

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 12, 2012

TO: Historical Resources Board and Interested Parties

FROM: Kelley Stanco, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **ITEM 6 – Fred W. Osburn House**

This item was previously heard by the Board on May 24, 2012. At that meeting, the Board continued the item for up to two meetings with direction to provide additional research and analysis under HRB Criterion A, looking at the development of the Middletown area and why the building was built as a vernacular expression of Victorian era architecture. Following the hearing, the applicant informed staff that they were unable to invest additional resources in report revisions. Consequently, staff has conducted limited additional research to address the Board's motion, which is presented in this memo.

To provide a context for late 19th century development in the Middletown area, the following excerpts from the Draft Uptown Context Statement are provided:

Development activity in Uptown remained stagnant until Southern California experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth in the mid-1880s. After years of planning and construction, the California Southern Railroad was completed in 1885 and connected San Diego with the transcontinental Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line at its hub in Barstow. In San Diego, the completion of the railroad touched off the "Great Boom" between the years 1885 and 1887, wherein the city experienced a population increase unparalleled in its history.

Not only did the railroad transform the rural outpost of San Diego into a mainstream American town, but its construction pushed development onto the Uptown mesa for the first time.... The Great Boom came to an end by the spring of 1888 as Southern California's real estate bubble abruptly burst and tens of thousands of San Diegans, many of whom had become "paper millionaires", were left near penniless.

Despite its eventual collapse, the Great Boom touched off development in the Planning Area for the first time.... In the early months of 1888, prior to that year's economic downturn, more than 100 homes were constructed in Uptown. These were built primarily in the section north of New Town but south of Laurel Street.... Reflective of the era, many of the community's early homes were styled in accordance with Victorian period architectural styles....

In addition to the civic elite, the Uptown community appealed to the middle class and the upwardly mobile as well. A number of modest homes were constructed in the Planning Area during this period. These homes also featured Victorian-era architectural styles and details but were constructed by builders and carpenters, not architects, and were generally not as complex in form, ornament and scale.... These more modest properties would increase in number range over the next few decades as the streetcar became the main mode of transportation.

The subject building, constructed c.1888, reflects this context of early development in Uptown. Sanborn Maps from the years 1887, 1888 and 1906 were reviewed to evaluate development in the area of the subject property (Attachment 1). Maps for 1887 do not extend north of A Street, with the exception of the Florence Hotel, which is shown at Grape Street and Third Avenue, reflecting the limited development in Uptown at the start of the Great Boom. Maps for 1888 indicate more consistent development up through Cedar Street, with sporadic development between Cedar and Laurel Streets. Maps for 1906 extend up through Uptown into Hillcrest and University Heights as expansion of the streetcar provided access to these once remote areas. The block occupied by the subject house was not included in the 1887-1906 maps, and was not documented until the 1921 Sanborn Maps. The 1887, 1888 and 1906 maps do illustrate, however, that development was steadily and sporadically expanding northward, with one, two or a handful of structures on each block.

While the subject building does reflect this early development, there is no evidence that it does so to any greater degree than other structures built during the turn of the last century. Draft results from the 2007 Uptown Survey reveal approximately 342 extant structures constructed in Uptown prior to 1906, just under half of which were constructed before 1900. The vast majority of these were found to be minimally altered. There is no evidence available to suggest that the subject house spurred development in the Middletown area or played a unique or special role in that development. Rather, the building appears only to reflect early development, which is insufficient for designation under Criterion A.

In regard to the vernacular nature of the building; the Draft Context establishes that the middle class and the upwardly mobile constructed modest homes in Uptown during this period. These homes featured Victorian-era architectural styles and details but were constructed by builders and carpenters, not architects, and were generally not as complex in form, ornament and scale. 31 of the 156 pre-1900 buildings identified in the 2007 Draft Uptown Survey were identified as vernacular Victorian Era buildings. The original owner and resident of the subject building, Fred W. Osburn (also F.W. Osburn) was listed in the 1887-1888 City Directory as a contractor with an office on Fourth Avenue. He was later listed in the 1897 Directory as the Superintendent of Streets. Prior to construction of the subject house, Osburn worked as a contractor on the California Southern Railroad in 1884, according to the *Journal of San Diego History*. His occupation as a contractor accounts for the vernacular styling of the building, which he likely constructed himself with his moderate earnings. As Criterion A requires that a resource be unique or distinct among others within its context, staff finds that the building does not reflect vernacular architecture to any greater degree than other similar examples.

As the building does not appear to reflect special elements of development related to early development in Middletown/Uptown or vernacular architecture, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

In conclusion, the staff recommendation provided in Staff Report No. HRB-12-031 remains unchanged, as follows:

Designate the Fred W. Osburn House located at 2430 Union Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of c.1888 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Victorian Era Vernacular architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a moderately pitched, truncated hipped roof with front-facing cross-gable; slightly overhanging eaves with a smooth soffit and simple cornice; wide wood tongue-and-groove siding over wood frame construction; a partial-hipped roof porch on simple wood spindles; and fenestration consisting of tall 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows.



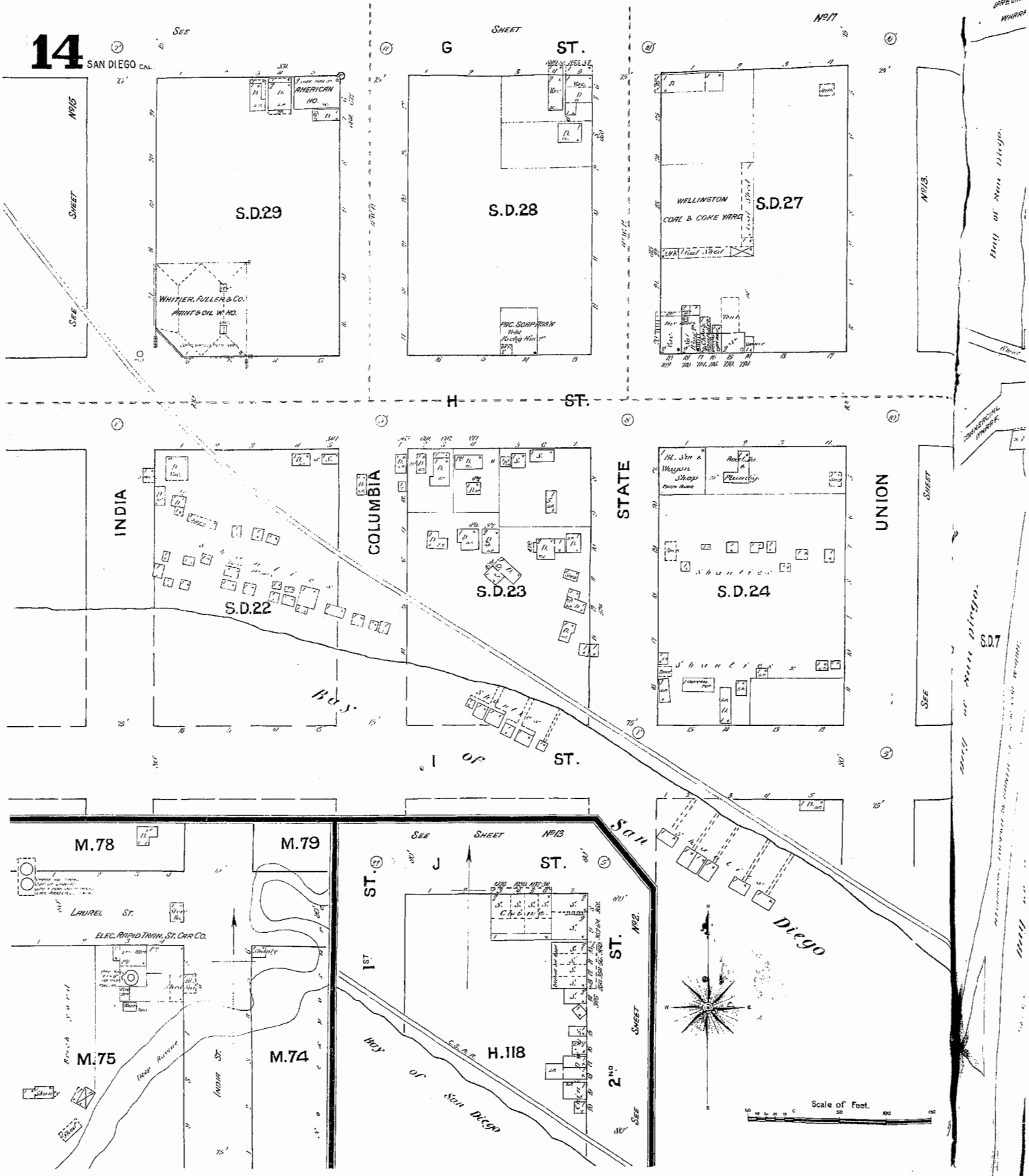
Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner

Attachments:

1. Sanborn Maps from 1887, 1888 and 1906
2. Staff Report No. HRB-12-031, with Attachments

14

SAN DIEGO CAL.



S.D.29

AMERICAN HO.

WHITIER, FULLER & CO.
PRINTS & OIL W. AD.

G ST.

S.D.28

PAC. COAST PRESS
PRINTING & LITHO.

H ST.

S.D.27

WELLINGTON
COAL & COKE YARD

INDIA

S.D.22

COLUMBIA

S.D.23

STATE

S.D.24

Shunties

M.78

M.79

LAUREL ST.

ELEC. RAPID TRAM, ST. CAR CO.

M.75

M.74

1st ST.

J ST.

S.D.25

H.118

1st ST.

2nd ST.

K ST.

L ST.

M ST.

N ST.

O ST.

P ST.

Q ST.

R ST.

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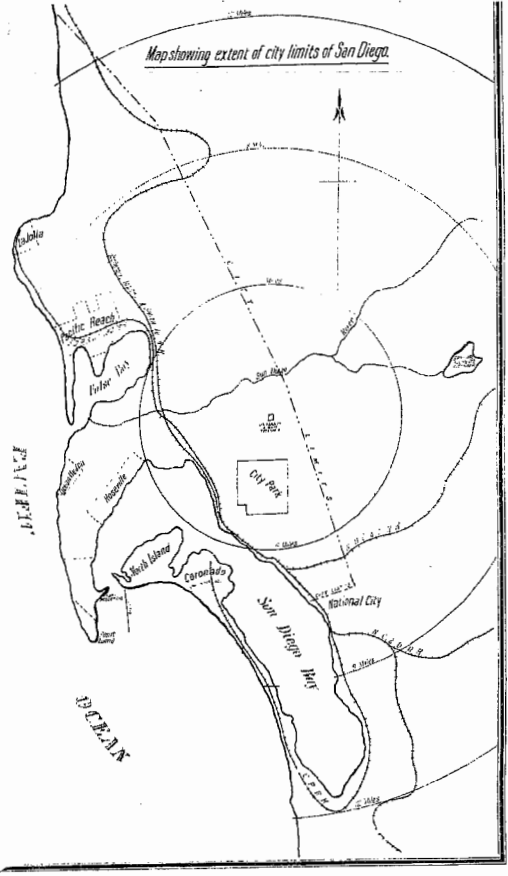
W ST.

X ST.

Y ST.

Z ST.

Scale of Feet.



SAN DIEGO
Population 28200. Prevailing Winds, N.W.

WATER FACILITIES.

The water supply for the city is derived from the San Diego River and the San Diego Bay. The water is pumped to the city through a system of pipes and conduits. The main pumping station is located at the foot of the city, and the water is distributed to the various parts of the city through a network of pipes. The water is of good quality and is used for domestic and industrial purposes.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The fire department is organized into three divisions, each with its own fire engine and hose wagon. The divisions are located in different parts of the city to ensure quick response to fires. The fire engines are equipped with the latest machinery and are operated by skilled firemen. The fire department also maintains a system of public hydrants throughout the city.

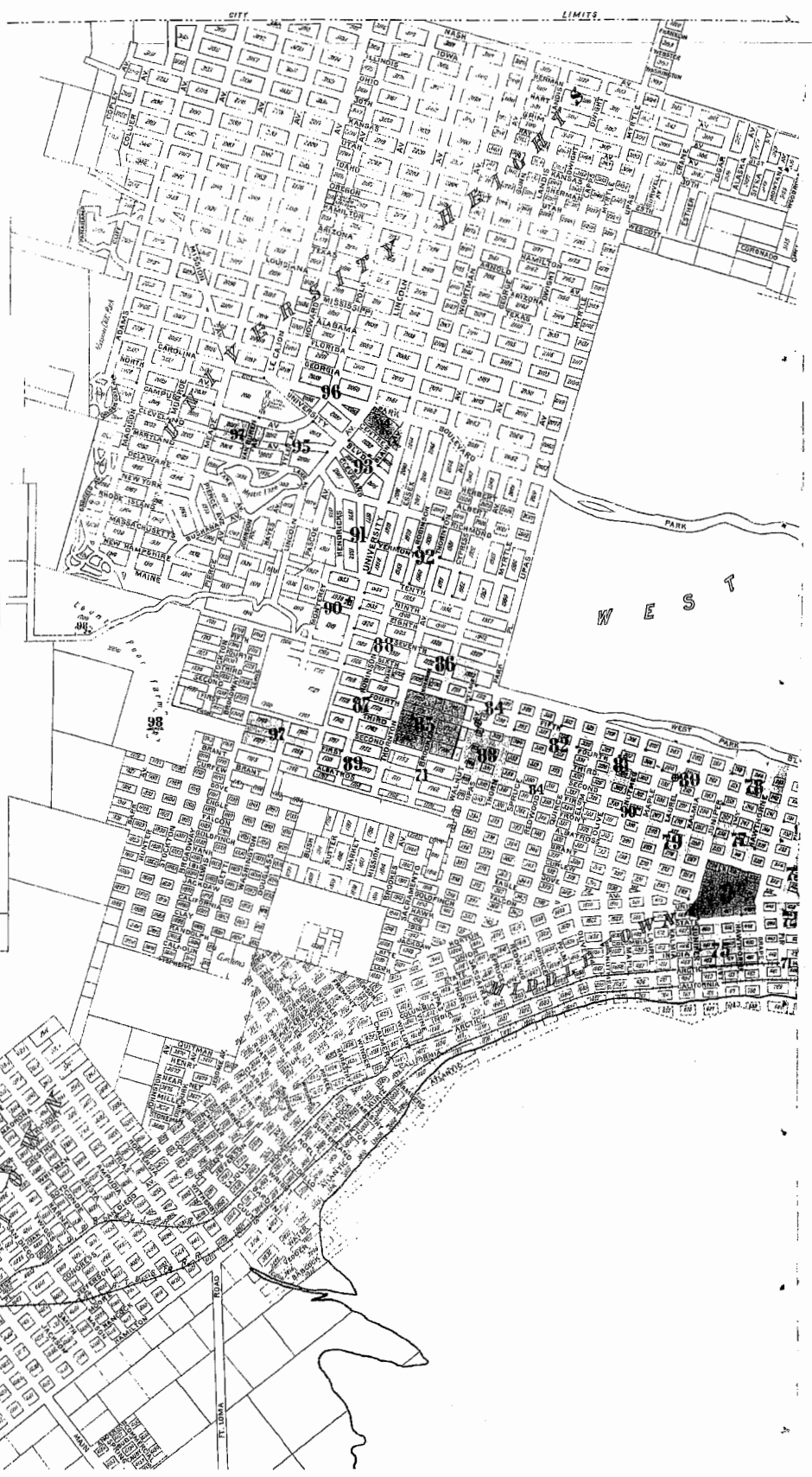
CORONADO BEACH
Population 1200. Prevailing Winds, N.W.

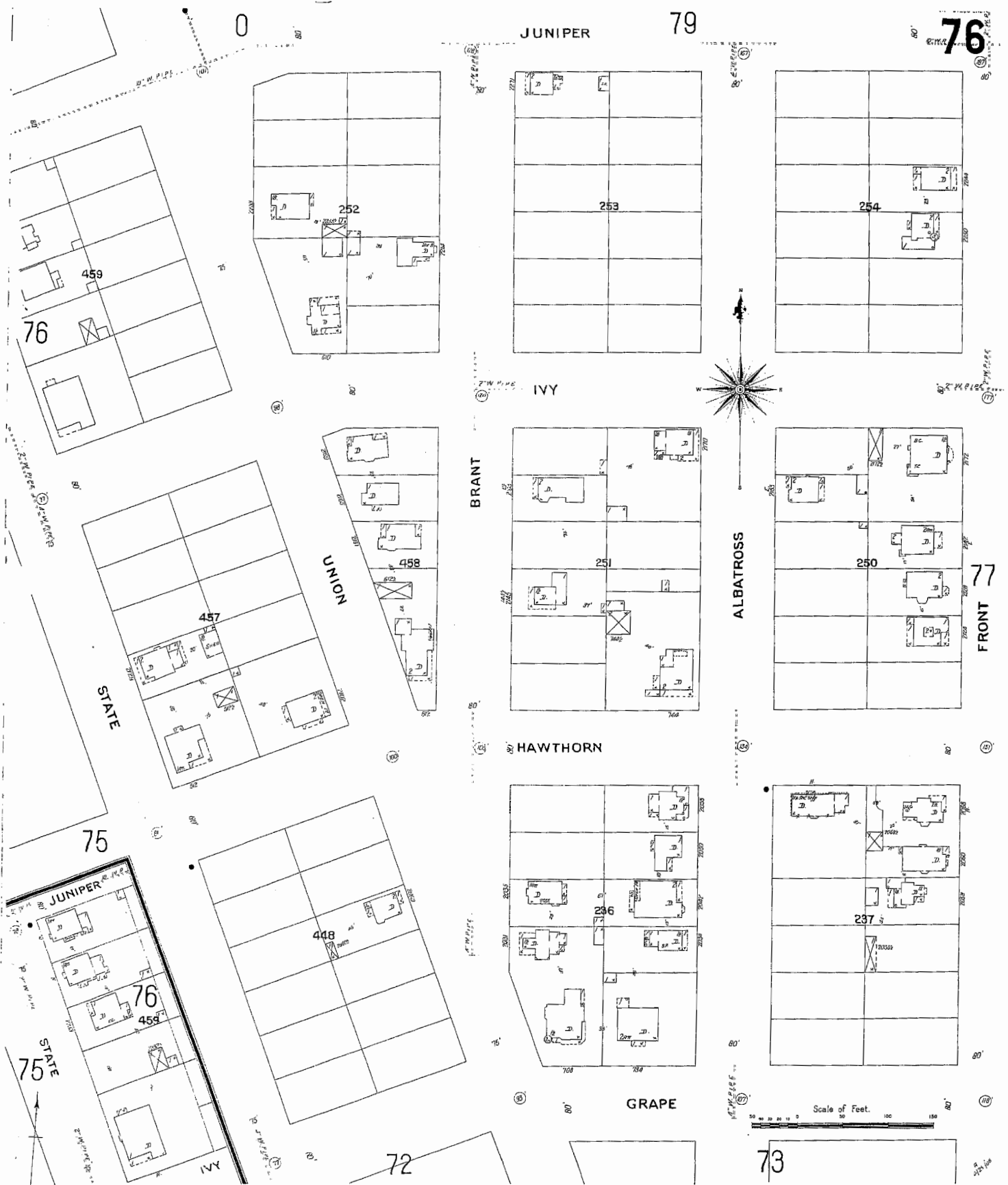
WATER FACILITIES.

