



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 8, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-016

HEARING DATE: March 22, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – William F. Riley Spec House #1**

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

APPLICANT: Linda B Parker Trust

LOCATION: 4118 Middlesex Drive, 92116, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9
APN 440-191-06-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the William F. Riley Spec House #1 located at 4118 Middlesex Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the William F. Riley Spec House #1 located at 4118 Middlesex Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1926 under HRB Criterion A. The designation excludes the enclosed rear porch and the 2010 rear addition. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is a special element of Kensington Height's development and the first house constructed in the subdivision and retains integrity to its 1926 period of significance. Specifically, the resource represents the development of the Kensington Height's neighborhood which was designed to appeal to affluent buyers and had a design review process and provided marketed finished products.

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 house is located within the Kensington Height's neighborhood which is predominantly single family.

The property was identified in the Greater Mid-City San Diego Preservation Strategy Survey and given a Status Code of 5D2, "Contributor to a district that is eligible for location listing or designation."

The historic name of the resource, the William F. Riley Spec House #1 has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of William Riley, who constructed the house as a speculation house.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by the property owner which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C, and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion A but not under HRB Criteria C and D. 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.

George Forbes purchased 113 acres of Mission Valley rim property in 1925 to create the Kensington Heights subdivision. The development of Kensington Heights was carried out under the personal direction of Harrison R. Baker, Chairman of the Subdividers and Homebuilders Division of the California Real Estate Association and a member of the Subdividers Division of the National Association. The project was not an experiment, but involved the application of policies previously employed successfully in extensive developments in the City of Pasadena. In Pasadena, the firm of Davis-Baker developed some twenty subdivisions, with over nine hundred homes. By 1930, one family in every thirty in Pasadena lived on a lot developed by the firm. The new development was to be an architecturally-supervised community and an exclusive, residential tract of modern and beautiful homes that would become a high-class residential park. With its proximity to the new State College and Herbert Hoover High School, as well as other nearby schools, the location was ideal for an "investment-quality" tract that rivaled exclusive communities such as Beverly Hills and the Oak Knoll section of Pasadena.

Davis-Baker ran weekly ads and promotions in the Sunday sections of the San Diego Union throughout 1926 and 1927 which featured photos of model homes. They used the promotions to showcase houses to convince investors and prospective homeowners to visit Kensington Heights to view the homes' modern amenities in this architecturally controlled community. The subdivision's Architectural Review Board was staffed by the firm of Requa and Jackson. To ensure that their standards were met, plans were first submitted to them and specific direction was provided on exterior and interior changes.

William F. Riley was selected by George Forbes (the Kensington Heights landowner), Davis-Baker (the developers) and Richard Requa (the noted architect) to build this home and four others, including the first two model homes in Kensington Heights.

Riley purchase his first lot in this subdivision on January 4, 1926. By May 2, 1926, the Sunday San Diego Union reported that construction had begun on a home on this property; the first dwelling in the new Kensington Heights tract. Riley went on to purchase and build on four additional lots within Kensington.

Significance Statement: The resource reflects a special element of Kensington Heights' historical, cultural, social and economic development and retains integrity to the 1926 period of significance. The resource represents the development of the Kensington Heights neighborhood which was designed to appeal to affluent buyers, had a design review process and provided marketed finished products. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

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.*

Constructed in 1926 in the Tudor Revival style, the house is in the multiple-façade gables sub-style. The house features two forward-facing gables. The front entrance is centrally located in the subordinate gable to the right of the stuccoed and stepped chimney. The front entrance is recessed with an arch that has a slight peak giving it a gothic flair. Fenestration consists of wood multi-pane casement windows. Decorative detailing is limited to a stepped cornice at the gable end. A detached rear yard garage is located at the back of the property and accessed via a ribbon driveway.

Popular in the 1920s and 1930s, Tudor Revival architecture is loosely based on a variety of late Medieval English styles and influences, but unlike some English prototypes, Tudor Revival style houses exhibit steeply pitched gable roofs that dominate the facades. Other character defining features include decorative half-timbering; tall, narrow windows, usually appearing in multiple groups and with multi-pane glazing; massive chimneys, sometimes with decorative chimney pots; entry porches with round or Tudor arches; and gable dormers. Relatively uncommon before World War I, widespread adoption of masonry veneering techniques in the 1920s accompanied a dramatic rise in the style's popularity as even the most modest examples began to closely mimic the brick and stone veneers of their English prototypes. Tudor Revival style houses usually include the use of stucco as well as wood cladding and brick or stone veneer, depending upon the subtype.

There have been a number of modifications to the property. Based on a site visit, it appears that the house has been re-stuccoed in a number of spots which has altered the original texture. There appear to be several spots where the stucco texture appeared to be more of a sand finish. As noted in the nomination report, a front façade window to the left of the front entrance was cut down in the 1960s. Also on the front façade, it appears that the paneling in the front door was removed and replaced with glass. At the rear of the property, a porch was enclosed to accommodate a sewing room in 1958 and in 2010 a rear addition was added to the house. At an unknown time, a front walk way was added to access the front door and the ribbon driveway was changed from concrete to pavers. Due to these modifications, staff does not recommend 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.*

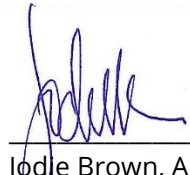
The subject property at 4118 Middlesex Drive was built by William F. Riley. Riley has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation 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 William F. Riley Spec House #1 located at 4118 Middlesex Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1926 under HRB Criterion A as a special element of Kensington Height's development and the first house constructed in the subdivision. The designation excludes the enclosed rear porch and the 2010 rear addition.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Sonnier Francisco
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison

JB/sf

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 3/22/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/22/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **William F. Riley Spec House #1** (owned by Linda B Parker Trust 09-05-91, 4118 Middlesex Drive, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4118 Middlesex Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **440-191-06-00**, further described as BLK 9 LOT 7 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 William F. Riley Spec House #1 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of Kensington Height's development and the first house constructed in the subdivision and retains integrity to its 1926 period of significance. Specifically, the resource represents the development of the Kensington Height's neighborhood which was designed to appeal to affluent buyers and had a design review process and provided marketed finished products. 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 enclosed rear porch and the 2010 rear addition.

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: _____
JEREMY JUNG,
Deputy City Attorney