integrity as it relates to the original McFadden and Buxton construction, and the building could no longer convey any possible significance as a notable work of the firm of McFadden and Buxton. Therefore, staff does not support or recommend the establishment of the McFadden and Buxton as Master Builder and does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Although the property is not recommended for designation, it should be noted that if designated, designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

CONCLUSION

Staff has reviewed the HRRR nomination prepared by IS Architecture and the HRRR prepared by Nexus Planning and Research as part of the prior preliminary review application. Based on all of the information submitted and staff's field check and analysis, it is recommended that the property located at 820 Fort Stockton Drive should not be designated under any adopted HRB Criteria due to a lack of significance under HRB Criteria A, B, D, E and F, and a lack of integrity under HRB Criterion C.



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City Planning Department



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Attachment(s):

1. Applicant's Historical Report prepared by IS Architecture under separate cover
2. Historical Report prepared by Nexus Planning and Research under separate cover