

October 10, 2017

To the members of the San Diego Historic Resources Board,

We are proud home-owners in the proposed South Park Historic District who have a strong vested interest in the community and its character. This letter outlines some considerations regarding the proposed designation by the Board.

The advantages provided to support the historic designation include increased property values and the Mills Act [1] [2]. The former is speculative, as there is no consensus or guarantee whether property values will increase, nor is there a metric to evaluate if property value increases are attributable to historic designations. Property values in the area have been steadily increasing without a historic designation. Furthermore, the Mills Act is voluntary and is already available to historic homes in South Park [3], as evidenced by the 34 homes in the proposed district that already have Mills Act protection [4]. For those homes, the trade-off is definite; in exchange for restrictions and additional permitting requirements, home-owners receive a significant reduction in their property tax. No such definitive trade-off is provided with the proposed involuntary historic district designation. Overall, the advantages are speculative or not applicable.

The disadvantages, however, are clear. Disadvantages include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Through the more rigorous and expensive permitting and review process, the designation discourages improvements such as the installation of energy efficient windows, which is in contrast to the City's energy efficiency and sustainability goals [5].
- It disincentivizes young families from staying or moving into the area, thereby decreasing age diversity. Young families are more likely to purchase "fixer uppers," and increase the property value through "sweat equity." Additional permitting requirements that result in increased costs present an undue financial burden for young families.

While we understand that improvements are still possible under the designation, such improvements are restricted and require additional review at the expense of the homeowner. Overall, the proposed historic district designation presents an undue hardship on homeowners who want to make reasonable and responsible improvements to their property.

Finally, there is no pressing need for the proposed designation. The South Park neighborhood is not in jeopardy of losing its charm, character, culture, or aesthetic value. Property values have consistently increased without a historic designation, and the neighborhood sees far more voluntary restoration projects than new or unsightly construction from its residents. The present condition is just not in need of the oversight that comes with a formal, involuntary historic district designation.

Due to the undue financial burden, the involuntary nature of the designation, and lack of pressing need, we conclude that a historic designation in South Park is not currently in the community's best interest. We ask the members of the Historic Resources Board not to make this designation at this time.

Sincerely,

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- [1] "Historic District Designation Fact Sheet," City of San Diego Planning Department Historic Preservation Planning Section, 19 May 2017. [Online]. Available:  
[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic\\_district\\_designation\\_fact\\_sheet\\_20170519.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/historic_district_designation_fact_sheet_20170519.pdf). [Accessed 10 October 2017].
- [2] K. Stanco, City of San Diego Planning Department, 12 August 2017. [Online]. Available:  
[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/south\\_park\\_property\\_owner\\_workshop.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/south_park_property_owner_workshop.pdf). [Accessed 10 October 2017].
- [3] "Mills Act Program for Historically Designated Properties," City of San Diego Development Services Department, July 2015. [Online]. Available:  
[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy//planning/programs/historical/pdf/2015/millsact\\_handout201507.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy//planning/programs/historical/pdf/2015/millsact_handout201507.pdf). [Accessed 10 October 2017].
- [4] "California Historic Resources Inventory Database," [Online]. Available:  
<http://sandiego.cfwebtools.com/search.cfm?display=search>. [Accessed 10 October 2017].
- [5] "City of San Diego Climate Action Plan," The City of San Diego, December 2015. [Online]. Available:  
[https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/final\\_december\\_2015\\_cap.pdf](https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/final_december_2015_cap.pdf). [Accessed 10 October 2017].