



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 16, 2008 REPORT NO. HRB-08-068

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of October 30, 2008

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Legacy 106 on behalf of the owners, Claudio and Rita Romero-Dutschmann

LOCATION: 4330 Witherby Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1 located at 4330 Witherby Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1 located at 4330 Witherby Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1926 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1926 period of significance.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification of a structure 45 years old or older consistent with SDMC Section 143.0212 and the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The house is



a one and two story Spanish Eclectic style home built in 1926 by developer/contractor David Ryan and designer/builder Arthur Kunze as a speculation house for property owners Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly in the residential subdivision of Carmelita Place in Mission Hills.

The historic name of the resource, the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the names of Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly, who constructed the house as a speculation house. Although David Ryan's name appears on the Notice of Completion as the owner (by attorney), and both Ryan and Arthur Kunze appear on the Water and Sewer records as the owner, neither Ryan nor Kunze ever appear on the title as owners of the property, although they were clearly responsible for many speculative projects in this subdivision. The Board's adopted naming policy states, "If the site is a house that was built for speculation and the owner who had it builder never lived in it, the house may be NAMED FOR ITS OWNER, provided it is also identified in the name as a SPECULATIVE HOUSE." As the Kellys were the sole owners of the house during its construction per the chain of title, and as they never lived at the house, the historic name of the house shall be the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1, consistent with the adopted naming policy.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, 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 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 property at 4330 Witherby Street contains a one and two-story stucco over wood frame Spanish Eclectic style house built in 1926 in a generally rectangular configuration on a concrete foundation. The house features a flat roof and parapet for much of the roofline, with a side-gable clay tile roof on the right, forward-projecting side of the house. This side-gabled bay includes a decorative arched window consisting of a 25-lite fixed center pane flanked by narrow single-pane casements set just right of center on the bay; and three staggered, narrow windows with thick decorative sills and decorative (non-historic) stained glass. The entry door is located on the south side of this bay, perpendicular to Witherby Street. The left bay features a flat roof and parapet with a large fixed single-pane window flanked by 10-lite casement windows. Fenestration elsewhere on the house consists primarily of 1-over-1 double hung windows, multi-pane casement windows and fixed single-pane windows.

In 1930, the house underwent a number of modifications, which were completed by William B. Melhorn for then-owners Fraser and Helen Macpherson. As originally constructed in 1926, the side-gabled, forward-projecting bay featured clipped eaves and a low-profile pan-tile. As part of the remodel, the eaves were extend past the wall of the building with exposed "rafter tails" and the roofing tile was changed to a higher-profile barrel tile. The left bay was also modified from its original appearance, which included a stepped parapet with end piers and a long, shallow decorative shed tile roof between; a distinctive, bold projecting cornice which extend across the façade under the decorative shed tile roof and out past the building wall into the sideyard; and a decorative plaster detailing above the window. All of these elements were removed as part of the

1930 remodel, and the parapet was modified to a simple, straight parapet without any decoration or ornamentation. The 1930 remodel included additions to the rear of the property, including the second story addition set to the rear. At some point, the entry door was relocated from the building wall inside the vestibule parallel to Witherby Street to the pre-existing arched vestibule opening perpendicular to Witherby Street. It is not entirely clear whether or not this happened during or after the Melhorn remodel, as the door is not clearly visible in the c.1940 historic photograph. Lastly, at an unknown date, the original garden wall, which was set flush with the forward-projecting bay, was extended out into the yard to the front property line and a canvass awning was added above the window on the left bay.

During the process of researching the property, the current owner was able to obtain historic photographs from a relative of Helen Macpherson which clearly illustrated the appearance of the house as constructed in 1926 and shortly after the 1930 remodel. Based on this primary documentation, the owner decided to pursue partial restoration of the house to the 1926 period. This restoration work includes removal of the extended eaves; replacement of the barrel tile with a pan-tile; demolition of the non-historic garden wall and reconstruction of the original garden wall; reconstruction of the stepped parapet, piers, narrow shed tile roof, and projecting cornice; and the reconstruction of the plaster detail. The relocated entry door will remain in its current location and the additions, which are located toward the rear of the house and do not significantly impact the resource, will remain. On October 3, 2007 the Design Assistance Subcommittee (DAS) reviewed the proposed restorations and were supportive of the project, noting that the restoration of the tile and eave line was important, and the restoration of the parapet bay was highly encouraged (Attachment 1).

