

HISTORIC BUILDING INTERIORS AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 7, 2007, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

4th Floor Large Conference Room

City Administration Building

202 C Street, San Diego, CA

MEETING NOTES

1. ATTENDANCE

Subcommittee

Members: David Marshall (Chair); Robert Vacchi, Priscilla Berge, Marsha Sewell,
Bruce Coons

Staff: Cathy Winterrowd

Guests: None

2. Public Comment: None

3. Discussion of Issues:

Overall discussion: Priscilla Berge provided a handout with her general comments. Staff gave an overview of Land Development Code (historical resources regulations) and Land Development Manual (designation criteria) related to interiors. Regulations only apply if an interior element is designated. There was discussion of the number and kind of interiors that have been designated by the City. There was discussion and review of the Standards with emphasis on specific language addressing interiors with a focus on Rehabilitation Standards. Standards talk about both primary and secondary spaces of the interior. Preservation Brief 18 language will be the guiding principle for the subcommittee: *“While the exterior of a building may be its most prominent visible aspect, or its “public face,” its interior can be even more important in conveying the building's history and development over time. Rehabilitation within the context of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation calls for the preservation of exterior and interior portions or features of the building that are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values.”* Research report guidelines already address interiors for commercial properties, Ms. Berge suggested changes to the guidelines to include opportunities to address interiors beyond commercial properties. Ms. Sewell suggested the subcommittee define interior spaces and what constitutes a significant interior element.

1. Evaluation criteria for determining what constitutes a historic interior.

Criteria for designation are same as for exteriors, intact, good or rare example; must be significant, as opposed to separate interior criteria. Question of whether, under Criterion C, an interior could be significant if the exterior is not. In this case, the interior would have to be very significant and the owner would not be eligible for the Mills Act if only

the interior is designated. The interior significance must be evaluated within the historic context of the building. The interior could have a separate period of significance, but it must relate to building's significance. Discussion of whether it is enough for an interior to be intact and a good representative example of the building's historical context to be designated or does it need to be of "high style" or better than a typical example. It was agreed that it must be a sufficiently intact primary or secondary space and a room by room evaluation is needed for a complete evaluation. It was also agreed that since so few interiors have been designated, the owner should be given the benefit of doubt and the Board could designate a volunteered interior even if it is not rare or high style.

2. Public vs. private ownership.

Ownership is not the issue associated with designation of interior spaces. Publicly visible interior spaces should be considered for designation. Private homeowners should be encouraged to volunteer significant interior spaces for designation. An extra layer of review is required to view interiors. Owners may be interested in having important interior elements designated and protected. It was agreed that usually a homeowner should have the option of volunteering interior spaces for designation, but there may be rare occasion when board/staff would want to evaluate and consider designation of a significant interior space that an owner does not volunteer.

3. Whether or not owner consent is needed to designate interior elements of single family residences.

Chair Marshall felt that owner consent is needed unless it's an extraordinary interior, such as the Villa Montezuma that was used as a private residence and is now a museum with interiors of exceptional significance. It was acknowledged that staff and board may not be given access without owner consent. It was agreed that the Board should support designation of volunteered interiors and only nominate non-consensual interiors if they are of exceptional significance.

4. Public access/visibility of the interior elements.

Discussion of a variety of interior spaces that are public or quasi-public. The lobby of a hotel is public space, lobby of medical/dental office is considered public. The Central Library interior was a missed opportunity; there was no research of the interior in the report, no photos so it was never evaluated for interior significance. It was agreed that interior areas visible to the public from the exterior are not considered an interior designation, but are part of the exterior designation; therefore it can be designated as part of the resource. It was agreed public buildings need evaluation of interior spaces prior to a designation hearing, in time for staff evaluation and board visit, in order to consider the interior in the designation action.

It was also agreed that the City can't require access to private interiors and a lack of physical access by the public is not sufficient reason not to designate an important interior space. In these cases, the designated interior could be documented in other way

that is accessible to public, for example photos on the HRB website, a virtual tour available through the internet, photos displayed in other media, etc.

5. The need for the research report to address the historical or architectural significance of interior elements that should be considered for designation.

There is language in the adopted research report guidelines. Ms. Berge suggested a minor revision to highlight the language and to reference Preservation Bulletin 18. Staff reminded the subcommittee that the Code allows the Board to continue a designation item if the report is deemed incomplete and direct staff and the applicant to provide additional research and analysis. It was agreed that Board may continue an item if insufficient information is contained in the research report, but staff needs to be proactive in the identification and evaluation of important historic interiors.

6. The need for Board Members to visually inspect interior elements being considered for designation.

Adopted Board procedures already require Board members to view resources prior to voting on the item. It was agreed that this requirement applies to designation of interior spaces as well. Staff will continue to make arrangements for Board member access to interiors that are being considered for designation.

7. Property owner assistance from DAS in determining rehabilitation approaches that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines.

No discussion of this issue at this meeting.

8. The treatment of non-designated historic building interiors on a voluntary basis.

No discussion of this issue at this meeting.

4. Adjourn

Next Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting will be on Wednesday, April 4, 2007 at 2:00 PM.

For more information, please contact Cathy Winterrowd by phone at (619) 235-5217 or email at cwinterrowd@sandiego.gov