



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 9, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-022

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 23, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Vista del Valle**

APPLICANT: Reginald and Rhianna White represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 4348 Middlesex Drive, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of Vista del Valle located at 4348 Middlesex Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate Vista del Valle located at 4348 Middlesex Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1928 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the modified rear detached garage and all other existing detached accessory structures. 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 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features asymmetrical façades and irregular massing; hipped and gabled roofs of Mission clay tile with modest eave overhang and exposed rafters; exterior stucco cladding; accented windows and entries including decorative grillework; stucco chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood casement windows.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The resource is a one and two story single-family residence built in 1928 in the Spanish Eclectic style, and located on the northwest side of Middlesex Drive in the Kensington Heights Unit 2 Subdivision of the Kensington-Talmadge Community.

The building is located on APN 465-020-03-00. The property was identified in the 1996 Mid-City Survey as a Contributing Structure within the Kensington Potential Historic District and given a Status Code of 5D2, "Contributor to a district that is eligible for local listing or designation."

The historic name of the resource, Vista del Valle, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the specific name bestowed upon the building by the builder upon its construction.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not eligible for designation under any HRB Criterion. Staff disagrees with the conclusion of the Research Report and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C. 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.

Limited research into the history of the property and primary source material provided in the report indicate the property at 4348 Middlesex Drive was among seven model homes given special names and used to promote Kensington Heights by the Davis-Baker Company in 1928. The home was named Vista del Valle and used in a Better Homes Exposition event held on September 30, 1928 by the Davis-Baker Company in which seven homes, some fully furnished, were opened to the public and made available for purchase.

Although there are other Kensington-Heights homes designated by the HRB under Criterion A and known to have been used as models or for other promotional campaigns by George Forbes and/or the Davis-Baker Company, at this time, there is insufficient information and analysis to determine if the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Kensington-Talmadge's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A at this time.

CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 4348 Middlesex Drive did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not recommended for designation under HRB Criterion B.

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 and two story Spanish Eclectic style single-family residence with detached garage built in 1928. The building is of standard wood frame construction on a concrete foundation with floor joists, and maintains an original, irregular footprint sited on a large lot with views to the north of Mission Valley. The building is clad in an irregular, hand-troweled stucco finish and exhibits asymmetrical façades with varied wall planes and irregular massing, indicative of the Spanish Eclectic aesthetic. A combination of low-pitched hipped and gabled roof forms of Mission clay tile is presented with modest eave overhang and exposed rafters. The primary elevation is asymmetrically arranged around the entry which projects forward and is accentuated with its deep inset and an adjacent small window with wrought iron grille. The northeast (side) elevation exhibits a stucco chimney flanked by a pair of small inset windows and round attic vents above. Fenestration consists primarily of original divided light wood casement windows, appearing singly or in pairs. A modified detached garage is located in the rear and is joined to the house by a trellis. It is not known whether this trellis structure is original to the residence. A non-historic carport and swimming pool are located farther to the rear of the lot.

Modifications to the primary structure are negligible and do not greatly impair integrity or detract from the building's character defining features. Most modifications are limited to accessory structures and site improvements at the rear of the property. Impacts to the primary residence include the replacement of the entry door and the installation of two "pop out" kitchen windows along the west side elevation. Staff's field check and examination of the unclear historic photo could not confirm the applicant's assertion that the second story wrought iron balcony to the left of the entry is not original. Finally, non-historic tile has been added to the entry stairs. Overall, the alterations do not affect the essential physical features critical to the Spanish Eclectic style of the building – there is no impact to composition, massing, scale, or decorative elements. Accordingly, the alterations do not greatly impair the building's integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. Thus, the building remains eligible under HRB Criterion C. The rear detached garage has been greatly modified with a shed addition to the north and does not add any meaningful, character-defining value to the resource. Therefore, staff recommends any designation exclude the rear detached garage.

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 until the Modernist movement took hold during and after WWII. 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, as well as gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include Mission and Spanish clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

Significance Statement: Limited modifications allow the house to continue to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics

associated with the style; including asymmetrical façades and irregular massing; hipped and gabled roofs of Mission clay tile with modest eave overhang and exposed rafters; exterior stucco cladding; accented windows and entries including decorative grillework; stucco chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood casement windows. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 4348 Middlesex Drive was built by the Davis-Baker Company in 1928. The architect or designer could not be identified. The Davis-Baker Company has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Builder and there is insufficient to designate it as such at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.

The property at 4348 Middlesex Drive has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

The property at 4348 Middlesex Drive is not located within a designated historic district, and is therefore not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

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 Vista del Valle located at 4348 Middlesex Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1928 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style. The designation excludes the modified rear detached garage and all other existing detached accessory structures. 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.



Camille Pekarek
Associate Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

CP/ks

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 4/23/2015

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/23/2015, to consider the historical designation of **Vista del Valle** (owned by Reginald LR and Rhianna L White, 4179 Middlesex Drive, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4349 Middlesex Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **465-020-03-00**, further described as LOTS 83 & 84 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 Vista del Valle on the following finding:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features asymmetrical façades and irregular massing; hipped and gabled roofs of Mission clay tile with modest eave overhang and exposed rafters; exterior stucco cladding; accented windows and entries including decorative grillework; stucco chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of multi-light wood casement 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 modified rear detached garage and all other existing detached accessory structures.

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: _____
JOHN LEMMO, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
HEATHER FERBERT,
Deputy City Attorney