



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 14, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-053

HEARING DATE: September 28, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Joel Brown Spec House #2**

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

APPLICANT: Burkhart/Mazzola Family Trust represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 4127 Lark Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APN 443-483-02-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Joel Brown Spec House #2 located at 4127 Lark Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Joel Brown Spec House #2 located at 4127 Lark Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1916 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the flat-roofed two-story addition at the rear, northeast corner of the building and the detached two-story garage and game room located at the southeast corner of the property. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Prairie style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1916 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a low-pitched hipped roof form with wide enclosed eaves, decorative brackets and cornice; prominent front porch with large square support columns and balcony with matching wide eave detailing; medium sand finish stucco cladding and pronounced brick wainscoting; and abundant fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood double hung windows appearing typically in groups of two or three.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Joel Brown and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1916 design. Specifically, the resource was built on speculation in conjunction with a similarly designed neighboring property to the north, demonstrating a confidence and matured taste in the Prairie style brought to a high-end residential building, and expressing a quality of craftsmanship seen in his other known works.

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 resource is a two-story Prairie style single-family residence built in 1916 on the east side of Lark Street, just south of West Montecito Way in the Arnold & Choate's Addition of the Uptown Community.

The property was identified as a minimally altered Prairie style residence in the 2016 Uptown Survey, and given a Status Code of 5D3, "*Appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation though survey evaluation.*"

The historic name of the resource, the Joel Brown Spec House #2 has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Joel Brown, a Master Architect who constructed the house as a speculation house.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, 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 subject resource is a two-story single-family residence built in 1916 in the Prairie style. The building is of standard wood frame construction on a concrete foundation, sited on a west-facing, flat rectangular lot near the corner of Lark Street and West Montecito Way. The building has an irregular plan form and asymmetrical primary façade. A most prominent feature is the low-pitch, hipped roof with very wide boxed eaves and long decorative brackets underlined by a decorative stucco cornice, imparting a very strong horizontal emphasis.

The recessed primary entry is sheltered by partial-width front porch with massive square columns and balcony above located near the center of the primary façade. The building is clad in a historically appropriate medium sand finish stucco which replaced the non-historic cementitious coating that had been applied sometime in the 1970s or 1980s. Rough wire-cut, running bond brick wainscoting wraps the building at the ground floor, awarding the structure greater massing and horizontality. Fenestration is abundant and consists generally of multi-light wood double hung windows appearing typically in groups of two or three.

The Prairie style originated in Chicago and was popular primarily in the Midwest for the early part of the 20th century. An indigenous American style, the Prairie School shared the ideals of the British Arts and Crafts movement and was popularized by architects including Frank Lloyd Wright, George Maher and others. Character defining features of Prairie style architecture include low-pitched, usually hipped roofs, wide overhanging eaves, and façade detailing emphasizing horizontal lines. Pattern books and popular magazines spread vernacular examples widely to suburbs throughout the country, with most being built between 1905 and 1915.

Alterations to the structure occurred in 1931, including a flat-roofed two-story addition at the rear, northeast corner of the structure. The 1931 two-story addition at the northeast corner is not highly visible from the public view shed, and is readily identified as an addition by its distinct flat roof with parapet.

A rehabilitation project (circa 2016) reviewed by HRB staff significantly improved the building's integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. Some of the work involved the removal of the non-historic exterior cladding, and restoration of previously modified elements at the primary façade, including restoring the originally open front porch and balcony, and restoring the main entry door and tripartite feature window to their original locations. The improvements of the most recent rehabilitation project (2015-2017) include a small bump-out at the first floor rear elevation, minor modification to rear fenestration and a new two-story garage with game room built in place of the original, previously modified detached garage. The new garage structure also includes a connecting bridge to the main house. The new garage structure does not overwhelm the main house structure visually, and is compatible yet differentiated from the original construction, particularly by the single light fenestration and simplified eave brackets.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Prairie style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a low-pitched hipped roof form with wide enclosed eaves, decorative brackets and cornice; prominent front porch with large support columns and balcony with matching wide eave detailing; medium sand finish stucco cladding and pronounced brick wainscoting; and abundant fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood double hung windows appearing typically in groups of two or three. 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.

Joel L. Brown was born in Indiana in 1870. In the late 1890s and until around 1906-1908, Brown worked for the Indiana Architecture firms of Powers & Kibele and Brown & Houck, and designed such locally prominent buildings as the Hartford City Public Library and the Hartford City High School built between 1902-1904. Brown moved to San Diego with his wife Edith between 1908 and 1909 and quickly became a prominent building contractor and architect. As detailed in the historic report, Brown was responsible for the development of a number of properties throughout San Diego, particularly in Mission Hills. His designs were primarily high-quality residences in the Craftsman and Prairie styles.

Joel Brown's status as a Master Architect was established with the 2003 designation of HRB Site #593 at 2124 Sunset Boulevard under Criterion D. Currently there are five properties individually listed on the local register that are attributed to Joel Brown:

- The Kirkland Apartments built in 1912 at 2309 5th Avenue (HRB Site #483)
- The J. L. Brown Spec House built in 1912 at 2858 Evergreen Street (HRB Site #575)
- The Katherine H. Wagenhals/Joel Brown House built in 1913 at 2124 Sunset Boulevard (HRB Site #593)
- The Joel L. and Edith M. Brown House built in 1916 at 4141 Lark Street (HRB Site #777)
- The Clara Champlin House built in 1912 at 1445 Granada Avenue (HRB Site #1255)

The subject resource was designed and built on speculation by Brown concurrently with the neighboring structure to the north, 4141 Lark Street (HRB Site #777). As shown in the 1917 San

Diego Union article provided in the report, the property was prominently displayed as a modern "House of Quality" available for sale in the Arnold & Choate's neighborhood. The building shares a quality of design and craftsmanship seen in Brown's other known works that are historically designated. Brown's distinctive Prairie style is readily conveyed in the building's massing, details, and decorative features with horizontal emphasis.

Significance Statement: The subject resource reflects the notable work of Master Architect Joel Brown, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the construction of many quality works in the City, some of which have been historically designated. Specifically, the resource was built on speculation in conjunction with a similarly designed neighboring property to the north, demonstrating a confidence and matured taste in the Prairie style brought to a high-end residential building, and expressing a quality of craftsmanship seen in his other known works. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject resource 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 Joel Brown Spec House #2 located at 4127 Lark Street be designated with a period of significance of 1916 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Prairie style; and Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Joel Brown. The designation excludes the flat-roofed two-story addition at the rear, northeast corner of the building and the detached two-story garage and game room located at the southeast corner of the property.



Camille Pekarek
Associate Planner



Elyse W. Lowe
Deputy Director
Development Services Department

CP/sf/el

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/28/2017

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/28/2017, to consider the historical designation of the **Joel Brown Spec House #2** (owned by Burkhart/Mazzola Family Trust 01-09-07, 4127 Lark Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **4127 Lark Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-483-02-00**, further described as BLK 39 LOTS 5 THRU 7 S 1/2 LOT 4 & ALL 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 Joel Brown Spec House #2 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 Prairie style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1916 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a low-pitched hipped roof form with wide enclosed eaves, decorative brackets and cornice; prominent front porch with large square support columns and balcony with matching wide eave detailing; medium sand finish stucco cladding and pronounced brick wainscoting; and abundant fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood double hung windows appearing typically in groups of two or three. 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 Joel Brown and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1916 design. Specifically, the resource was built on speculation in conjunction with a similarly designed neighboring property to the north, demonstrating a confidence and matured taste in the Prairie style brought to a high-end residential building, and expressing a quality of craftsmanship seen in his other known works. 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 flat-roofed two-story addition at the rear, northeast corner of the building and the detached two-story garage and game room located at the southeast corner of the property.

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