



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 9, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-073

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of October 22, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 –The Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Gomez and Amuedo-Dorantes Trust, property owners  
Represented by Scott Moomjian, consultant

LOCATION: 4276 Trias Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of The Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1 at 4276 Trias Street as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate The Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1 at 4276 Trias Street as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1933 period of significance.



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## BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the house and site designated as a historical resource. The house at 4276 Trias Street is a single family home that was originally constructed in 1933 by the Olmstead Building Company and then bought after completion by Walter and Nettie Bellon. The house was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

The historic name of the house is based on the name of the company who constructed it as a speculation home and is consistent with the adopted naming policy.

This designation was previously continued from the July 24, 2008 and September 25, 2008 Historical Resource Hearings at the owner's request.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Scott Moomjian, the consultant on behalf of the property owners, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C and D. Staff concurs that the property is significant under Criterion C, but disagrees with the determination that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion B and D, as follows:

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

The applicant states that the property at 4276 Trias Street is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Walter Bellon. Bellon was the City's Health Officer between 1909 and 1922, during which time he was tasked with enforcing health and safety codes throughout the city. Enforcing the city codes helped reduce substandard housing, improve the city's water supply and reduce prostitution.

While a City Health Officer, Bellon was charged with enforcing municipal codes within the Stingaree. The Stingaree district extended from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Market through J Street encompassing twelve city blocks. The district was known for brothels, opium dens, dance halls and any number of other vices. As early as 1855, the California legislature enacted laws against keeping or residing in a house of ill fame. There were also several moral reforms in 1905. Additionally, several civic organizations, the Anti Saloon League, the Purity League and the Vice Suppression League, were pressuring the various government entities into action. Many also considered the upcoming California-Panama Exposition as an important civic event that required a "clean" city. The "clean up" of the Stingaree district was several years of hard work that involved more people than just Bellon. Work in disbanding the district came from state legislation; ordinances enacted by the Assistant City Attorney Edgar A. Luce; police raids directed by Police Chief Keno Wilson; confiscation of illegal substances by Fred C. Boden, Inspector of the State Board of Pharmacy and general direction from the Mayor and City Council. The "clean up" was not done single handedly but rather a concerted effort of the citizens, city and state officials. For example, a 1974 Journal of San Diego

History article, “*When the Red Lights Went Out in San Diego: The Little Known Story of San Diego’s “Restricted” District*” by Elizabeth MacPhail recounts a November 10, 1912 raid on the district that managed to arrest 138 women. The raid managed to force many of the women out of the red light district and either out of the city or to other parts of the city. As stated previously, Bellon’s work to rid the Stingaree of its many vices was only a portion of the overall effort. In 1916, Bellon was promoted to the city Chief Health Inspector.

From 1922-1932, Bellon operated Walter Bellon Plumbing and Heating, but after the death of his son he closed the business. In 1933, Bellon was elected to the Grand Jury and developed a better understanding of government. In November 1936 Bellon was elected a County Supervisor of the First District and served in this position till 1944 acting as Board Chairman in 1937, 1941 and 1942. During his two terms he worked on the development of the city’s desert areas and the County Parks Commission. In 1943, Bellon and his wife divorced with Nettie continuing to live in the house until 1945.

While Bellon worked in the City Health Department to clean up the downtown area, it was done prior to his residency at 4276 Trias Street. Additionally, his work as County Supervisor during his occupation of the house was on par with the work of any city or county employee and does not make him a person significant in history. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under 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 house at 4276 Trias Street was constructed in 1933 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The builder of the house was the Olmstead Building Company and it was built as a spec home.

The home has an irregularly shaped floor plan and it is constructed of frame and stucco. The house was recently restuccoed with a smooth sand finish. The roof is a combination of a low pitched gabled barrel tile roof with exposed rafter tails at the front with a flat roof and a parapet at the rear of the house. A stuccoed chimney with a decorative brick cap protrudes from the center of the house. The gable ends have wood lap siding with approximately a 5”-8” exposure. The gable end at the front of the house features two wood louvered vents.

The windows on the house are predominantly three light wood casements that appear to be original to the house. The main focal window is a rectangular window set in an arched opening. The window is currently one solid pane of glass set in a wood frame, however in the aerial provided by the consultant there appears to be a shadow of a divided light window. Some of the windows towards the side/rear of the house have been changed to fixed or wood sliders.

The front door is located under the porte cochere that is perpendicular to the house. The front door appears to be the original with tongue and groove paneling and a 1’x1’ fixed glass window with wrought iron. The porte cochere has a gable roof to match the house and is sheathed with barrel clay tile. The structure is supported by large stuccoed square columns

with an arched opening in between them. The arched opening has been in-filled with wood louvers. While there has been some question as to the historicity of the porte cochere, the property owner was able to provide a 1938 aerial that shows what was described as a vine covered porte cochere.

There is a two car detached garage with a flat roof and decorative roof tile located at the rear of the property. The garage is constructed of wood framing and sheathed with a smooth sand finish stucco.

Overall, the integrity of the house is good and the house has been maintained. Staff believes that there have been a few changes to the exterior of the home, but the alterations do not detract from the historic character of the house. Alterations include the replacement of original windows with plate glass, and the addition of Ranch style elements to the house including wood lap siding at the gable ends with squared vents. Regardless of the modifications, staff recommends that the house is designated under Criterion C as a good example embodying distinctive characteristics of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The consultant also provided additional information in the addendum dated June 2008 on the Olmstead Building Company. The Olmstead Building Company was declared a Master Builder in conjunction with construction of the DeWitt C. Mitchell American Legion Hall Post 201. Lester Olmstead was a founding member of Post 201 which lead to his design and construction of the building. Olmstead also designed and built several properties in San Diego County, most notably in the Mount Helix area two of which have been designated by the County of San Diego Historic Site Board (R. King Kauffman House at 1087 Dutton Drive HSB #2008-007 and the C.W. Cadman Residence at 4625 Calavo Drive HSB # 2006-007). The consultant identified two properties at 3109-3111 Ocean View Boulevard and 2829 Dove Street constructed by Olmstead and both of which have questionable integrity. The consultant goes on to state that "...based upon the field research, the Property is the only known Olmstead residential example in the City to possess a very high degree of original integrity (the remaining known examples have been altered). As such, the Property is a notable representative example of the work of Lester Olmstead and the Olmstead Building Company..."

Based on the consultant's report submitted for the DeWitt C. Mitchell American Legion Hall Post 201, Ron May identified 2744 Chatsworth within the boundaries of the National Register Loma Portal Potential Historic District as an Olmstead Building Company constructed home. As a contributor to the potential district, the resource has managed to maintain a high degree of integrity which negates the consultant's earlier statement that 4276 Trias Street is the only known intact residential building within the City of San Diego. With the number of residential homes constructed in San Diego County Olmstead Building Company's importance should be considered on a regional level. While there are few known remaining examples of the company's residential work within the city, there are designated properties within the county that are listed on the county's register that are considered notable. Given a

comparison with the other known and designated sites, Staff does not find that the house is a notable work or the only remaining work in the City of San Diego by the Olmstead Building Company. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

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 Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1 at 4276 Trias Street is designated as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C as a good example embodying distinctive characteristics of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. 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.



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Jodie Brown  
Senior Planner



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Kelley Saunders  
Acting Principal Planner

jb/ks

Attachment(s):      Draft Resolution  
                                 Historical Resources Memo dated September 19, 2008  
                                 Historical Resources Report dated July 17, 2008  
                                 Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 10/22/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/22/2009, to consider the historical designation of **The Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1** (owned by Amuedo-Dorantes Gomez Trust, 4276 Trias Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **4276 Trias Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-210-36-00**, further described as Lot 3, Block 522, Old San Diego, Map 1870 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 Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1933 period of significance. Specifically, the house retains low pitched gable roof with exposed rafter tails sheathed with clay tile and a flat roof with a parapet at the rear; stucco walls; and wood divided light 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 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
NINA FAIN  
Deputy City Attorney



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 19, 2008

TO: HRB Boardmembers

FROM: Jodie Brown, Senior Planner, CPCI

SUBJECT: Item 7 – 4276 Trias Street

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This item was continued from the July 24, 2008 meeting of the Historical Resources Board at the request of the applicant. The original consultant's report, completed by Scott Moomjian, concluded that the resource was eligible under HRB Criterion B, for its association with Walter Bellon, Criterion C, as a good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture and D as a notable work by Master Builder Olmstead Building Company/Lester Olmstead. The July 24, 2008 staff report (attached) did not concur with the consultant's report. More recently an addendum was provided by the consultant that offered more information on the other properties associated with Walter Bellon, information on the integrity of the house and evidence of other properties associated with Olmstead Building Company/Lester Olmstead.

In the addendum the consultant states that "It is undisputed that Walter C. Bellon is a historically significant figure who was responsible for the 'clean up' of San Diego's Stingaree District." The consultant's report dated June 2008 also states "...Bellon helped to substantially, and almost single-handedly, curtail prostitution, remove substandard housing and commercial structures, exterminate vermin infestations..." The Stingaree district extended from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Market through J Street encompassing twelve city blocks. The district was known for brothels, opium dens, dance halls and any number of other vices. As early as 1855, the California legislature enacted laws against keeping or residing in a house of ill fame. There were also several moral reforms in 1905. Additionally, several civic organizations, the Anti Saloon League and the Purity League, were pressuring the various government entities into action. The "clean up" of the Stingaree district was several years of hard work that involved more people than just Bellon. Work in disbanding the district came from state legislation; ordinances enacted by the Assistant City Attorney Edgar A. Luce; police raids directed by Police Chief Keno Wilson; confiscation of illegal substances by Fred C. Boden, Inspector of the State Board of Pharmacy and general direction from the Mayor and City Council. The "clean up" was not done single handedly but rather a concerted effort of the citizens, city and state officials. Bellon's

work to rid the Stingaree of its many vices was only a portion of the overall effort. As such, Bellon does not rise to the level of a historic person in the city and any association that Bellon had with the property at 4276 Street is considered moot. Staff does not recommend designation of 4276 Trias Street under Criterion B.

The consultant also submitted additional material from architect Mark Lyon in regards to the integrity of the house. Mr. Lyon visited the site on two occasions, August 12 and August 27, 2008. During his first visit to the property Mr. Lyon specifically investigated the porte cochere. He concluded:

- That the porte cochere was built as one unit based on the evidence that the footing is homogenous with the arch
- That the wood looks original
- That the wood is actual sized rough sawn lumber and constructed of Redwood
- That the nails used in the construction of the porte cochere are wire nails and would have been used in the 1930s.

While the observations are sound they can also be applied to a property or an addition that was built in the 1940s or 1950s. Staff still has serious reservations about the porte cochere not showing up on the 1940 Sanborn Map. Without evidence such as an original photo from 1933 or the original plans, Staff is not able to state conclusively that the porte cochere is original to the house.

Mr. Lyon's second visit to the property was to investigate the windows, gable end siding, attic vents, foundation vents, wood shutters, garage and rafter ends. Mr. Lyons noted that all of the windows on the house were original except the five windows that were replaced by the current owners. He also noted that the wood siding on the gable end was original since it was redwood, attached to the framing and not applied over the stucco. The attic vents on the gable end, however are constructed of sheet metal and considered to be not original to the house. The attic vents located on the remaining walls of the house that are the round terra cotta are considered original to the house. Mr. Lyon goes on to state that the foundation vents, garage, shutters and rafter ends are also all original to the house.

While Staff concurs that the sheet metal attic vents are not original to the house and that the gable end siding, round terra cotta vents, foundation vents, garage, shutters and rafter ends are original to the house, Staff does not concur with the statement that all but five of the windows on the house are original. Based on the 1952 photo provided by the property owner, Staff believes that there is a shadow on the front focal window that presents the appearance of a divided light window. While the frame may be original to the house, it appears that the muntins have been removed.

Given the inconclusive evidence of the porte cochere, the plate glass on the front window and the added vents at the gable ends, Staff continues to not recommend designation of the property under Criterion C.

The consultant also provided additional information on the Olmstead Building Company in his addendum. The Olmstead Building Company was declared a Master Builder in conjunction with construction of the DeWitt C. Mitchell American Legion Hall Post 201. Lester Olmstead was a



founding member of Post 201 which lead to his design and construction of the building. Olmstead also designed and built several properties in San Diego County, most notably in the Mount Helix area two of which have been designated by the County of San Diego Historic Site Board (R. King Kauffman House at 1087 Dutton Drive HSB #2008-007 and the C.W. Cadman Residence at 4625 Calavo Drive HSB # 2006-007). The consultant identified two properties at 3109-3111 Ocean View Boulevard and 2829 Dove Street constructed by Olmstead and both of which have questionable integrity. The consultant goes on to state that "...based upon the field research, the Property is the only known Olmstead residential example in the City to possess a very high degree of original integrity (the remaining known examples have been altered). As such, the Property is a notable representative example of the work of Lester Olmstead and the Olmstead Building Company..."

Based on the consultant's report submitted for the DeWitt C. Mitchell American Legion Hall Post 201, Ron May identified 2744 Chatsworth within the boundaries of the National Register Loma Portal Potential Historic District as an Olmstead Building Company constructed home. As a contributor to the potential district, the resource has managed to maintain a high degree of integrity which negates the consultant's earlier statement that 4276 Trias Street is the only known intact residential building within the City of San Diego. With the number of residential homes constructed in San Diego County Olmstead Building Company's importance should be considered on a regional level. While there are few known remaining examples of the company's residential work within the city, there are designated properties within the county that are listed on the county's register that are considered notable. Given alterations to the property at 4276 Trias Street that were discussed earlier, Staff does not find that the house is a notable work or the only remaining work in the City of San Diego by the Olmstead Building Company.

Given all of the evidence, Staff believes that the house maybe eligible as a contributor to a potential historic district, however, there is no district in place or under consideration at this time and it is not individually eligible. Therefore, Staff recommends that the house at 4276 Trias Street is not designated as a historic resource under any HRB Criteria.



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 17, 2008 REPORT NO. HRB-08-049

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of July 24, 2008

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 –4276 Trias Street**

APPLICANT: Scott Moomjian, on behalf of the property owner, the Gomez and Amuedo-Dorantes Trust

LOCATION: 4276 Trias Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

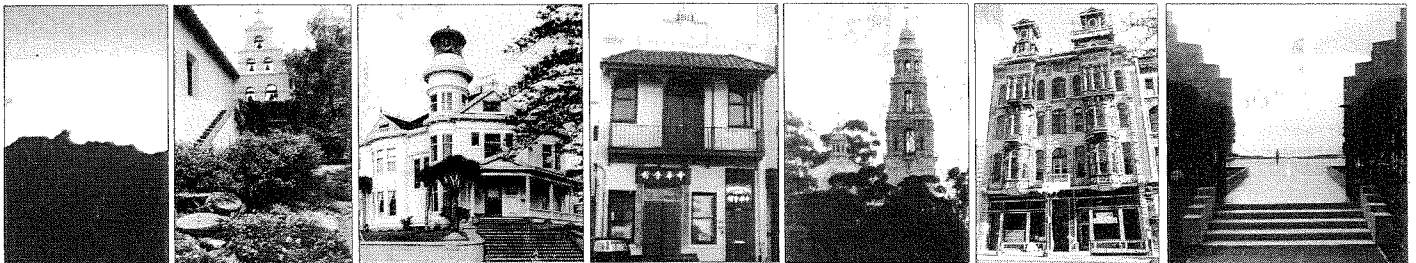
DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the house at 4276 Trias Street as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the house at 4276 Trias as a historical resource under any HRB Criterion.

## BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the house and site designated as a historical resource. The house at 4276 Trias Street is a single family home that was originally constructed in 1933 for Walter



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and Nettie Bellon. The house was designed and built by Olmstead Building Company in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

### ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Scott Moomjian, the consultant on behalf of the property owners, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C and D. Staff disagrees with the determination that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion B, C and D, as follows:

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

The applicant states that the property at 4276 Trias Street is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Walter Bellon. Bellon was the City's Health Officer between 1909 and 1922, during which time he was tasked with enforcing health and safety codes throughout the city. Enforcing the city codes helped reduce substandard housing, improve the city's water supply and reduce prostitution. In 1916, Bellon was promoted to the city Chief Health Inspector. From 1922-1932, Bellon operated Walter Bellon Plumbing and Heating, but after the death of his son he closed the business. In 1933, Bellon was elected to the Grand Jury and developed a better understanding of government. In November 1936 Bellon was elected the County Supervisor of the First District and served in this position till 1944 acting as Board Chairman in 1937, 1941 and 1942. During his two terms he worked on the development of the city's desert areas and the County Parks Commission. In 1943, Bellon and his wife divorced with Nettie continuing to live in the house until 1945.

While Bellon worked in the City Health Department to clean up the downtown area, it was done prior to his residency at 4276 Trias Street. Additionally, his work as County Supervisor during his occupation of the house was on par with the work of any city or county employee and does not make him a person significant in history. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under 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 house at 4276 Trias Street was constructed in 1933 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The builder of the house was the Olmstead Building Company and was built as a spec home. The architect of the home has not been confirmed by the consultant.

The home has an irregularly shaped floor plan and it is constructed of frame and stucco. The house was recently restuccoed with a smooth sand finish. The roof is a combination of a low pitched gabled barrel tile roof with exposed rafter tails at the front with a flat roof and a parapet at the rear of the house. A stuccoed chimney with a decorative brick cap protrudes from the center of the house. The gable ends have wood lap siding with approximately a 5"-8" exposure. The gable end at the front of the house features two wood louvered vents.

The windows on the house are predominantly three light wood casements that appear to be original to the house. The main focal window is a rectangular window set in an arched opening. The window is currently one solid pane of glass set in a wood frame, however in the aerial provided by the consultant there appears to be a shadow of a divided light window. Some of the windows towards the side/rear of the house have been changed to fixed or wood sliders.

The front door is located under the porte cochere that is perpendicular to the house. The front door appears to be the original with tongue and groove paneling and a 1'x1' fixed glass window with wrought iron. The porte cochere was not original to the house but appears in the 1952 aerial. The porte cochere has a gable roof to match the house and is sheathed with barrel clay tile. The structure is supported by large stuccoed square columns with an arched opening in between them. The arched opening has been in-filled with wood louvers.

There is a two car detached garage with a flat roof and decorative roof tile located at the rear of the property. The garage is constructed of wood framing and sheathed with a smooth sand finish stucco.

There appears to have been several modifications to the house. Alterations include the addition of the porte cochere, the replacement of original windows with plate glass, and the possible addition of Ranch style elements to the house including wood lap siding at the gable ends with squared vents. While the house may be eligible as a contributing resource as part of a potential historic district, staff believes that the alterations exclude the house for consideration on an individual basis. Based on these alterations, staff does not recommend designation under Criterion C.

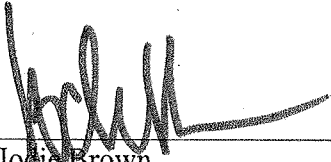
*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The applicant states that the property at 4276 Trias Street is significant under HRB Criterion D as the work of Lester Olmstead and the Olmstead Building Company. While Lester Olmstead has been established as a Master Architect by the HRB, the integrity of this particular house has been comprised and the consultant was not able to definitely determine that Lester Olmstead designed the house. Staff also believes that this particular house is not a notable example of their work. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended to not designate the Walter and Nettie Bellon House at 4276 Trias as a historical resource under any HRB Criterion. 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  
Senior Planner

jb/cw



Cathy Winterrowd  
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

Attachment(s):

Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover