



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 15, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-050

HEARING DATE: October 29, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1**

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

APPLICANT: Justin and Sarah Jones represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 5471 Madison Ave, College Area Community, Council District 9  
APN 466-571-27-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1 located at 5471 Madison Ave as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1 located at 5471 Madison Ave as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criterion C. The designation includes the detached garage and enclosed eastern patio. The designation excludes a 1964 addition on the south façade of the main house and the undated addition to the south façade of the detached garage. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Spanish Eclectic and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1931 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical stucco exterior; both a low-pitched cross gable roof covered in red mission tiles and a parapet roof; minimal eave overhang with exposed wood rafters; walled-in courtyard; clay attic vents; an arched focal window; and wooded casement and double hung windows.

### 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 building is a one-story single-family residence that on the corner of Madison Ave and 55<sup>th</sup> St.

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 Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ernest and Thelma McGowan, who constructed the house as a speculation house.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C, 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 subject resource is a Spanish Eclectic one-story single-family residence with a detached garage. Constructed in 1931, the resource features an asymmetrical stucco exterior with brown painted, wood casement and double hung windows, and a low-pitched roof that is covered in red mission tiles and minimal eave overhang with brown painted rafters, and a parapet roof in the back.

The front façade faces north along Madison Avenue from which a red painted (type) curved walkway leads up to the entrance. Centered on this facade is the entry, which is made up of a small, red painted concrete porch with two steps that is nestled between a small lantern and a black painted, metal railing on the left side and the front most gable of a double gable wing on its right side. The front door is made of painted wood, vertical planks with a small glass light covered by an iron grill in the top left corner. To the left is a large three-lite, double casement window with the original wood shutters painted brown. At the top of the both gables are rectangular clay vents. To the left is the side of a crossed gabled roof covered wing that showcases a stucco covered chimney with a decorative curved shoulder, and a three-lite double casement window that matches the one on the right side of this façade.

The west façade faces a neighboring property and features the transition from the tile covered roof to the parapet roof. Beneath the side gable roof is a two-lite double hung window with ogee lugs and a smaller square opening that has been infilled and stuccoes over, though its casing and sill are still visible. Beneath the parapet roof are two sets of round tile canales and a medium sized window and a small window infilled and with the casing and sill still visible. Further down is three one-over-one double hung windows with ogee lugs. The first two are the same size and the third is smaller than both. While the windows on this façade vary in sizes, they are all set at the same header height. Past these windows is the back-façade addition's west side which is a uninterrupted stucco wall with a parapet roof with an aluminum cap. The covers all three sides of the addition.

From left to right, the south façade features the back of the addition with a two light aluminum-clad slider window, a pergola attached to the additions' east façade and the detached garage's back façade. The back of the center of original house which is made of a parapet roof, a small aluminum-clad one-over-one double hung window and a medium sized wood one-over-one double hung window with ogee lugs. The right most portion of the south face is covered by a sloping side gable covered in mission red tiles and the wall below is composed of uninterrupted stucco. A brick floored patio exists between the garage and left most part of the south façade. A red painted, concrete

paved courtyard exists between the right most part of the south façade and the east façade of the house, and the north façade of the garage. It is enclosed on the street side of the east facade by a stucco wall that connects the house to the detached garage.

North of the courtyard is a gable end wing that is topped with Mission red tiles and a rectangular clay vent below the apex of the gable roof. The wall below features a large, single lite parabolic window. To the left is the center of the main house that features a parapet roof and two sets of round tile canals. Set in the wall is a wooden side entry door with a 9-lite pattern on its top half, and a metal storm door between it the exterior. The door is flanked by two narrow wood windows with a vertical 4-lite pattern. The portion of the courtyard in front of this wall is a three-step high patio with black painted, iron handrails lining the edges. The southernmost portion of the east facade of the house is the addition behind the detached garage. It features the parapet roof with an aluminum cap, an infilled doorway marked by a score line, and narrow 2-lit aluminum-clad horizontal sliding window.

The detached garage entrance faces 55<sup>th</sup> Street on the east façade. The entrance is split into two one car entrances with doors made of brown painted, vertically placed wood. A small shed roof is above the entrance while a parapet roof covers the majority of the structure. A brown painted, rounded wood door to the right of the garage serves as the entrance to the enclosed courtyard. Along the north façade is a decorative fountain with octagon shaped ceramics of various colors forming an arch on the garage wall. To its right is a rectangular doorway to get into the garage. The west façade features a 2-lite, aluminum framed horizontal window that looks out on the back yard, and the south façade features a small undated addition with a shed roof cover in asphalt shingles.

Several modifications have been made to the property since it's 1931 date of construction. Based on historical aerials, the garage's west façade addition was added prior to 1964, when the bedroom was added to the house. By 1985 security doors and the patio trellis were added, the original sliding door was sealed, and many of the original wood double-hung windows were replaced along the east, west and south facades with aluminum. In 1990 the roof was repaired by reusing its original straight barrel mission tiles. The vertical windows that flank the side door and the window above the kitchen sink were also replaced. By 2004 the backyard gate, patio gate, back-porch, the back door and the garage's side door and all been replaced. In 2019 the owners worked with Historical Resources staff to replace seven historically inappropriate windows. All the double hung windows were replaced with wood framed, one-over-one windows with laminated glass and ogee lugs, and two fixed windows were replaced with wood framed, 4-light, single pane, laminated glass windows. The window modifications were determined to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Black painted metal rails were added to the front entry and were made to look like wrought iron. A doorway was infilled on the rear addition with score line to mark its previous existence. Thorough out the years the landscape has been altered, most recently with a desert esthetic. These modifications do not significantly impair the integrity of the design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

The Spanish Eclectic 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 1920's and early 1930's before rapidly declining in the 1940's. 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 principle windows. Common decorative details are patterned tiles, carved stonework, large focal windows, wooden or iron window grilles, decorative vents and balconies.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including an asymmetrical stucco asymmetrical exterior; both a low-pitched cross gable roof covered in red mission tiles and a parapet roof; minimal eave overhang with exposed wood rafters; walled-in courtyard; clay attic vents; an arched focal window; and wooded casement and double hung windows. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

#### 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 Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1 located at 5471 Madison Ave be designated with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style. The designation includes the detached garage and enclosed eastern patio. The designation excludes a 1964 addition on the south façade of the main house and the undated addition to the south façade of the detached garage.



Megan Bacik  
Junior Planner

MB/ss



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner  
Development Services Department

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 10/29/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/29/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1 (owned by Justin and Sarah Jones, 5471 Madison Avenue, San Diego, CA 92115) located at **5471 Madison Avenue, San Diego, CA 92115**, APN: **466-571-27-00**, further described as LOT 27 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 Ernest and Thelma McGowan Spec House #1 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1931 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical stucco exterior; both a low-pitched cross gable roof covered in red mission tiles and a parapet roof; minimal eave overhang with exposed wood rafters; walled-in courtyard; clay attic vents; an arched focal window; and wooded casement and double hung windows. 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 include the detached garage and enclosed eastern patio.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 1964 addition on the south façade of the main house and the undated addition to the south façade of the detached garage.

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney