



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 5, 2025 REPORT NO. HRB-25-056

HEARING DATE: November 20, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – 3223 MARLTON DRIVE**

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

APPLICANT: Tomkins Family Trust 07-18-08; represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 3223 Marlton Drive, Golden Hill Community, Council District 3  
APN 539-190-12-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 3223 Marlton Drive as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 3223 Marlton Drive 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 property was located within the boundary of the [2016 Golden Hill Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey](#), but was not identified in the survey because it was not evaluated.

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 3223 Marlton Drive is a one-story, Spanish Colonial Revival style single-family residential building constructed in 1935 in the Golden Hill Community Planning Area. Other buildings and structures present on site include an original 1935 detached garage and a circa 1940s rear yard brick fireplace/barbecue. The property is situated among similarly scaled residences, and abuts Ivy Canyon, a City-owned open space located to its northeast. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1935, the property has been modified as follows: circa 1965, a 24-pane windbreak window was installed at the porch, which was later replaced with a single sheet of glass. Between 2015 and 2021, a metal fence was added to the northeast elevation, and a metal shelf was added below the northeast elevation focal window; a cat-face stucco finish was applied over the exterior of the property covering the original medium-grain stucco; the original northeast elevation wood single-pane focal window was replaced with a synthetic frame dual-pane window, and nearly all of the original wooden single-pane windows at the front, side, and rear elevations were replaced with dual-pane wood double-hung windows with vinyl tracks (jamb liners). The only windows that appear to be unaltered are the two windows located on the northeast elevation wall underneath the covered porch, which include the paired wood six-over-one double-hung window and the large one-lite picture window. In 2022, the cat-face stucco was patched and rehabilitated to a medium-grain texture at the front and side elevations. Undated changes to the property include the addition of a metal gate at the entry staircase, tiles at the entry stair risers, and Saltillo tiles at the front porch floor.

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff disagrees and finds that the building is not eligible under any HRB Criteria. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

*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 property is a single-story single-family residence constructed in 1935. The property's primary elevation faces northeast on Marlton Drive, situated on an elevated lot, and is accessed by a flight of stairs from the sidewalk. It exhibits a principal composition flat roof with a tile-covered false-gabled and hipped roof at the northeast, street elevation. Round clay tile attic vents are visible at the side and rear elevations. The plan of the property is rectangular, with the extending false-gabled and hipped roof forming a covered front patio area, which is supported by three large rectangular stucco piers. Stucco clads all the building's walls, including the porch and entry stair balustrade. The staircase balustrade has a curved base and stepped walls. The front door of this property is a paneled wooden door, and other doors located on the rear and side elevations are divided-lite

wooden French doors. Fenestration primarily consists of single and multi-lite double-hung and fixed wood window replacements at the front, side and rear elevations, as well as a synthetic-framed front focal window. A stucco chimney is located at the southwest elevation.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. Its vocabulary is influenced by Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic or Renaissance precedents. The style became popular after the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 and reached its height in the 1920s and early 1930s before rapidly declining in the 1940s. Identifying features include a low-pitched roof with little or no eave overhang, red tile roof covering, stucco exterior wall finishes, an asymmetrical façade and arches above doors and principal windows. Common decorative details are patterned tiles, carved stonework, large focal windows, wooden or iron window grilles, decorative vents and balconies.

The [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) state that “age of the resource alone is not sufficient to meet the criterion for designation. Resources which do not embody the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction as supported by established sources do not qualify.” While the subject resource exhibits some of the character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which includes flat, low-pitched hipped, and false gable roof with minimal eave overhang, ornamental rafter tails, stucco cladding, wooden windows, and wood paneled entry door, the resource as a whole only expresses the style in a limited way, and its limited embodiment of the proposed Spanish Colonial Revival style property does not rise to the level of significance to be eligible for individual historic designation.

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 Spanish Colonial Revival style. Although staff’s position is that the building was never a resource that embodied the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style as required under Criterion C, the modifications, as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, degraded the building’s limited expression of the style and result in a loss of integrity of materials, design, workmanship, and feeling. The replacement of all but two of the resource’s original single-pane wood windows with dual-pane wood windows and the replacement of the front focal picture window with a synthetic-framed window have resulted in a substantial loss of historic material and design. These dual-pane windows have thicker muntins to retain the insulated glass units, which is a significant change in the window profile. Please refer to Attachment 2 for a side-by-side comparison of the original and replacement double-hung windows. Other alterations, such as the cat-face stucco application at the rear elevation, the addition of tile at the covered patio and entry steps, the addition of a patio windbreak at the covered patio, the addition of metal window shelf, are less impactful modifications that, when considered as a whole along with the aforementioned window modifications, have cumulatively impaired the property’s integrity that it no longer retains integrity under HRB Criterion C.

In conclusion, the property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and does not retain critical aspects of integrity, and therefore staff does not 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 property was built by John H. Lovett, who is being proposed as a Master Builder. Lovett was born in Colorado in 1897 and obtained a degree from UC Berkeley. He served in WWI as an aviation mechanic. Afterwards, he experimented as a realtor before apprenticing in carpentry. In both his real estate and carpentry careers, he sold and tailored properties to veterans. He partnered with established Master Builder Benjamin Torgerson in 1930, but information about this partnership and its outcome is not identified. In 1943, Lovett was seriously injured in a car accident, which reduced his ability to work during WWII. He died in 1965.

The historical resource nomination report identified 147 houses built by John Lovett. It concluded that Lovett constructed about 19% of his known works before and during the Great Depression, about 65% between 1935 and 1942, and about 16% after World War II. His work reflected the popular architectural trends of the time; his earlier works are mostly Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival residences. He pivoted to Minimal Traditional homes in the 1930s and 1940s, which constitute the majority of his work. In the 1950s, he primarily built ranch homes. He constructed homes in a "signature" tripartite architectural fashion, where the street facades of his homes exhibit three distinctive parts. Although he primarily built single-family homes throughout his career, he is documented to have constructed a full bungalow court located at 4183-4187 Utah Street in 1936.

According to the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria, a property eligible under HRB Criterion D must be representative of the notable work of the Master, as demonstrated in the nomination. The work of a Master may be established through a number of considerations, including 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 Historical Resource Research Report did not provide any of the above considerations that would demonstrate John H. Lovett's eligibility as a Master Builder. Most of Lovett's work consists of modest one-story Minimal Traditional style homes, some of which exhibit Colonial Revival influences. These properties have limited expressions of their respective architectural styles. And by nature of their smaller size and simplified design, the homes' architectural detailing is restrained. Therefore, based on information in the report, John. H. Lovett's scope, excellence, and quality of design do not rise to the level of significance to be eligible under HRB Criterion D as a Master Builder. The historical report did not include any information that speaks to Lovett's use of material in new ways resulting in unique designs, his special attention to construction, or his work being published in popular press, journals, or books. The report did not show that Lovett was ever the subject of academic

research, or that his work was ever acknowledged through awards, citations, or favorable reviews by professional architectural critics. Thus, Lovett does not meet any considerations that qualify him as a Master Builder. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

Furthermore, staff's position is that the building was never a resource that embodied the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and it contains numerous alterations that impaired the of integrity of materials, design, workmanship, and feeling, considerations which are critical to convey significance under HRB Criterion D. As the property lacks integrity, it is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion D.

#### 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 property locate at 3223 Marlton Drive not be designated under any HRB Criteria.



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City Planning Department

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Attachment(s):

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
2. 3223 Marlton Drive Window Comparison