



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 8, 2025 REPORT NO. HRB-25-019

HEARING DATE: May 22, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – Sarah Beckwith House**

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

APPLICANT: 836 Prospect LLC; represented by BFS Environmental Services

LOCATION: 836 Prospect Street, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 350-070-1900

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Sarah Beckwith House located at 836 Prospect Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Sarah Beckwith House located at 836 Prospect Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1922 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the 1954 rear addition and circa 1971 rear enclosed staircase both constructed outside of the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence and retains integrity from its 1922 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a stucco and brick veneer exterior, half-timbering, a moderately steeped pitched cross gable roof with little eave overhang, projecting front-facing gable, massive brick chimney and tall, narrow multi-lite wood windows. The tapered front porch columns are influenced by the Craftsman style.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Sarah Beckwith House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Sarah Beckwith, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

In order to be eligible for designation and listing on the City's Register, a resource must meet one or more of the City's designation criteria as specified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual and retain integrity as it relates to the significance of the resource. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance, which requires an understanding of the physical features and characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. The National, California, and City of San Diego Registers recognize location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as the seven aspects of historical integrity.

Although not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present for a property to be eligible for designation, the record must demonstrate that the property retains enough physical and design characteristics to reflect and convey the significance of the property. Each resource depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects are most important to a particular property requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) provide information regarding the City's designation criteria, as well as guidance on their application and how to evaluate the integrity of a resource.

ANALYSIS

The property located at 836 Prospect Street is a two-and-half-story with basement building constructed in the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence in 1922 in the La Jolla Community Planning Area. The building was originally constructed as a single-family residence but currently functions as offices. There are no other buildings and structures present on site. The property is located on a steeply sloping lot overlooking the Pacific Ocean in La Jolla Village. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1922, the property has been modified as follows: in 1949, the building was converted to a six-unit apartment, and an addition was constructed at an unknown location at that time. A three-story addition was added to the rear façade in 1954. In 1970, the basement was built out, which required the conversion of two windows to doors. From 1971 to 1972 stairs were added to the rear balcony, brick veneer was removed from the original west façade door and composition shingles were added to the roof. Between 1985 and 1986 an unattached pergola was constructed on the south side of the building and the front brick walkway was replaced. On the north façade, all but two windows were replaced with steel framed casement or fixed windows with wire glass within the original openings and a basement door was converted to a window at an unknown date. Additionally, the primary entrance door and sidelights were replaced with a compatible style at an unknown date. The Historical Resources Research Report asserts that the property was converted from residential to office use in 1957; however, the Directory Listing of Occupants supports an estimated conversion of 1971.

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by BFS Environmental Services, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C, but not HRB Criteria A, B, or D. This

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 Historical Resources Research Report asserts that the property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a special aspect of cultural and social development for its association with philanthropist and women's education advocate Sarah E. Beckwith (see discussion under Criterion B); however, staff does not agree. The report does not discuss how the resource is connected with the work of Beckwith and the Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO), which mostly took place when she was living in the Midwest, and how the PEO contributed to the cultural/social development of San Diego, the La Jolla community and/or La Jolla Village. Additionally, the report does not discuss why the property would be considered a "special element" of development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A. As the property is not significant under Criterion A, an evaluation of integrity as it relates to Criterion A is not relevant or required.

CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

The subject resource was constructed in 1922 by Sarah Beckwith as a vacation property. Beckwith was originally from Iowa and often traveled to La Jolla for holidays with her husband, Civil War veteran Captain Warren Beckwith, the cofounder of the Western Wheeled Scraper Company. After the death of her husband in 1905, Beckwith moved to Escondido and vacationed in a bungalow located at 828 Prospect Street until constructing the subject resource in 1922.

Beckwith was a financial supporter of the Philanthropic Educational Organization, or PEO, one of the oldest women's organizations in North America, which focused on women's education. She donated her former family residence in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, to the PEO as a retirement home for elderly women with no family and established scholarships for women. At the time of her death, Beckwith was well known as a philanthropist who sponsored the education of many young women.

With the information provided, it is unclear if Sarah Beckwith is a historically significant person for her philanthropic work with the PEO. The report states that she was a founder of the organization; however, she is not currently listed as a founder on the PEO International website. Financial support of the PEO alone would not make Beckwith a historically significant person, she would have needed to actively participate in the organization's work and have demonstrated achievements beyond those of other PEO members. The report currently lacks the required information regarding the nature of Beckwith's association with the PEO to determine if she is a historically significant individual. Furthermore, the report does not discuss when Beckwith conducted her most significant work with the PEO and if it is associated with the time she resided at the 836 Prospect Street property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion B at this time; however, more information may be submitted at a later date for evaluation by staff. As the property is not currently significant under Criterion B, an evaluation of integrity as it relates to Criterion B is not relevant or required.

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 was originally constructed in 1922 as a Tudor Revival style, single-family residence with Craftsman influence. The building was subsequently converted to apartments and later offices. Located on the west side of Prospect Street in La Jolla Village, the resource is constructed at the rear of the lot, creating a significant setback from the street and a small garden in front of the residence. The building is a brick veneered, two-and-a-half-story structure with a basement that is exposed at the rear due to a steeply sloping lot. The cross gable roof is covered in composition shingles and features a moderately sloped pitch with little eave overhang. The primary façade is generally symmetrical, with a central projecting front facing gable accentuated by stucco and half-timbering. The entry porch is located below the central projection and features brick, square, tapered Craftsman style columns. Tall, narrow, multi-paned casement wood windows flank the entry on the first floor and are also present in the central projection. The original 1922 portion of the structure also features wood windows and half-timbering in the gable ends of all three non-primary facades. Additionally, a massive stucco chimney is located on the south façade. At the rear is a box-like, three-story stucco addition and enclosed stairwell, which are not original to the structure.

Popular in the 1920s and 1930s, Tudor Revival architecture is loosely based on a variety of late Medieval English styles and influences, but unlike some English prototypes, Tudor Revival style houses exhibit steeply pitched gable roofs that dominate the facades. Other character defining features include decorative half-timbering; tall, narrow windows, usually appearing in multiple groups and with multi-pane glazing; massive chimneys, sometimes with decorative chimney pots; entry porches with round or Tudor arches; and gable dormers. Relatively uncommon before World War I, widespread adoption of masonry veneering techniques in the 1920s accompanied a dramatic rise in the style's popularity as even the most modest examples began to closely mimic the brick and stone veneers of their English prototypes. Tudor Revival style houses usually include the use of stucco as well as wood cladding and brick or stone veneer, depending upon the subtype.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence. The property, which has been modified as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, is altered but is still able to convey its architectural significance. The 1954 west façade addition and 1971 exterior stair addition are located on the rear façade, where they have the least visual impact, and are clearly differentiated from the historic structure through the use of stucco. The front door replacement is sympathetic to the property's architectural style and within the original opening. On the north façade, the window replacements are stylistically compatible and within the original openings, evident by the preserved brick windowsills. Other modifications, such as the roof replacement, construction of an unattached pergola and replacement of the brick walkway are minor, and do not detract from the property's historic significance. Therefore, the property retains integrity to its 1922 period of significance under HRB Criterion C.

Significance Statement: The resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a stucco and brick veneer exterior, half-timbering, a moderately steeped pitched cross gable roof with little eave overhang, projecting front-facing gable, massive brick chimney and

tall, narrow multi-lite wood windows. The tapered front porch columns are influenced by the Craftsman style. Therefore, staff recommends 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 property at 836 Prospect Street was built by John Morgan, who the applicant is proposing to be established as a Master Builder with this designation. However, the HRRR does not provide enough information about the scope and quality of Morgan's overall body of work. Specifically, to establish a Master Builder, it is not enough to have been a prolific builder in San Diego, the builder must be associated with quality designs and attention to detail. In the future, Morgan could be established as a Master Builder if more information is provided that speaks to his known works and how they demonstrate quality design and construction. Therefore, staff cannot recommend designation under HRB Criterion D at this time. As the property is not significant under Criterion D, an evaluation of integrity as it relates to Criterion D is not relevant or required.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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. 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 Sarah Beckwith House located at 836 Prospect Street be designated with a period of significance of 1922 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence. The designation excludes the 1954 rear addition and circa 1971 rear enclosed staircase both constructed outside of the period of significance.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
City Planning Department

SS/ks

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on , to consider the historical designation of the **Sarah Beckwith House** (owned by 836 Prospect LLC, 1302 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar, CA 92014) located at **836 Prospect Street, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **350-070-1900**, further described as BLK 55 LOT 23 in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Sarah Beckwith House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of the Tudor Revival style with Craftsman influence and retains integrity from its 1922 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a stucco and brick veneer exterior, half-timbering, a moderately steeped pitched cross gable roof with little eave overhang, projecting front-facing gable, massive brick chimney and tall, narrow multi-lite wood windows. The tapered front porch columns are influenced by the Craftsman style. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 1954 rear addition and circa 1971 rear enclosed staircase both constructed outside of the period of significance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote:

BY: _____
KRISTI BYERS, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: HEATHER FERBERT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney