



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 12, 2010 REPORT NO. HRB-10-012

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of March 25, 2010

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Johnson’s Wilshire Gas Station**

APPLICANT: Y. Toma, Janan T. Toma, Latif C. Marogy and Faiza M. Marogy
represented by Archaeos

LOCATION: 4689 Market Street, Encanto Neighborhoods Community, Council District 4

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of Johnson’s Wilshire Gas Station located at
4689 Market Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate Johnson’s Wilshire Gas Station located at 4689 Market Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1962 under HRB Criterion C. The recent convenience store building is excluded from the designation. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Goochie architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1962 period of significance.



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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 Googie style service station canopy located at the corner of Market Street and 47th Street in the Market Street Knolls subdivision of the Chollas View community.

A Notice of Completion filed for the property indicates that a “steel service station building and facilities” was constructed by Western Service and Equipment Company in 1957 for Benjamin and Gertrude Fish. The Notice of Completion did not explicitly address the canopy structure. The Assessor’s Commercial-Industrial Building Record indicates that the canopy was constructed in 1962. The construction of the canopy (or at the very least substantial modification to its present condition) in 1962 is supported by the information provided in the report that Wilshire Oil Company standardized the design of its pumping areas using “futuristic” design in the early 1960’s. Therefore, staff has identified the date of construction and period of significance of the canopy as 1962.

The historic name of the resource, Johnson’s Wilshire Gas Station, has been identified consistent with the Board’s adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the service station during the period of significance of 1962.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Ruth Alter of Archaeos, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C, follows:

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 resource located at 4689 Market Street consists of a service station canopy constructed in 1962 in the Googie style. The canopy measures 76 feet wide by 26 feet deep and covers three rows of fueling pumps on raised concrete pads. The canopy itself is flat roofed and tilts slightly down to the west. Constructed of wood planks with metal eaves, the canopy is pierced by three diagonal metal supports approximately 16 feet in height which are bolted to the concrete floor. The supports, which were designed to attract attention of motorists, extend through and upward above the canopy, tapering at the top and bottom and flaring out at the intersection with the canopy. Two metal beams brace the canopy and the supports; and single metal cables extend from each of the diagonal supports to the eastern edge of the canopy. The fuel pumps below are contemporary and do not date to the period of significance.

In 2009, the small service building and office behind the canopy, which was utilitarian in nature and did not reflect the Googie style exhibited by the canopy, was demolished and replaced with the current building.

Googie architecture, also known as Futurist architecture, began after World War II as Americans became entranced with technology and the space age. At that time America was also being transformed by the car culture. As automobile use increased, roadside architecture evolved. It was intended to attract the consumer with bright colors, oversized lighted signage, and exaggerated forms. The Futurist style was used overwhelmingly on coffee shops, gas stations, motels, restaurants, and retail buildings. The name “Googie” comes from the well-known coffee shop in Los Angeles named Googies, which was designed by renowned Modernist architect John Lautner in 1949. Futurist architecture was popular throughout the 1950s and fell out of favor by the mid-60s, as America became more sophisticated in its understanding and interpretation of space travel and futurist technology. The San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement lists the primary and secondary character defining features of Googie architecture as follows:

Primary

- Abstract, angular or curved shapes
- Expressive roof forms (flat, gabled, upswept, butterfly, parabolic, boomerang, or folded)
- Large windows (aluminum framed)
- Prominent signage (neon or lighted)

Secondary

- Variety of exterior finishes including stucco, concrete block, brick, stone, plastic & wood siding
- Bright colors
- Screen block and shadow block accents
- Building as billboard
- Asymmetrical facades

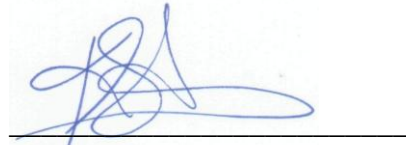
Because the canopy was not a building and its function was simple, to provide shelter for the fueling pumps and attract customers, the canopy expresses the applicable primary character defining features of Googie architecture, including abstract, angular shapes seen in the dynamic diagonal supports through the canopy roof; and the expressive roof form seen in the tilted flat canopy roof. The Modernism Context Statement goes on to say, “In order to be eligible for designation, Googie style buildings should retain the primary character defining features of the style. Secondary character defining features which may have been lost due to tenant improvements and commercial remodeling are not as critical to conveying the style.” In this case, the canopy retains all of the applicable primary character defining features of a Googie style service station canopy, as described above and retains integrity from its 1962 period of significance. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C. The recent convenience store building is excluded from the designation.

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 Johnson's Wilshire Gas Station be designated under HRB Criterion C as a good example of a Googie style architecture with a 1962 period of significance. The recent convenience store building is excluded from the designation. 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.



Kelley Saunders
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

Attachment(s): Draft Resolution
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 3/25/2010

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/25/2010, to consider the historical designation of the **Johnson's Wilshire Gas Station** (owned by Sabah Y. Toma, Janan T. Toma, Latif C. Marogy and Faiza M. Marogy, 3412 Kurtz Street, San Diego, CA 92110) located at **4689 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92102**, APN: **547-221-14-00**, further described as Lot 8 (Ex St.Wid & S 65 ft.) 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 Johnson's Wilshire Gas Station on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as the resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Googie architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1962 period of significance. Specifically, character-defining features of Googie architecture reflected in the canopy include: a flat roof tilted slightly down to the west pierced by three diagonal metal supports designed to attract attention of motorists extending through and above the canopy to a height of 16 feet, tapering at the top and bottom and flaring out at the intersection with the canopy. 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, but excludes the recent convenience store 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