



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 13, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-041

HEARING DATE: July 27, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House**

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

APPLICANT: Fick-Nguyen Family Trust represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1965 Sunset Boulevard, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 443-580-02-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1965 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1965 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance and the detached garage. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1912 period of significance. Specifically, the resource displays a low-pitched roof with wide, unenclosed eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative horizontal beams; triangular knee braces; a full width porch with square columns; a wood shingle exterior with stucco beneath; and wood frame windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder, Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1912 design. Specifically, the house is notable as an example of Melhorn's early work in San Diego when he designed predominantly in the Craftsman style.

### 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 contains a two-story Craftsman style home constructed in 1912.

The property was identified in 2016 Uptown Community Plan Update and given a Status Code of 5D3, "appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Henry and Lavnia Nelson, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Martin V. Melhorn, a Master Builder.

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., 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 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.*

Research into the history of the property at 1965 Sunset Boulevard did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Uptown's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 1965 Sunset Boulevard did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion B.

*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 two-story, single family residence constructed in 1912 in the Craftsman style. The house was built in a common form known as American Foursquare. Foursquare houses such as this generally feature a two-story, boxy design with hipped roof. The front yard features a mature Blue Atlas Cedar tree which is believed to be between 60 and 80 years old. Because the tree is not a part of the original landscaping of the property staff has not included it within this designation. A detached garage is located on the alley behind the house. It is unclear if the garage is original or has been modified and is therefore excluded from this designation. The structure is covered with a low pitched, hipped roof with concrete tiles and a wide eave overhang. Stucco cladding in a heavy dash texture is present on the first floor while the exterior of the second floor is covered with wood shingles. The house features a full width, one-story front porch with scored

concrete floor and hipped roof. A brick chimney with stucco on the lower portion is present on one of the side facades. On the second floor of the rear of the home is a sunroom original to the house. A modern addition and deck are also present on the rear façade.

The property exhibits many of the details characteristic of the Craftsman style. These include the square porch columns, prominently featured triangular knee braces, unenclosed eaves, exposed rafter tails and decorative horizontal support beams. Wooden windows in a variety of styles and sizes are present throughout the home. Of note is the nine-over-one lite pattern of the fixed windows on the main façade.

Several modifications have been made to the home since its construction in 1912. The roof of the sunroom on the rear façade was changed from a flat roof to a gable roof at an unknown date. This is evident from a 1927 aerial view of the property portraying the roof as flat. A one-story rear addition completed in 1996 spans the entire width of the rear façade. This addition likely replaced the covered porch that can be seen in the 1927 aerial photo. Additionally, a previous owner applied concrete tiles to the roof. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials or feeling.

The American Foursquare is a house shape that was popular between 1890 and 1930. Born out of the Arts and Crafts movement, the simple structure of the Foursquare was a response to the overly ornate and revival styles of the Victorian era. Foursquare houses are characterized by a square floor plan, hipped roof, centered dormer, large porch and two-story design. The interior features four rooms on both the first and second floors without a central hall. This common vernacular form can be found in a variety of styles including Prairie, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical and Mission Revival. Because the term Foursquare refers to the shape of a house not the style, staff is not recommending the subject property as an example of an American Foursquare.

With origins in the British Arts and Crafts movement, born in response to the overly ornate Victorian aesthetic and the highly mechanized Industrial Revolution, Craftsman style architecture was popular in the United States largely between 1905 and 1930. Early examples by Greene and Greene were highly publicized in magazines, thus familiarizing the rest of the nation with the style. As a result, a flood of pattern books appeared, offering plans for Craftsman bungalows. One story vernacular examples are often called simply bungalows. Character defining features of Craftsman architecture include a low-pitched, gabled roof with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; exposed roof rafters; decorative beams or braces; full or partial-width porches supported by tapered columns or pedestals; decorative attic vents; wood or stucco cladding; and wood frame and sash windows in fixed, double hung and casement varieties.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Craftsman style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a low-pitched roof with wide, unenclosed eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative horizontal beams; triangular knee braces; a full width porch with square columns; a wood shingle exterior with stucco beneath; and wood frame windows. 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.*

Martin V. Melhorn was born in Indiana in 1866. He lived and worked in Falls City, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado before moving to San Diego in 1911 with his wife, Alberta, and their son William. That same year, Melhorn formed the Bay City Construction Company with John J. Wahrenberger and John C. Rice as his partners. Bay City Construction lasted until 1916 and during this time Melhorn and Wahrenberger both predominantly designed in the Craftsman and Arts & Crafts styles. Melhorn established another business, the Alberta Security Company, in 1913 which focused primarily on the financial aspects of building construction. Melhorn and his affiliates were prolific builders in the City of San Diego – particularly in the areas of Mission Hills, Hillcrest, University Heights, North Park and South Park – and numerous Melhorn-built homes have been listed on the San Diego Register. Melhorn’s status as a Master Builder was established in 2003 with the designation of the Neil Brown/Martin V. Melhorn House at 4195 Palmetto Way (HRB Site #583).

The subject property was constructed in 1912 during a period in which Melhorn mostly designed in the Craftsman and Arts & Crafts styles. His style would later become more varied as he began to experiment in the Prairie, Colonial Revival, and Spanish Eclectic styles. 1965 Sunset Boulevard is an early example of Melhorn’s work in the Craftsman style and illustrates his skill for elegant design and quality constructions.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Melhorn’s original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as an example of Melhorn’s early work in San Diego when he designed predominantly in the Craftsman style. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn.

*CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 1965 Sunset Boulevard has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

*CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

The property at 1965 Sunset Boulevard is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

#### 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

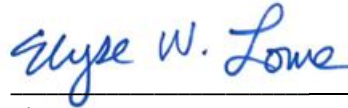
site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1965 Sunset Boulevard be designated with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance and the detached garage.



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Suzanne Segur  
Assistant Planner



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Elyse W. Lowe  
Deputy Director  
Development Services Department

SS/el

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 7/27/2017

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/27/2017, to consider the historical designation of the **Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House** (owned by Fick-Nguyen Family Trust 05-12-16, 1965 Sunset Blvd., San Diego, CA 92103) located at **1965 Sunset Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-580-02-00**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 2 W 1/2 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 Henry and Lavnia Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn House 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 Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1912 period of significance. Specifically, the resource displays a low-pitched roof with wide, unenclosed eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative horizontal beams; triangular knee braces; a full width porch with square columns; a wood shingle exterior with stucco beneath; and wood frame windows. 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 Builder, Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1912 design. Specifically, the house is notable as an example of Melhorn's early work in San Diego when he designed predominantly in 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 rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance and 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: N/A

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

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
CORRINE NEUFFER,  
Deputy City Attorney