



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 11, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-062

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of October 25, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Amezquita Family Trust represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1915 Sunset Boulevard, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1 located at 1915 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1 located at 1915 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1913 under HRB Criterion C. An interior element included in the designation is the custom built-in China cabinet with decorative leaded glass in the dining room. The designation includes the mature Fern Pine (*Podocarpus gracilior*) tree located at the northwest corner of the lot. The designation excludes the three car garage, and the 1974 and 1993 additions at the southeast corner totaling approximately 844 square feet. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Craftsman style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1913 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a medium-pitch cross gable roof and a low-pitch gable roof over the partial width brick front porch; decorative stucco and wood half timbering on gable ends; wood clapboard and shingle siding; and fenestration consisting of wood casement, fixed and double hung 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 a two and a half story

Craftsman style residence built in 1913 at the southeast corner of Sunset Boulevard and Alameda Drive in the Inspiration Heights subdivision of the Uptown Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Henry and Lavina Nelson, who constructed the house as a speculation house.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C. Staff concurs that the resources is significant under HRB Criterion C, but not HRB Criterion A. 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 historical report asserts that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the Inspiration Heights subdivision and its historical development. It was one of the first structures built in Harry Miller's Inspiration Heights subdivision which he marketed to prospective buyers as a particularly exclusive community providing "Ideal Home Sites for Ideal Homes." As the owner of the Inspiration Heights subdivision, Harry Miller sought to attract the attention of potential buyers in the Mission Hills community to his elite subdivision immediately adjacent. Investor Henry Nelson quickly purchased a number of lots in 1911 in view of Sunset Boulevard and built large, attractive speculation homes to draw in buyers. The subject home at 1915 Sunset Boulevard was one of the first to be built.

Early promotional images of the Inspiration Heights subdivision almost always featured the iconic tile-capped pillars used to mark the boundaries of the fashionable community. After Nelson's investment, those pillars would soon become a part of the Sunset Boulevard streetscape accompanied by large, beautiful homes to entice buyers to purchase exclusive property in Inspiration Heights. The first few homes of Inspiration Heights were bought up quickly by home owners eager to capture exclusive real estate in the elite subdivision. Nelson built and sold all his homes in Inspiration Heights by San Diego's 1915 Panama-California Exposition.

While there are clear indications that Miller and Nelson participated in some of the same business ventures, including the Ammes Motion Picture company, there is no clear evidence that Nelson's construction of the subject house was part of a coordinated effort between Miller and Nelson to promote Inspiration Heights. The house at 1915 Sunset was not featured in any advertisements for the subdivision or other documentation to clearly show that the house was constructed expressly to promote the subdivision. Absent this documentation, Nelson could very well have built the house primarily as a speculative investment, aided by his association with Miller. This is insufficient evidence for designation under Criterion A; therefore, 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.

The subject building is a two and a half story Craftsman style home built in 1913 that features a medium-pitch cross gable roof and a low-pitch gable roof over the partial width brick front porch; decorative stucco and wood half timbering on gable ends; wood clapboard and shingle siding; and fenestration consisting of wood casement, fixed and double hung windows. The roof system is accentuated by exposed rafter tails, triangular knee bracing and decorative vergeboards with a flared end cut design.

With the aid of historic photographs, the subject property recently underwent considerable restoration to undo non-historic changes that were made to the structure over the years. Aluminum siding was removed to reveal the original stucco and wood half timbering. Artificial stone veneer was removed at the front porch to reveal the original brick porch and columns. Whenever possible, original materials were repaired and any replacement of materials was made in kind based on extant originals, historic photographs and sometimes paint impressions left on original material. The wood shingles were replaced on the second level as none remained under the aluminum siding, and portions of the clapboard were replaced to match existing originals. All the wood casement, fixed and double hung windows are original with the exception of two that were replaced in kind at the west elevation bay window. A non-historic attic window at the front elevation was replaced with vents to match the historic photos.

Most modifications have occurred primarily at the rear of the structure. The original detached single car garage is missing from southeast corner of lot. A three car garage built sometime before 1960 sits along Alameda Drive at the southwest corner of the property. Also at the rear, southwest corner of the structure, a number of original windows at the lower level west elevation have been removed. A single metal replacement window is outside of public view at a recessed portion of the east elevation. Finally, a number of small additions were made at the southeast corner of the structure in 1974 and 1993. These additions are not visible from the public right of way and are excluded from the designation.

Although the three car garage addition at the southwest is readily visible from Alameda Drive, it is easily differentiated from the historic portion of the house with its mansard style roof and the unlikelihood that a three car garage was originally built for a single family home built in 1913. The additions at the rear and sides of the property at the southeast corner are not readily visible from the front of the house and do not adversely impact the building's integrity and ability to convey the Craftsman style from the 1913 date of construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the house under HRB Criterion C. Staff also recommends including in the designation an original custom built-in China cabinet with leaded glass in the dining room.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

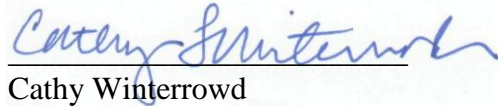
If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1 located at 1915 Sunset Boulevard be designated with a period of significance of 1913 under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the City's and Inspiration Heights' historical, economic and architectural development; and Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Craftsman style architecture. An interior element included in the designation is the custom built-in China cabinet with decorative leaded glass. The designation includes the mature Fern Pine (*Podocarpus gracilior*) tree located at the northwest corner of the lot. The designation excludes the three car garage, and the 1974 and 1993 additions at the southeast corner totaling approximately 844 square feet. 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
Planning Intern



Cathy Winterrowd
Assistant Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/cw

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Interior Elements Proposed for Designation
3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 10/25/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/25/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1** located at **1915 Sunset Blvd, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-602-01-00**, further described as BLK 1 LOT 1 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 **Henry and Lavina Nelson Spec House #1** 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 Craftsman style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1913 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a medium-pitch cross gable roof and a low-pitch gable roof over the partial width brick front porch; decorative stucco and wood half timbering on gable ends; wood clapboard and shingle siding; and fenestration consisting of wood casement, fixed and double hung 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**. The designation shall include portions of the interior, specifically, the custom built-in China cabinet with decorative leaded glass in the dining room. The designation includes the mature Fern Pine (*Podocarpus gracilior*) tree located at the northwest corner of the lot. The designation excludes the three car garage, and the 1974 and 1993 additions at the southeast corner totaling approximately 844 square feet.

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 AS TO FORM AND
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
KEITH BAUERLE
Deputy City Attorney

1915 Sunset Boulevard
Interior Plan (Original Built-in China Cabinet)