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JUNIPER 79

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76

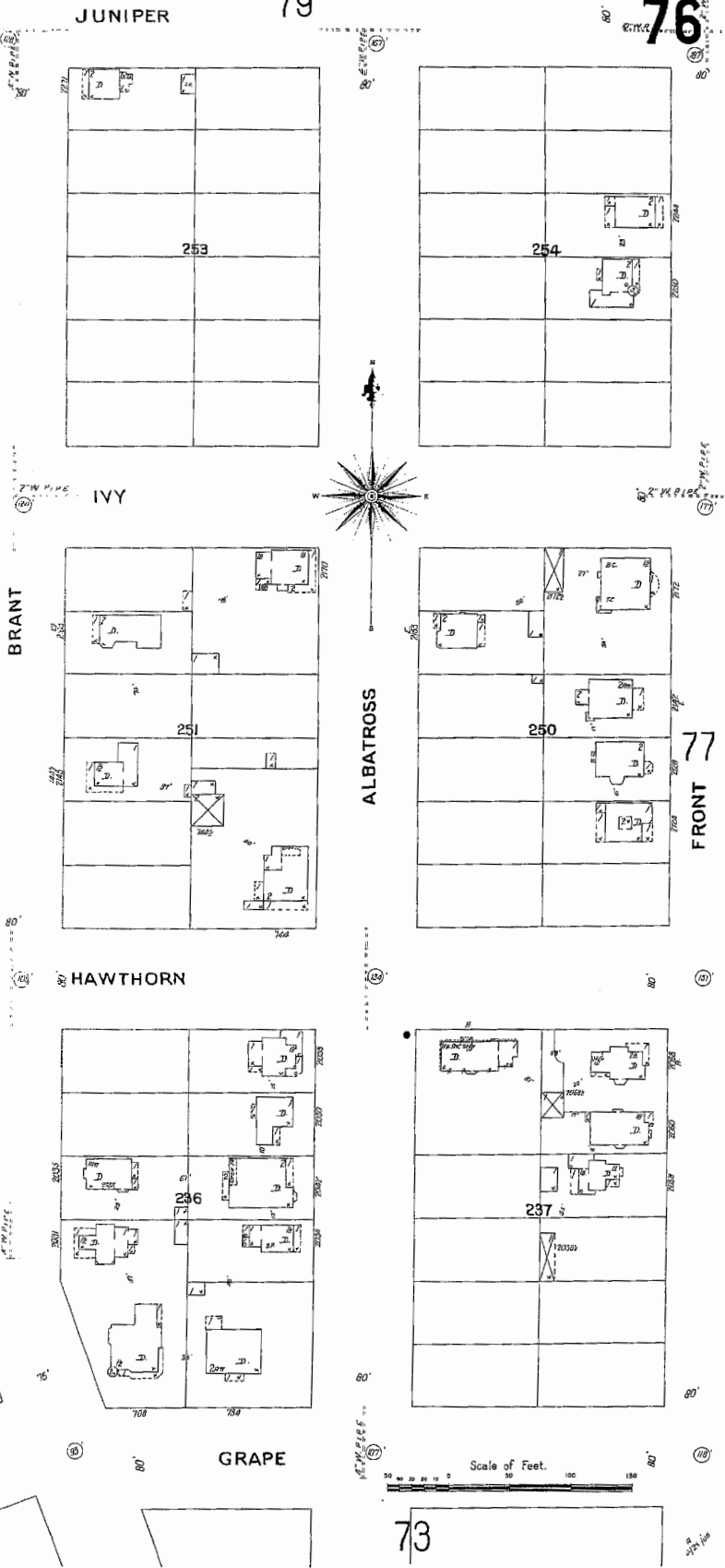
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75

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73

77 FRONT



Scale of Feet. 0 50 100 150



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-031

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of May 24, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Fred W. Osburn House**

APPLICANT: NDD, Inc. represented by Marie Burke Lia
Velda Knox, property owner

LOCATION: 2430 Union Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Fred W. Osburn House located at 2430 Union Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Fred W. Osburn House located at 2430 Union Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of c.1888 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Victorian Era Vernacular architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a moderately pitched, truncated hipped roof with front-facing cross-gable; slightly overhanging eaves with a smooth soffit and simple cornice; wide wood tongue-and-groove siding over wood frame construction; a partial-hipped roof porch on simple wood spindles; and fenestration consisting of tall 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application by a potential buyer to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The building is a one story single family house located in the Middletown subdivision. The house is surrounded by single, family, multi-family and commercial development.

The historic name of the resource, the Fred W. Osburn House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the first owner, who constructed the house as their personal residence. This is substantiated by City Directory research from 1887-1888, which lists "Osburn F.W., contractor, office 862 Fourth, res cor Union and Kalmia" and 1897, which lists "Osburn, F.W., superintendent of streets, res Union bet Kalmia and Laurel".

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Kathleen Crawford of the Office of Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees, and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as 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 subject building located at 2430 Union Street is a one story Victorian Era Vernacular single family home constructed c.1888, and features an irregular plan (although it appears as gable-and-wing from the primary elevation); a moderately pitched, truncated hipped roof with front-facing cross gable and asphalt shingles; slightly overhanging eaves with a smooth soffit and simple cornice; wide wood tongue-and-groove siding over wood frame construction; and a wood pier foundation with mudsills. The primary elevation appears "L" shaped, with a front-facing gable at the north end of the façade, and a partial-hipped roof porch on simple wood spindles to the south. Fenestration consists of tall 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows. Modifications include replacement of the roof sheathing and roofing material on the porch cover; and alterations at the rear consisting of storage area additions, a porch addition, stairs, and window additions and replacements. The applicant's report indicates that the extent of the work at the porch cannot be verified; however, physical inspection of the porch reveals older wood construction at the porch posts and header, and there is no scarring on the siding to indicate that the profile or appearance of the roof was changed. It appears to have been an in-kind replacement. Additionally, the modifications at the rear are not visible from Union Street, do not impact any significant character defining features, and do not significantly impair the integrity of the house.

Vernacular architecture, present throughout all eras and styles, reflects local, non-architect designed interpretations of popular high-style architecture. In this instance, Osburn, a contractor, constructed a Vernacular interpretation of Victorian Era architecture, characterized by gable and hipped roof forms, wood siding in shiplap, tongue-and-groove, lap and shingle varieties, tall, double hung windows, and corner porches supported on posts and spindles. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Victorian Era Vernacular architecture by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including a truncated hipped roof with front-facing cross-gable; overhanging eaves with a smooth soffit and simple cornice; wider tongue-and-groove siding; a partial-width porch with simple wood spindles; and tall double hung wood frame windows. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion C.

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 Fred W. Osburn House located at 2430 Union Street be designated with a period of significance of c.1888 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Victorian Era Vernacular architecture and retains integrity to the date of construction. 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 Stanco
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 5/24/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/24/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Fred W. Osburn House** located at **2430 Union Street, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **533-062-05-00**, further described as BLK 72 LOT 9 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 Fred W. Osburn House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that embodies as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Victorian Era Vernacular architecture and retains integrity to the c. 1888 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a moderately pitched, truncated hipped roof with front-facing cross gable; slightly overhanging eaves with a smooth soffit and simple cornice; wide wood tongue-and-groove siding over wood frame construction; a partial-hipped roof porch on simple wood spindles; and fenestration consisting of tall 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash 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: _____
KEITH BAUERLE
Deputy City Attorney