



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 7, 2025 REPORT NO. HRB-25-058

HEARING DATE: November 20, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9- COSSITT COTTAGE #1/ IRVING GILL HOUSE**

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

APPLICANT: Prairies Edge CA, LLC, represented by James B. Guthrie

LOCATION: 3729 Eighth Avenue, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APN 452-103-48-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Cossitt Cottage #1/Irving Gill House located at 3729 Eighth Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Cossitt Cottage #1/ Irving Gill House as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1911 under Criteria C and D. This designation excludes the garage built outside the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Early Modern style of architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a rectangular massing with clean lines, a lack of ornamentation, light sand stucco exterior, arched entry, wood casement windows and stucco chimney.
2. The resource is representative of the notable work of established Master Architect Irving J. Gill. Specifically, the resource is an excellent example of his work in the Early Modern style, which is shown through its repeating arch motif, cubist influence, unique window arrangements, and lack of ornamentation. The combination of stylistic elements creates a distinctive architectural style which Gill has become known for. The resource expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works and retains an excellent level of integrity.

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 identified in the [2016 Uptown Community Plan Update Historic Resource Survey](#) and given a status code of 5S3, "Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation".

The historic name of the resource, the Cossitt Cottage #1/Irving Gill House has been identified as consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Frederick and Mary Cossitt who simultaneously constructed four rental cottages along Eighth Avenue, and the name of Irving J. Gill, a Master Architect.

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 3729 Eighth Avenue is a two-story, Early Modern style, single-family residential building constructed in 1911 in the Uptown Community Planning Area. Other buildings and structures present on site include a detached garage. The property is located on the east side of Eighth Avenue, south of Robinson Avenue, and directly west of the 163 Freeway. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1911 the property has been minimally modified as follows: At an unknown date after 1919, a detached garage was added to the property. Between 1994-1998 the resource was restuccoed with a heavy textured finish. Staff notes that the Saltillo tile on the front porch is also likely not original. Between 1994-1998, a bedroom window on the south (side) elevation was infilled. In 2025, the stucco was restored to a period appropriate light sand finish texture consistent with other Gill designs.

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by James Guthrie which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D, and Staff concurs. 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 resource is a two-story, single-family residence constructed in 1911 in the Early Modern style.

The primary (west) elevation serves as the principal façade. The façade features a cube-like form, absence of applied ornamentation, and reliance on proportion and geometric balance. The façade is organized around a one-story arched loggia which is accessed via tiled steps on both north and south sides. The façade's composition includes the use of a distinctive window grouping- which consists of a three-part configuration; an upper awning window over paired casements located south of the primary solid wood entry door. A secondary door leads to the side of the house. The roof of the loggia forms a roof patio for the second level. A second-story exterior door provides access to the roof patio, and is flanked by two wood windows, one is a three-part awning/casement window type and the second is a four-lite casement window.

The south (side) elevation continues the same geometry as the primary façade. The elevation features two first floor windows and one second floor bedroom window and lacks ornamentation. The rear (east) elevation faces Cabrillo Canyon. The upper story contains two casements with upper awnings. The first floor features French doors and a large wood window. The north (side) elevation similarly features few openings, with three windows and a narrow service door.

A simple detached garage is located to the south of the resource and features a stucco finish, wood garage door, and is devoid of fenestration.

According to the [San Diego Modernism Context Statement](#), Early Modernism emerged in reaction to the ornate Revival and Art Deco styles popular in early 20th-century America. Originating in Europe through architects such as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the movement emphasized rationality, simplicity, and the honest expression of structure and materials, giving rise to what became known as the International Style. While this philosophy spread slowly in the United States, and even more gradually in San Diego, it gained momentum as European Modernists like Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra immigrated to the West Coast. Meanwhile, American architects including Louis Sullivan, D.H. Burnham, and Frank Lloyd Wright developed a more humanist expression of Modernism that emphasized natural materials, organic forms, and open, functional spaces, establishing a distinctly American interpretation of the Modernist ideal. During its formative years, the functionalism and simple forms of Modernists were largely confined to academia and a few rare built examples, predominantly in the eastern states and Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie style "experiments" in the Mid-west. However, two architects were creating genuinely Modernist works in San Diego well before 1935: Irving Gill and Rudolph Schindler.

Early Modern architecture is defined by its emphasis on function over ornament, favoring clean, simplified geometric forms and the honest expression of structure and materials such as concrete, steel, and glass. Buildings often feature horizontal lines, flat or low-pitched roofs, and large expanses of windows that connect interior and exterior spaces. Interiors are typically open and flexible, with layouts designed for practicality and flow. Early Modern designs also respond to their sites, integrating light, air, and views, while maintaining a restrained color palette that highlights form and shadow. Together, these elements embody the movement's ideals of clarity, simplicity, and harmony between building and environment.

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 Early Modern style. The property, which has been modified as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, retains overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship despite the minor modifications. The second story infill window did not impact significant character defining features and is located on a secondary facade. The stucco texture was restored in a period and architect appropriate texture, restoring integrity. The addition of a detached garage does not impact integrity because it is physically and visually separate from the primary structure, smaller in massing and scale, and does not alter or introduce any incompatible elements related to the original design, materials, or character-defining features of the historic building. Finally, the addition of Saltillo tile on the front porch is minor in nature. Therefore, the property retains its integrity to its 1911 period of significance under HRB Criterion C.

Significance Statement: The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Early Modern style of architecture and retains integrity from its 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a rectangular massing with clean lines, a lack of ornamentation, light sand stucco exterior, arched entry, wood casement windows and stucco chimney. 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.

Irving John Gill was born in Upstate New York in 1870. His father was a carpenter and building contractor. After Gill completed high school, he started his first architectural job in 1889, working with Ellis G. Hall in Syracuse. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Chicago to join the Adler & Sullivan firm, where he was mentored by Frank Lloyd Wright.

In 1893, Gill moved to San Diego for health reasons and to further his architectural career. He partnered with Joseph Falkenhan to form the firm Falkenhan & Gill. His earliest projects in San Diego were Queen Anne-style houses. In 1896, Gill partnered with famed architect William S. Hebbard. In 1900, he and Hebbard were commissioned to stabilize the Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The Mission's architecture had a vast influence on Gill's future projects. He began to incorporate stripped-down Mission-style elements into his Craftsman designs. In 1907, he introduced his own Mission-influenced Cubist style that had no ornamental embellishments. Gill's awareness of political and social reform swayed him to design for all classes of society, which also encouraged his development of a stripped-down Mission style. Gill built in several San Diego neighborhoods such as Uptown, La Jolla, Sherman Heights, Golden Hill, South Park, and Downtown. In addition to Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Mission Revival, Gill built in the Tudor, Prairie, and International.

Many San Diego architects have been influenced by Irving Gill's Modernist style of structural simplicity and the use of natural materials and colors.

At least 22 of Gill's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Gill House (HRB #18), the George Marston House (HRB #40), and the Wheeler Bailer/Irving Gill House (HRB #782). A partial list of Gill's notable works that have been designated by the HRB includes:

- HRB #18– Gill House, (2212 Pine Street), 1905
- HRB #40– George Marston House (3525 7th Avenue), 1909 (Hebbard and Gill)
- HRB #51– Horton Plaza and Fountain (300 Block of Broadway), 1909
- HRB #62– Lee House #2 (3353 Albatross Street), 1905 (Hebbard and Gill)
- HRB #79– La Jolla Women's Club (715 Silverado Street), 1914
- HRB #86– La Jolla Recreational Center (615 Prospect Street), 1915
- HRB #97– Mary Cassitt House #4 (3526 7th Avenue), 1906
- HRB #98– Teats House #1 (3560 7th Avenue), 1905
- HRB #119– George H. Scripps Marine Biological Laboratory (8602 La Jolla Shores), 1910
- HRB #153– Major Myles Molan House (2214–2224 2nd Avenue), 1894 (with Falkenhan)
- HRB #296– First Church Christ Scientist/ Goodbody's (317 Ash Street), 1904 (with Hebbard)
- HRB #367– Joseph Jessop and Sons Jewelers Building (1041–1049 5th Avenue), 1927 (Hebbard and Gill)
- HRB #782– Wheeler Bailer/Irving Gill House (7964 Princess Street), 1907
- HRB #1021– Alice Lee/ Irving J. Gill/ Hazel Wood Waterman House (3574 7th Ave), 1905
- HRB #1532– George and Maud Easton/ Irving Gill House (3353 2nd Avenue), 1908

The subject resource was built by Master Architect Irving J. Gill in 1911,

The subject residence is an example of Gill's work in the Early Modern style, a distinct combination of Cubist and Mission styles which he became known for. Irving J. Gill's early modern architectural style represents one of the earliest and most influential departures from traditional, ornamented architecture in the United States. Working primarily in San Diego in the early 20th century, Gill pioneered a design language that embraced simplicity, geometric purity, and functionalism. The Early Modern style draws influence from numerous styles, including Prairie, Cubist and Mission, incorporating features such as arched loggias, patios, sleeping porches, and mixtures of awning and casement windows. The use of combined parapet and flat overhanging roof forms, repeating arches, and a lack of ornamentation demonstrated on this building are part of what made Gill's style distinctive and conveys his skill as an architect through its high-quality design and craftsmanship. The overall façade composition demonstrates Gill's approach of using windows, doors, and voids as the ornament, achieving a sense of rhythm and simplicity that is both functional and visually refined.

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 D as a resource that represents the notable work of Master Architect Irving Gill. The property, which has been modified as detailed at the beginning of the analysis section of this report, retains its overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Therefore, the property retains its integrity to its 1911 period of significance as an example of the notable work of Master Architect Irving Gill under HRB Criterion D.

Significance Statement: The subject resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Irving J. Gill, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality houses in the City, some of which have been historically designated. Specifically, the resource is an

example of his work in the Early Modern style, which is shown through its combined roof forms, repeating arch motif, and lack of ornamentation. The combination of stylistic elements creates a distinctive architectural style which Gill has become known for. The resource expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works with its key elements of his style and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1911 design. Therefore, staff recommends 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 Cossitt Cottage #1/ Irving Gill House located at 3729 Eighth Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1911 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the detached garage constructed outside the period of significance.



Kelsey Kaline
Associate Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
City Planning Department

KK/SS

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/20/2025

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/20/2025, to consider the historical designation of the **COSSITT COTTAGE #1/ IRVING GILL HOUSE** (owned by Prairies Edge CA LLA, 4142 Adams Avenue #103-126, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **3729 8th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **452-103-4800**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 5 POR 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 COSSITT COTTAGE #1/ IRVING GILL HOUSE on the following findings:

- (1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of the Early Modern style of architecture. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Early Modern style of architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a rectangular massing with clean lines, a lack of ornamentation, light sand stucco exterior, arched entry, wood casement windows and stucco chimney. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.
- (2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Irving J. Gill. Specifically, the resource is an excellent example of his work in the Early Modern style, which is shown through its repeating arch motif, cubist influence, unique window arrangements, and lack of ornamentation. The combination of stylistic elements creates a distinctive architectural style which Gill has become known for. The resource expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works and retains an excellent level of integrity. 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 garage built outside 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

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