



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Historical Resources Board**

DATE ISSUED: November 15, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-079

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of November 29, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #15 – 4364 Witherby Street**

APPLICANT: Schmieg-Watters Family Trust represented by Johnson and Johnson  
Architecture

LOCATION: 4364 Witherby Street, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 4364 Witherby Street  
as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 4364 Witherby Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The subject house is a 1913 Craftsman style house in the Mission Hills neighborhood surrounded by single family residences.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Johnson and Johnson Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C. Staff does not concur that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria A or C. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows:

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*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 applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a resource that exemplifies special elements of the City's historical development by reflecting the Craftsman Architectural development of Mission Hills, the Progressive Era, and San Diego's streetcar suburb development. The Historical Report provides little information regarding the Progressive Era of San Diego, the American Arts and Crafts Movement in Mission Hills or the nearby streetcar track. The report does note that in 1913 the Fort Stockton trolley line was extended to the nearby intersection of Fort Stockton and Trias Street which most likely played a vital role in the construction of the subject house. There is no documentation in the report to indicate that the subject property reflects these developments to any greater extent than other homes in the neighborhood. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

*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 house is a two-story, Craftsman style house and rear yard detached garage constructed in 1913. The house features a low-pitched gable roof with wide eave overhang supported by knee braces and exposed rafter tails. The exterior façade of the house is covered in a cat face style stucco texture with a large decorative lattice attic vent in the main gable of the house.

The nomination report refers to the subject house as Prairie Foursquare style, but due to the trusses in porch gable, lattice detail on attic vent and overall lack of decorative horizontal emphasis it is in staff's opinion this home portrays the Craftsman architectural style.

The entry porch spans the full width of the front façade and is accessed by scored concrete steps and walk up. The porch's cross-gabled roof configuration is supported by a wood truss and four large tapered columns. The front door is an oak veneer door with glass inlay in the upper portion. Two fixed 7-over-1 light windows sit on each side of the entry door. Two pairs of wood double hung windows, replicated based on the house's extant windows, replaced two non-historic metal windows on the second story. The bulk of fenestration found on the house consists of the original and replicated double hung windows.

A rear stucco and clapboard second story projection on the house is made up of new sliding windows and a shed roof supported by tall square piers sheathed in clapboard. This projection is present on the 1921 Sanborn maps and is understood to be original to the house.

The subject house recently underwent an extensive renovation. Modifications to the house are significant and have altered the historic integrity. The report states that a "never paint again" texture covered the stucco walls and wood decorative elements was removed revealing the original historic heavy dash stucco finish. The homeowner re-stuccoed with an inappropriate cat face style texture. This alteration does not conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the stucco texture was not replaced in kind based on the original stucco texture that was extant. In addition, the new stucco application is now flush or extends beyond window and door reveals causing the façade to appear aberrant and flat. Homeowners also discovered evidence of a small

window on the second story of the front façade that was removed during a previous renovation and used the size and location to replace it with a small 3-over-1 double hung window. The new design of this window is based on speculation as no historic documentation was found. Per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, restoration must be based on historic documentation of a prior condition. The report notes that an investigation found evidence for two more small windows flanking the chimney on the north elevation and the homeowners used their size and location to install two stained glass casement windows. The report did not include the evidence that was found for these two windows. Although it is possible that these two stained glass casement windows were originally designed similarly to their current appearance, there is no evidence such as historic photos that clearly show the windows. Due to the substantial loss of integrity from the original 1913 Craftsman style design and construction, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the property located at 4364 Witherby Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity. Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives.



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SV/jb/cw

Attachment:

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover