



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 13, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-029

HEARING DATE: August 27, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM 12 – Elizabeth Mills Spec House #1**

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

APPLICANT: Maria Monfort Revocable Trust represented by Legacy 106, Inc

LOCATION: 4397 Piedmont Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 531-052-01-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of Elizabeth Mills Spec House #1 located at 4397 Piedmont Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Elizabeth Mills Spec House #1 located at 4397 Piedmont Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1929 under HRB C. The designation excludes the 2018 rear addition along the East Facade of a first-floor bay window and a second floor balcony, and includes the staircase and railing inside the entryway turret. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1929 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a two story symmetrical front facade with a large turret tower flanked by balconies; arched colonnades and wood windows; stucco exterior; clay tile conical and gable roofs with minimal eaves. The decorative finishing details include wooden rafter tails on the front façade turret and iron wrought railings; and a highly decorated stairway on the interior with multi-colored tiles and iron railing.

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 two story single-family residence built in 1928 in the Spanish Eclectic style. The house is located on a corner lot at Piedmont Drive and Cornish Drive in Sunset Cliffs neighborhood of the Peninsula Community.

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

ANALYSIS

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

Constructed in 1929, the subject resource was designed in the Spanish Eclectic style as a U-shaped, two story single-family home with a detached garage, and features gable and conical roofs with regularly laid clay tile, minimal eave overhang and a stucco exterior. On the gable ends of the south, west and east facades are singular arched rectangular attic vents.

The front façade is symmetrical with centered, large turret tower. At the tower's base is the original scored front walkway leading up to the stairs at the inset flared front entry door. Above it the cantilevered tower upper level is supported by decorative wooden rafter tails. On the lower level the tower is flanked by pairs of two arching wooden dual casement windows with an eight lite pattern. On the upper level the turret tower has four arching wooden fixed windows with an eight lite pattern. On either side are inset, covered balconies with plank style wooden balustrade in the open arches along the front and side facades.

On the lower west façade are three fixed wood windows. On the upper level are two arching wooden dual casement windows with a ten lite pattern between the front and back balconies. The back balcony is uncovered and has plank style wooden balustrade to match the front balconies. A half wall connects the house to the garage and encloses the raised patio area.

On the east façade the upper lever cantilevers over the lower level as the home transitions from two stories to a one story wing. There are two groupings of rectangular eight lite casement windows and a smaller four lite window behind them on the second story, while on the first floor there are two groupings of rectangular eight lite casement windows near the front, and a double hung window and a six lite rectangular window behind the back entry. Continuing to the South facade is the rear balcony addition with stucco wall topped with glass. Along the wall is a single door entrance and a double hung window. The lower level continues out and is topped with a gable clay tile roof. On the south facing side is a rectangular, six lite dual casement window. On the rectangular bay window addition are matching double hung windows on the short sides and two fixed square windows facing the courtyard. Left of the bay window addition is recessed single door entry with a cement staircase and with iron rails leading up to it. Further left is a dual casement window with a single lite pattern above a set of stairs leading downwards to below the south facing bay window with a fix

central window flanked by 10 lite pattern dual casement windows. Directly above is a central inset three-part window with a single light fixed window flanked by double sets of rectangular eight light casement windows. On the street side extending wing's lower level are two paired fixed windows facing south, and on the courtyard side is single door entrance with one step below. Above the lower level is the uncovered balcony with a plank style wooden balustrade. The wall has a center stucco fireplace with a French door entrance on the left and single door entrance on the right. A multi-level courtyard connects the house to the top of the detached garage, with a stair way leading the rounded door in the wall to exit to the Cornish Drive side.

Within the front façade's large turret tower is an original spiral staircase. It features a decorative iron railing and brown tiles on the treads. On the risers is the same brown tiles with either pairs of two or three colorful tiles with eight different patterns in total going up the stairs in order. The staircase and railing embody the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style and are included in the designation.

Modifications appear to be limited to the rear of the building. In 2018 historical resources staff approved the re-stuccoing of the resource, a first-floor bay window and second floor balcony addition, and the removal of non-historic balcony and garage top terrace enclosures. These modifications were determined to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards. The garage door has also been replaced with a modern update. The modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

Following the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition, the romantic ideal of Spanish and Latin American architecture was revived. What resulted was the Spanish Eclectic style, which was the predominant style in Southern California between 1915 and 1940, significantly altering the architectural landscape of the region. The style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. These may be of Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, or Renaissance inspirations, and unusually rich and varied series of decorative precedents. The style employed a variety of floor plans and roof forms, such as, gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include stucco exterior wall surfaces, Mission and Spanish terra cotta clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

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 a two story symmetrical front facade with a large turret tower flanked by balconies; arched colonnades and wood windows; stucco exterior; clay tile conical and gable roofs with minimal eaves. The decorative finishing details include wooden rafter tails on the front façade turret; iron wrought railings; and a highly decorated stairway on the interior with multi-colored tiles and iron railing. 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 Elizabeth Mills Spec House #1 located at 4397 Piedmont Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1929 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style. The designation excludes the 2018 rear addition along the East Facade of a first-floor bay window and a second floor balcony, and includes the staircase and railing inside the entryway turret.



Megan Bacik
Junior Planner



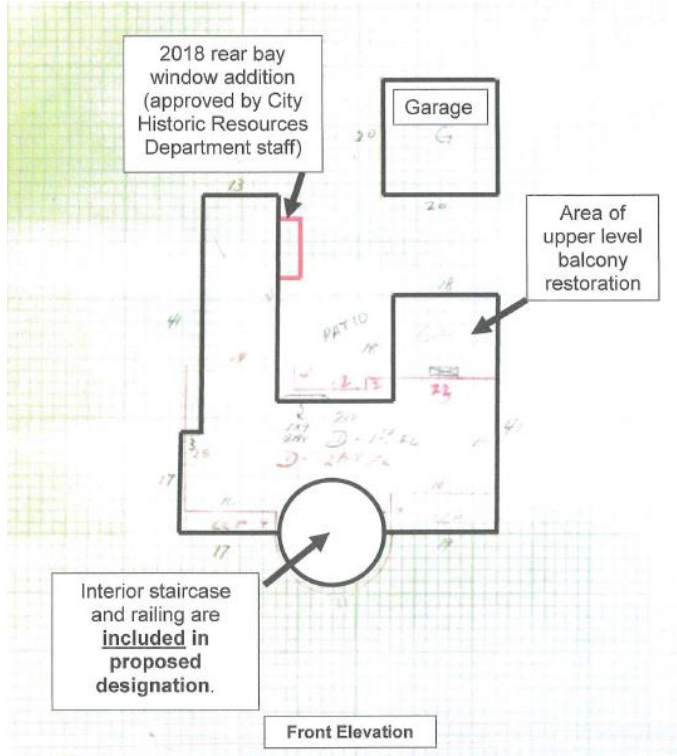
Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

MB/ss

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Interior staircase and railing proposed for designation
3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

Site Plan with Footprint Staircase Included In Proposed Designation



RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 8/27/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/23/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Elizabeth Mills Spec House #1 located at **4397 Piedmont Drive, San Diego, CA 92107**, APN: **531-052-01-00**, further described as BLK R LOT 1 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 Elizabeth Mills 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 Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1929 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a two story symmetrical front facade with a large turret tower flanked by balconies; arched colonnades and wood windows; stucco exterior; clay tile conical and gable roofs with minimal eaves. The decorative finishing details include wooden rafter tails on the front façade turret and iron wrought railings; and a highly decorated stairway on the interior with multi-colored tiles and iron railing. 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 staircase and railing inside the entryway turret

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the rear addition along the East Facade of a first-floor bay window and a second floor balcony

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