In May of 2008 the property owner began the process of restoring the building with a permit application. In September 2008 the owner completed the first phase of the restoration project, which included the removal of the eave extension, the removal of the barrel tile and the installation of the pan-tile, and the demolition of the modified garden wall and the reconstruction of the original garden wall. According to the project architect, phase one did not require building permits and was therefore completed first. The remaining work, which includes reconstruction of the stepped parapet, piers, narrow shed tile roof, and projecting cornice and the reconstruction of the plaster detail will be completed as part of the second phase. HRB staff has reviewed and approved the plans for the second phase, and the owner is awaiting building permit issuance. It may be that the reconstruction of the portion of the cornice which extended into the setback will not be allowed to be reconstructed due to zoning constraints. If this is the case, HRB staff has directed the owner to reconstruct the cornice up to the edge of the building wall. If the code is amended in the future to allow reconstruction of this element, either through a ministerial or discretionary process, the owner will be able to do so. A photographic chronology of modifications and restorations has been included in Attachment 2.

In most cases, staff requires that a significant portion of restoration work be completed before staff will recommend designation of a resource. In this instance, approximately half of the restoration work has been completed, and the other half has been approved by HRB staff. The owner has exhibited a good-faith effort in restoring the building, and staff is comfortable recommending designation with the remaining work pending. If, for some reason, the remaining work is not completed and the owner applies for a Mills Act contract, the remaining work will be


included as conditions of the contract to be completed within the first two years. Therefore, staff recommends that the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1 located at 4330 Witherby Street be designated under HRB Criterion C as a good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture embodying distinctive characteristics of the style and retaining a good level of integrity from its 1926 period of significance. The period of significance of 1926 reflects the original design and the selected reconstruction date.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the remaining restoration work, which includes reconstruction of the stepped parapet, piers, narrow shed tile roof, and projecting cornice and the reconstruction of the plaster detail is not completed and the owner applies for a Mills Act contract, the remaining work will be included as conditions of the contract to be completed within the first two years. Other Mills Act conditions shall include the reconstruction of the decorative wrought-iron grilles over the three narrow windows. Additional conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included a Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Cornelius and Eva Lee Kelly Spec House #1 located at 4330 Witherby Street be designated under HRB Criterion C as a good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture embodying distinctive characteristics of the style and retaining a good level of integrity from its 1926 period of significance. 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
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

KS/cw

- Attachment(s):
1. Design Assistance Subcommittee Meeting Record of 10/3/2007
 2. Photographic chronology of modifications and restorations
 3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
 4. Applicant's Historical Report Addendum under separate cover

DESIGN ASSISTANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

October 3, 2007, 3:00 pm – 6:30
4th Floor Conference Room
City Administration Building
202 C Street, San Diego, CA

MEETING NOTES

1. ATTENDANCE

Boardmembers: David Marshall (Chair), Otto Emme and John Eisenhart. Note: Mr. Eisenhart recused on 4330 Witherby Street

Staff: Marianne Greene, City Attorney's Office; Michael Tudury, HRB; Myra Herrmann, DSD

Guests: 4330 Witherby Street, Mission Hills: Ron and Dale May
4430 Witherby Street, Mission Hills: (Staff Report)
4251 Sierra Vista: Tom and Amy Stripe O'Regan
1104 Missouri Street, Pacific Beach: C. A. Marengo, architect
Ivy (Maryland) Hotel Signage: Louise Kelley, owner
2411 Second Avenue Office Building: Scott Moomjian, attorney; Doug Cook, contractor; Jeanne Martin, Bad Boy Brands, Offner Uptown LLC
Balboa Park House of Hospitality Restaurant Heaters: David Cohn, owner
Proposed balcony expansion at the La Valencia Hotel: Paul Benton, architect

2. Public/Staff Comment: None

3. Projects:

- 4330 Witherby Street, Mission Hills:
(John Eisenhart recused himself on this item and left the room.)
Ron May requested that the DAS review and comment on a proposed architectural restoration of this house. He presented historical and contemporary photos of the house and a rendering of a proposed restoration solution by the architect for DAS comment and guidance. He noted that in order to be more consistent with the historic character, the rounded rafter tails at the right side of the building would be removed and replaced with a trim piece to recall the historic photo and that wall would be faithfully reconstructed. He said that the reconstruction of the site wall would shorten the porch and that the new lower site wall would be capped and would have a low gate. He noted that a house in the same block had a similar scrollwork element to that shown in the historic photo and that it could be duplicated. He showed an 8 ½"x11" color rendering of the proposed new front elevation

Board Comment:

Chair David Marshall stated that the proposal to return the right side of the street-facing site wall to its historical appearance was good and asked that the vertical windows be further investigated. As it is not clear from the historical photos, if these vertical windows were clear glass, it would be OK to replace the existing stained glass windows there with clear glass. Mr. Marshall encouraged the reconstruction of the original unusual parapet at the wall behind the porch and the addition of the garland scrollwork, but said that this was not required. He said that if the owner chose to retain the existing plain parapet wall, that the top of the wall should be left alone and a new tile "cap" should not be introduced at the top of the wall.

Boardmember Otto Emme stated that he was pleased with the change of the use of the front yard back to its historic use and character. He was pleased that the awning at the porch was to be removed. He also encouraged, but did not require, that the porch wall parapet and garland be restored. It was noted that there was no guarantee that the house would be designated in the future, regardless of the scope of restoration work.

Other Comment: None

- 4430 Witherby Street, Mission Hills: (Boardmember John Eisenhart returned)
This 1917 property was found by the Board to be a non-contributing resource to the Fort Stockton Line Historic District and was given a status code of 6L. The owners, Steve and Barbara McGee, would like to consider possible restorations to their property which might make it eligible for designation as a contributing resource. A packet of information provided by staff Kelley Saunders was presented by staff Mike Tudury.

Board Comment:

Chair David Marshall wanted to confirm if the stucco was over wood siding or if the stucco was original. The notes indicate stucco over hollow clay tile, but the DPR form states "probably wood siding or shingle, but stuccoed over." Post-meeting, staff Kelley Saunders confirmed that it was stucco over clay tile -- the original material, but not the original texture.

Boardmember Otto Emme stated that, if the stucco is not original, the property might be too far gone, requiring multiple changes to be a contributor to the district. He noted the car parked in the front yard and the elimination of the original driveway beyond.

Boardmember John Eisenhart indicated that he agreed with staff that the arbor should be removed and the front yard restored.

The boardmembers all agreed that, if the stucco is the original façade material, if the following three things were done they could support it as a contributor to the district: change the stucco to an historically appropriate texture; remove the arbor and return the front yard to its historic look; and extend a split (Hollywood style) driveway to (at least) the side of the house in order to not have a car parked illegally in the front yard. It was noted that there was no guarantee that the house would be designated as a contributor in the future, regardless of the scope of restoration work.

Other: None.

- 4251 Sierra Vista:
This remodeled 1921 property is currently a non-contributor to the Fort Stockton Line Historic District. The owners would like to restore their property so that it may be

CHRONOLOGY OF MODIFICATIONS AND RESTORATIONS OF 4330 WITHERBY STREET



1926: Original Configuration

- Stepped parapet with piers
- Long, narrow decorative shed tile roof
- Projecting cornice
- Plaster detailing
- Pan-tile
- Clipped eaves
- Door set inside vestibule
- Original garden wall

c. 1940's: Reflecting Melhorn Remodel

- Straight parapet
- No long, narrow decorative shed tile roof
- No projecting cornice
- No plaster detailing
- Barrel clay tile
- Extended eaves
- Door set inside vestibule?
- Original garden wall



Early 2008: Melhorn Remodel & Additional Modif

- Straight parapet
- No long, narrow decorative shed tile roof
- No projecting cornice
- No plaster detailing
- Barrel clay tile
- Extended eaves
- Door set in opening to vestibule
- Extended garden wall



October 2008: Current Configuration

- Straight parapet (to be restored)
- No long, narrow decorative shed tile roof (to be restored)
- No projecting cornice (to be restored)
- No plaster detailing (to be restored)
- Pan-tile (restored)
- Clipped eaves (restored)
- Door set in opening to vestibule (to remain)
- Original garden wall (restored)

