



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 11, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-020

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 25, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #13 – La Jolla Post Office**

APPLICANT: United States Postal Service

LOCATION: 1140 Wall Street, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the La Jolla Post Office located at 1140 Wall Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the La Jolla Post Office located at 1140 Wall Street, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) era United States Post Office constructed in 1929 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style and reflecting a special element in the development of the community, as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1935-1960 under HRB Criterion E. An interior element included in the designation is the public lobby mural, *Scenic View of the Village* (1935-1936), painted by Belle Baranceanu. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the California State Register of Historical Resources by the State Office of Historical Preservation on January 2, 2013. Specifically, the resource meets National Register Criteria A and C at the local level of significance for its association with the community planning and development of La Jolla and for its architectural design, materials and method of construction respectively.

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 by the City of San Diego. On February 27, 2013 State Historic Preservation Officer Carol Roland-Nawi, Ph.D. notified the City in a letter addressed to Mayor Bob Filner that the subject property had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the California State Register of Historical Resources.

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The La Jolla Post Office was found to meet National Register Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the community planning and development of La Jolla during its Community Development Era (1930-1945) and Post War Expansion Era (1946-1962) – two of the five distinct historical phases detailed in the *La Jolla Reconnaissance Survey* of 2004. The resource was funded under the National Recovery Act (1933-1939), designed by Louis A. Simon and constructed by the WPA in 1935. In 1960, the La Jolla Post Office was sensitively expanded by Architect William Lumpkins with a sizeable addition to the rear of the structure. This addition is associated with the Post War Expansion Era (1946-1962), the expansion of the La Jolla 92037 ZIP code and the effects following the construction of the San Diego campus of the University of California.

The resource was also found to meet National Register Criterion C at the local level of significance for its architectural design, materials, and method of construction. The Post Office is constructed of a poured-in-place reinforced concrete shell, medium sand finish stucco cladding, Mission clay tile side gable roof, and asymmetrical side pavilions with flat roofs. The middle portion of the primary façade is symmetrically laid out with the double door entrance flanked by sets of nine over nine and three over three double hung windows. Remaining fenestration consists of six over six double hung windows on the primary (south) and west façades, and twelve over twelve on the east façade. An interior element that contributes greatly to the building's significance under Criterion C is the oil-on-canvas coastal landscape, *Scenic View of the Village*, located in the public lobby and painted at the time of construction by Belle Baranceanu, who achieved local, national and international recognition as a WPA muralist. The landscape illustrates a Cubist interpretation of La Jolla and is one of two San Diego WPA murals painted by Baranceanu that remain accessible to the public. The lobby tile floor is also original and exhibits scarring from the 1960 removal of a wind screen that is depicted on the original design plans. At the time of its construction in 1935, the WPA-built Spanish Colonial Revival style Post Office complimented the design character of La Jolla's commercial core by blending the Spanish aesthetic with the restrained, elegant and imposing design language typical of the WPA and New Deal construction.

The historic name of the resource, the La Jolla Post Office, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the historical name established by the community and the resource's name as it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources.

ANALYSIS

A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared by Diane Kane and Angeles Leira of the La Jolla Historical Society and submitted to the State Office of Historic Preservation in August of 2012 which concludes that the resource is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. Given that the La Jolla Post Office has since been listed on the National Register and the California State Register at the local level of significance, staff recommends local designation under HRB Criterion E. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

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 La Jolla Post Office was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 2, 2013 and subsequently listed on the California Register of Historical Resources, pursuant to Section 4851 (a)(2) of the Public Resources Code. The resource was found to meet the National Register Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the community planning and development of La Jolla during its Community Development Era (1930-1945) and Post War Expansion Era (1946-1962); and Criterion C at the local level of significance for its architectural design, materials, and method of construction.

At the HRB meeting of July 26, 2007, the Board voted unanimously to accept the proposed recommendations by the Historic Building Interiors Ad Hoc Subcommittee concerning the evaluation and designation of interior spaces. It was agreed that the interiors of public buildings and publicly accessible interiors of otherwise private buildings require evaluation and that interior spaces that are not volunteered by the owner must be of exceptional significance in order to be designated. The Cubist, Baranceanu WPA mural in the public lobby of the La Jolla Post Office is a well-preserved element of historical significance and the National Register Nomination Report clearly describes it as such. Therefore staff recommends the lobby mural, *Scenic View of the Village*, painted by Belle Baranceanu be included in any designation.

Given that the La Jolla Post Office has been listed on the National and California Registers, and given that the Historical Resources Board designation criteria provide for the local designation of resources listed on or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, staff recommends designation of the La Jolla Post Office, including the interior lobby mural, *Scenic View of the Village*, by Belle Baranceanu under HRB Criterion E.

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.

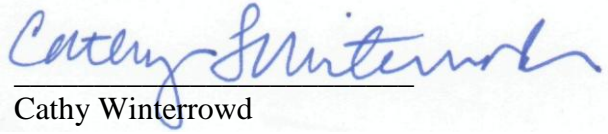
CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the La Jolla Post Office located at 1140 Wall Street be designated with a period of significance of 1935-1960 under HRB Criterion E due to its listing on the National and California State Registers. An interior element included in the designation is the public lobby mural, *Scenic View of the Village* (1935-1936), painted by Belle Baranceanu. 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 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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Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Interior Elements Proposed for Designation
3. Letter to Mayor Filner dated February 27, 2013
4. Staff Field Check Photo Survey dated March 2013
5. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover