



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 15, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-051

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of October 22, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – 1311 Sutter Street**

APPLICANT: Mary Perry represented by Brian F. Smith & Associates, Inc. and Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 1311 Sutter Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 1311 Sutter Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 1311 Sutter Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

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-story single-family residence built in 1924 in the Spanish Eclectic style on the south side of Sutter Street, west of Kite Street in the Pueblo Lot 1122 of the Pueblo Lands of the Uptown Community.

The building is located on APN 451-163-09-00. The property was identified in the 2012 Uptown Survey and given a Status Code of 5D3, “Appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation.”

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc., which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria and staff concurs. 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 1311 Sutter Street 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 1311 Sutter Street 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.

The subject resource is a one-story Spanish Eclectic style single-family residence with a detached garage built in 1924. The stucco clad building is of standard wood frame construction on a concrete foundation, and maintains an original rectangular footprint sited on a relatively flat rectangular lot. The roof form is flat with a stepped parapet. Fenestration consists primarily of replacement aluminum-clad wood double hung windows placed in original openings. The primary façade exhibits sharp symmetry, anchored by a central rectangular tower element at the main entry. The tower element is given greater mass and elaboration with the inset of the 12-light entry door, and the chamfered edges at the top. The entry door is sheltered by a concise, tiled shed roof cover. The foot of the central tower flares out in a way that mimics the outer wing walls of the building's primary façade. Two pairs of 12-over-1 double hung windows flank the central tower and are marked by louvered attic vents centered over each window set. Along the ribbon driveway at the east elevation stands a stucco chimney with a flared base to match the wing walls.

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.

The applicant's report indicates the building has been restuccoed, however the stucco texture appears to be similar to what would be historically appropriate for this building. Other modifications listed in the report including roof replacement, side and rear door replacements, garage modifications, and site work are not considered significant impacts to character defining features and integrity.

Generally, the building retains good integrity in terms of its location, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling. However, certain modifications have negatively impacted character defining features and the building's integrity of design that cannot be overlooked. In 2001, existing windows throughout the house were replaced with aluminum-clad wood windows within the existing frames. Most of the windows are single-lite with the presentation side of the building reserved for 12-over-1 patterned windows. While the windows were replaced in existing openings, and the materials, operation and light patterns all appear somewhat appropriate and consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards – especially when viewed in conjunction with the 12-lite entry door and multi-lite window patterns on neighboring structures – it is not known for certain whether the 12-over-1 light pattern at the front and sides of the building were selected to match the original, historic light pattern. Furthermore, it is not known whether the existing windows at the time of the 2001 replacement were the original windows or replacements that may or may not have influenced the selection of the light pattern for the current windows. According to the applicant, no historic photographs are available, and no other historical documentation concerning the original windows has been identified. Such uncertainty over whether the original window light pattern is accurately presented by the current windows is considered a critical impact to character defining features and integrity of design. Therefore staff cannot recommend designation 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 applicant's report provides some background on the building's development given limited available resources. According to the Chain of Title, the property was owned by three different parties in 1924. A larger, two acre parcel which included today's 1311 Sutter Street parcel was granted to A. and Ione Downs in January 1924. The 1311 Sutter Street parcel alone was then granted to real estate brokers Aber & Rutherford in April of 1924 and finally to Martin V. Melhorn's Alberta Security Company in December of 1924. The property was next granted to Union Trust Company in April 1925. It is not known precisely who is responsible for the building's construction since the building's exact date of construction cannot be verified. While it appears the possible builder is Martin V. Melhorn since he is well-known as a homebuilder and the others are not, the applicant asserts that the building could not have been completed in the single month or less that Alberta Security Company owned it in the year of 1924. It is important to note, however, that this claim is based on the assumption that the building was in fact completed in 1924. The building's 1924 date of construction has been established solely by the Assessor's Building Record. A Notice of Completion, water and sewer connection records, and a County Lot and Block book page are all not available for the subject property, so the 1924 date of construction cannot be verified.

Examination of the deed copies provided in the applicant's report show the property was granted to A. and Ione Downs, Aber & Rutherford, and to Alberta Security Company each for a total of ten dollars, suggesting the property had not yet been improved for each of the transactions. Examination of a Trustee's Deed, from Deed Book 1210, Page 330, and provided in the applicant's report indicates the property was used to secure a promissory note executed by the Alberta Security Company for a sum of \$1,581.75. The document goes on to note that Alberta Security Company then defaulted on their loan and the property was sold at auction for \$1,000. This may indicate that the property had been improved by the Alberta Security Company, however additional information and analysis would be needed to conclusively identify the party responsible for the subject building's construction. Nevertheless, alterations to the building's character defining features as noted previously, have negatively impacted the building's integrity of design such that it may no longer reflect the original builder's design or intentions. 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 1311 Sutter Street 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 1311 Sutter Street 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 property located at 1311 Sutter Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria. 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
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Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

CP/ks

Attachment:

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover