



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 15, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-014

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of March 28, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – 4639 Alabama Street and 4641 Alabama Street**

APPLICANT: Martin/Edmund Family Trust represented by Johnson & Johnson

LOCATION: 4639 Alabama Street and 4641 Alabama Street, 92116, Greater North Park Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 4639 Alabama Street and 4641 Alabama Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 4639 Alabama Street and 4641 Alabama Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

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 consists of two structures: 4641 Alabama Street, a Tudor Revival house with matching detached garage as well as 4639 Alabama Street, a Craftsman Bungalow accessible by a service alley between Alabama and Mississippi Streets. The property is located in the University Heights Neighborhood within the Greater North Park Community.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Johnson & Johnson Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C. Staff finds that the site is not a significant historical resource under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity. 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.

The applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a resource that exemplifies special elements of the neighborhood's historical development by corresponding with the time frame of San Diego's development of suburban neighborhoods to accommodate the middle class. The report notes that the University Heights developed in two phases. The first phase of development occurred in the first part of the 20th century in response to the planning for a major university in the area which created The California State Normal School, a teaching college. The second phase of development in University Heights occurred in response to a population growth with new trolley lines and new suburban neighborhoods. In 1924, a San Diego Union article referred to the area to the north of Balboa Park as the fastest growing area in San Diego. The report claims that the subject houses at 4639 and 4641 Alabama Street correspond with this second phase of development. There is no documentation in the report to indicate that the subject property exemplifies special elements of the neighborhood's development to any extent beyond the date of construction. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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.

4639 Alabama Street

This one-story Craftsman Bungalow constructed circa 1923 is rectangular in shape, clad in narrow horizontal siding and features a low-pitched side gabled roof with wide eave overhangs. Vertical slat attic vents are present in both gables. The house is accessible through the back service alley between Alabama and Mississippi Streets. The house was constructed in 1923 by Elmer and Katherine Muhl who eventually relocated the structure to the back of the property to make way for the construction of 4641 Alabama Street in 1926. Fenestration has been replaced with single-hung vinyl windows in the original openings. The west façade features the primary entrance for the bungalow with a pair of windows flanking the entry door while the east façade features a secondary entrance made up of a modern replacement door flanked by a window on each side.

A number of significant modifications to this structure have altered its historic significance. These modifications include the replacement vinyl windows, the relocation of the house to the back of the property, and the replacement door on the east façade, all adversely impacting the structure's appearance and integrity. Due to the substantial loss of integrity, the circa 1923 house no longer maintains its Craftsman Bungalow style design and construction. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

4641 Alabama Street

This Tudor Revival style home and complimentary detached garage were constructed in 1926 by Sydney Scott, a craftsman from Northern Ireland. The house features a high-pitched side gable

roof with a small front facing gable over the entrance. The off-centered main entrance adjoins the chimney and both are clad in brick featuring a decorative pattern designed to mimic clinker brick. The recessed front door appears to be modern in style and is accessed by a newly constructed brick walkway and brick driveway. The exterior façade of the house is clad in wide, horizontal lapped wood siding and a short roof overhang features exposed rafted tails at the eaves. Arched wood attic vents are found on the west, east and north elevations.

The main façade features two sets of windows. To the north (left) of the entrance is a set of three single-pane wood windows that are presumed to be original to the house. To the south of the entrance, three narrow two-over-one light, dual-paned fixed and casement windows have replaced a picture window (as observed in a 1995 survey photo). The south façade features an original pointed arch plate glass feature window. Remaining fenestration on the house consists of single-hung vinyl windows and one metal window. The majority of the rear façade is made up of two additions containing multi-light wood windows and French doors.

The single car detached garage is located at the north side of the property and was designed complimentary to the Tudor design of the main house. The garage features a gable roof with arched attic vent in the gable. It maintains the original garage doors which feature a 6 light window pattern over paneled wood. On the south side of the garage there is a vinyl window and door.

There have been numerous modifications over the years which have substantially impacted the historic integrity of the subject house. The majority of the windows on the house have been replaced with inappropriate vinyl windows. New windows on the front façade have replaced a picture window seen in previous surveys. The new window's design is speculative and does not follow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Due to numerous additions over the years, it is difficult to differentiate the original construction from the new. The report notes that in 1931, the Muhl family received a building permit for an addition on the south wing, but it is unclear where this addition is located. Additionally, the original U-shape design of the house is now rectangular in shape as the center courtyard was filled in at some point after 1956. In 2001, a large 684 square-foot addition was added to the south side of the house closely imitating the original house design with woodlap siding, attic vents, exposed rafter tails, and steep roof pitch. Metal corner caps have been added to the originally mitered wood siding. The front chimney, a main feature of the house, has been built up vertically at some point since 1995 mimicking the historic faux clinker brick design and new brick walkway and driveway have been installed at the front of the house. In addition, the overall setting of the 4641 Alabama Street has changed dramatically as it is now flanked by two contemporary apartment buildings not in scale with the original residential, single-family home streetscape. The numerous alterations made on the house have caused a substantial loss of integrity from the original 1926 Tudor Revival style design and construction, therefore staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 property located at 4639 Alabama Street and 4641 Alabama Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria due to cumulative alterations that have resulted in a lack of integrity. 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.



Sarah Vonesh
Planning Intern



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

SV/jb/cw

Attachment:

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover