



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: February 12, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-015

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of February 26, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – 215 West Washington Street**

APPLICANT: City of San Diego represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 215 W. Washington Street, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 215 West Washington Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 215 West Washington Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The property is located along a main thoroughfare in the Mission Hills neighborhood.

The building is located on APN 440-650-36. The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject building was not yet 45 years old when the Uptown Area was last surveyed in 2004-2006.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Marie Burke Lia 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 215 West Washington Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Mission Hill'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 215 West Washington 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.

Constructed ca. 1962, in the Modern Contemporary style, the building is two stories with a concrete block and brick veneer first floor with a wood frame and scored concrete second floor. The roof of the building features a folded plate section and flat portion. The main façade of the building fronts Washington Street and features variously placed aluminum windows and doors punched into the brick façade on the first floor at the west end with two narrow windows on the second level. Heading east on the first floor, there is a row of high windows and a pair of aluminum storefront doors. The second floor of the east end features the overhanging folded plate roof with windows integrated into the roof form.

On the first floor of the east façade the second floor appears to cantilever over the first floor and is supported by two inset square columns with a central two story glass element essentially creating two inset porches. The northern porch features high placed windows along the brick façade and aluminum storefront doors that provide access to the central glass element. The southern porch mirrors the opposite porch with entry doors. The central glass element is two stories and has the appearance of a multi-light fixed aluminum window.

The south façade of the building features high windows on the first floor under the folded plate roof portion with a second floor that mirrors the north façade with the addition of a metal staircase that accesses the second floor. The flat roof portion features five, evenly spaced, narrow, fixed windows on the second floor. The west façade features a centrally located access door on the first floor and three narrow windows on the second floor.

There have been a couple of alterations to the building which include the conversion of a carport to office space which appears to have been removed and the creation of offices within the interior of the building.

As discussed in the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, the Contemporary style was ubiquitous in San Diego during the 1950s and 1960s as a style for commercial buildings and streetscapes. These buildings display many of the same design features as Contemporary style homes, such as angular massing, varied material use, and unusual roof forms, especially on free-standing commercial buildings. Signage for the street front commercial buildings in the Contemporary style was generally large, with bold free-standing letters attached to building facades that were frequently lighted in order to attract passing motorists. For Contemporary buildings with private parking lots such as grocery stores, signage was frequently taller and rose above the building itself, serving as a beacon in large parking areas.

Of the primary character-defining features noted in the Modernism Context, the main attribute of the building is its strong roof form. The folded plate roof form, which originated in 1923, is a structure composed of thin, deep elements joined rigidly along their boundaries and forming sharp angles to brace each other against lateral buckling. The resulting stiffness of the cross section enables a folded plate roof to span relatively long distances. The consultant has noted several other instances of folded plate roofs within San Diego, most notably the Macy's Department Store in Mission Valley which appears to feature all of the primary character-defining features of a Contemporary style building. The applicant was also able to identify several public libraries and churches with the similar type of roof.

While the building features some of the primary and secondary character-defining features of a Modern Contemporary building, there are a number of elements lacking including the large expanses of glass, horizontal orientation, and integrated, stylized signage. Additionally, the folded plate roof utilized on the subject property is not a "rare or an important example of building practices, construction innovations or technological advances during a specific time in history." Therefore, staff does not 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 subject property at 215 West Washington Street was designed by William Frederick Rosser and built by Henry L. Wheeler and Company. Neither William Frederick Rosser nor the Henry L. Wheeler and Company has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate them as such at this time. 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 215 West Washington 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 215 West Washington 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 not recommended that the property located at 215 West Washington Street 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.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

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Attachment:

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover