



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 10, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-047

HEARING DATE: September 24, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #12 – Mission Hills Branch Public Library**

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

APPLICANT: Mission Hills Heritage; represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 925 W. Washington Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APNs 444-611-0100, 444-611-0200, 444-611-0300

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Mission Hills Branch Public Library located at 925 W Washington Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Mission Hills Branch Public Library located at 925 W. Washington Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1961 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the shed addition on the west façade of the building constructed at an unknown date. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Contemporary style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits including angular massing, upswept shed roof with wide overhanging eaves, stucco and stacked brick cladding, and large aluminum framed windows.

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 is located at the corner of W. Washington and Hawk Streets and consists of a one-story commercial building and parking lot.

The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey Report and given a Status Code of 5S3, "appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Mission Hills Branch Public Library, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the specific name placed on the building upon construction.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report 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.

The subject resource is a one-story library building constructed in 1961 in the Contemporary style. The building is generally rectangular in shape and clad in a smooth stucco with its main façade on West Washington Street. Most of the roof is flat with a wide eave overhang; however, the front façade exhibits a dramatic upswept shed roof. The building displays minimal architectural detailing except on the front façade which features a stacked brick wall that extends above the roofline and originally displayed stylized signage for the library. Fenestration includes large, aluminum framed windows on the front portion of the building with smaller windows on the sides.

The property has only had one known modification since its 1961 date of construction. At an unknown date a small shed style addition was added on the west façade. This modification does not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

Unlike earlier styles which are generally defined by exterior decorative details, the Contemporary style focused on interior spaces and their relation to the outdoors. Emphasis was placed on integrating the indoors with the outdoors by utilizing windows and exterior living areas such as balconies and courtyards. The style was popular in San Diego in the 1950's and 1960's largely because it could be easily adapted to hillside lots. Character defining features include strong roof forms with deep overhangs and exposed beams; large, aluminum framed windows; non-traditional exterior finishes including vertical wood siding, concrete block, stucco and flagstone; sun shades, screen or shadow block accents; broad masonry chimneys; and distinctive triangular, parabolic or arched forms, angular massing and courtyards or balconies. Other common features include asymmetrical facades, broad expanses of wall surfaces with integral patterns and recessed or obscured entrances. Contemporary commercial buildings often incorporate "eyebrow" overhangs, stylized signage, minimal architectural details and a horizontal orientation.

The HRRR identifies the resource as a good example of the Googie architectural style; however, staff disagrees. According to the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* both the Contemporary and Googie styles exhibit distinctive roof forms, large aluminum framed windows and a variety of exterior finishes but the concept behind the Googie style is very distinct. Googie, or Futurist architecture, which was influenced by the "Space Age," was intended to attract the consumer with bright colors and exaggerated forms; essentially for the building to serve as a billboard for passing automobiles. The subject resource does not evoke a connection with the "Space Age" and does not use an extreme appearance to attract consumers; therefore, staff is recommending designation as an example of the Contemporary style.

Significance Statement: The resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Contemporary style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including angular massing, upswept shed roof with wide overhanging eaves, stucco and stacked brick cladding, and large aluminum framed windows. 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 Mission Hills Branch Public Library located at 925 W. Washington Street be designated with a period of significance of 1961 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Contemporary style. The designation excludes the shed addition on the west façade of the building constructed at an unknown date.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

SS/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/24/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/24/2020, to consider the historical designation of the (owned by City of San Diego, 202 C Street, San Diego, CA 92101) located at **925 W Washington Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **444-611-03-00**, further described as BLK 66 LOTS 3 THRU 5 E 50 FT OF 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 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 Contemporary style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits including angular massing, upswept shed roof with wide overhanging eaves, stucco and stacked brick cladding, and large aluminum framed windows. 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 shed addition on the west façade of the building constructed at an unknown date.

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