



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-026

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of June 25, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Jessie Ostrander Building**

APPLICANT: 2540 4th Ave LLC represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 2544-2546 4th Avenue, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Jessie Ostrander House located at 2544-2546 4th Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Jessie Ostrander Building located at 2544-2546 4th Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1939 under HRB Criterion C. The designation shall exclude the two story building located at the southwest corner of the lot identified as 2540 4th Avenue. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of an Art Moderne style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource maintains corner wood multi light windows, smooth stucco wall surfaces, horizontal groove line at the front façade, bowed, curved canopy at the front façade and curved walls at the main front entrance.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The building is located in a predominantly commercial area with a number of high rise multi-family buildings in the near vicinity.

The building is located on APN 533-101-04-00. The property was identified in the Draft 2007 Uptown Survey 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 Jessie Ostrander Building has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the person who constructed the house as their personal residence and office.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott Moomjian which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff does not concur with the applicant's conclusion and believes 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.

Research into the history of the property at 2544-2546 4th Avenue did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Uptown's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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 2544-46 4th Avenue 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 eligible 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.

Constructed by L.C. Anderson Company in 1939, the one story, irregularly shaped structure was designed as two units to serve as psychology consulting rooms and a home. Designed in the Art Moderne style, the building features a smooth stucco exterior, a flat roof with parapet and wood, multi-light casement windows.

The main, recessed entrance along 4th Avenue is centrally located and is flanked by rounded corners and a pair of casement windows. A bowed, curved canopy covers the main entrance and flanking windows. The canopy reduces in size to slightly protrude from the wall surface as it continues around the sides of the house. The outer edge of the canopy features horizontal grooved trim. Just above the canopy is an inset groove speed line that also wraps around the

corners of the building. Each corner of the main façade features a corner window which helps create the illusion of rounded corners. The north façade features a number of casement windows evenly spaced on the wall plane. The south façade features a stepped chimney placed at the center of the elevation. The chimney is flanked by windows with a corner window on the left side. The southwest corner of the house is stepped back. Adjacent to the corner window by the chimney is a small covered stoop with two entrance doors. To the left of the stoop is another small corner window which leads to a small extension that also features a corner window. There have been no exterior modifications to the building.

The Modernistic styles were first evidenced at the Exposition Internationale des Artes Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, France in 1925 to celebrate the coming of the machine and technology age. Among the distinctive characteristics of the Art Moderne style are: smooth stucco wall surfaces; flat roof, usually with grooves or lines in walls and horizontal balustrade elements give a horizontal emphasis; usually asymmetrical facade; continuous windows around corners; glass block and small circular windows. “A Field Guide to American Houses” by Virginia Savage McAlester notes that the style is not common but rather scattered examples can be found around the country.

While it is a modest size building it displays a number of the character defining elements of the Art Moderne style. The building features smooth stucco wall surfaces, horizontal massing, horizontal “speed lines” and a flat roof. The house also features curved building corners, curved overhangs, and corner windows. Some of the variants not featured on the building include the coping at the parapet, the use of the glass block and the small circular windows. The lack of these elements does not detract from the overall Art Moderne style conveyed by the building.

Significance Statement: The building continues to convey the historic significance of the Art Moderne style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including corner wood multi light windows, smooth stucco wall surfaces, horizontal groove line at the front façade, bowed, curved canopy at the front façade and curved walls at the main front entrance. 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.

Research into the construction of the property at 2544-46 4th Avenue failed to conclusively identify a builder, designer or architect. Therefore, the property is not eligible for 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 2544-46 4th Avenue 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 2544-46 4th Avenue is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is 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 the Jessie Ostrander Building located at 2544-2546 4th Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1939 under HRB Criterion C as an excellent example of an Art Moderne style building. The designation shall exclude the two story building located at the southwest corner of the lot identified as 2540 4th Avenue. 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.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

JB/ks

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 6/25/2015

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/25/2015, to consider the historical designation of the **Jessie Ostrander Building** (owned by 2540 4th Aven LLC, 9437 Santa Monica Boulevard, #208, Beverly Hills, CA 90210) located at **2544-2546 4th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **533-101-04-00**, further described as BLK 285 LOT J 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 Jessie Ostrander Building on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of an Art Moderne style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1939 period of significance. Specifically, the resource maintains corner wood multi light windows, smooth stucco wall surfaces, horizontal groove line at the front façade, bowed, curved canopy at the front façade and curved walls at the main front entrance. 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 two story building located at the southwest corner of the lot identified as 2540 4th Avenue.

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: _____
INGA LINTVEDT,
Deputy City Attorney