



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 9, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-027

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 23, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Florence E. Gibson Spec House**

APPLICANT: Megan Humpal and Angela Rock, owners; represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 4771 Vista Lane, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of 4771 Vista Lane as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Florence E. Gibson Spec House as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic style architecture. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic architectural style and retains integrity from its period of significance, the construction date of 1927.



BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board at the owner's request to have the site designated as a historical resource. The house is a one story plus basement Spanish Eclectic style home built in 1927, according to the Residential Building Record and Water/Sewer connection records. The owner at the time of construction was Florence E. Gibson, no architect was identified.

The historic name of the resource, the Florence E. Gibson Spec House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy as Florence E. Gibson was the owner at the time of construction, however does not appear to have occupied the house.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that 4771 Vista Lane is significant under HRB Criteria A, B and C. Staff does not agree that 4771 Vista Lane is significant under either Criterion A or B 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.

The historical report concludes that the property is significant under HRB Criterion A for its physical expression of the historical, aesthetic, and architectural expression of the Kensington Park Extension. Staff does not believe that sufficient information was presented in the historical report to determine that the property exemplifies or reflects a special element of this subdivision, and therefore does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

The historical report also concludes that the property is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Judge John A. Hewicker. Judge Hewicker resided in the house from 1942 until his death in 1985. During this time he presided over civil and criminal cases, and was known as the "Hanging Judge" for being tough on criminals. The historical report notes that Judge Hewicker presided over a high-profile case in the 1950's that involved publicized government scandal and that this case resulted in the formation of the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control by the State of California. However the historical report does not directly connect Judge Hewicker to the formation of the ABC, it only states that he was the Judge that presided over the case. The historical report also suggests that Judge Hewicker was responsible for several significant reforms to the legal system during his career, including a reform that allows children in molestation cases to testify in closed session rather than in open court. The report provides supplemental documentation in the form of Judge Hewicker's obituary, two magazine articles, and a list of San Diego Union Tribune microfilm citations. The information provided is a good outline of Judge Hewicker's prolific law career; however it stops short of providing the

necessary research and analysis linking Judge Hewicker to specific legislation that resulted in the referenced significant reforms to the legal system. Therefore staff does not recommend designation of the property under HRB Criterion B.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is

Located on a steeply sloping corner lot, the Spanish Eclectic style home is a one-story plus basement with a rectangular floor plan. The exterior finish of the house and detached garage is stucco. The red tile roof has a low pitch and minimal eave overhang. This roof is not original; it is a restoration from non-historic shingles that replaced the original red tile roof in the 1950's. An arched top stucco chimney projects through the roofline resting against the front façade beneath the front three arch arcade. The house features two front facing gables at either end of the front façade with the arcade spanning the length between. A curved walkway leads from the sidewalk to the arcade and front entry which is paved with red concrete. Beneath the arcade, a wood door on the north wall features a fixed glass panel and iron grille, and two pairs of wood double doors with large glass panels are present on the east wall.

Fenestration throughout the home consists of casement and fixed wood windows. Focal windows are present at the north and south ends of the front, west facing, façade in the gable ends. At the north end, the focal window is divided into a fixed window flanked by two casements, while the south end features a large fixed pane window. Because the house is sited on a sloping canyon lot, most other fenestration is not visible from the street facades. This fenestration includes original wood windows and doors of various sizes and operations, as well as finished basement and screen porch that were enclosed with wood windows during the 1940's on the rear elevation. Leaded glass panels have replaced glass in the original windows on the north elevation, and the removal of an exterior porch and replacement of a pair of wood and glass doors on this elevation appears to have taken place since the submittal of the historical report in 2007.

The detached garage is linked to the house by a covered breezeway accessed by a wooden gate. The breezeway features a scored red concrete floor matching the floor of the covered arcade in front. A brick wall constructed during the 1940's separates the driveway from the breezeway access. At the rear of the breezeway, red concrete steps lead down to a rear garage entry door, a lath house, and the sloped backyard which features original concrete and rock hardscape elements. The tile roof overhang on the front of the garage is believed to be non-historic.

Overall, staff finds that the house retains integrity and embodies distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic style architecture. Modifications to the house including the enclosure of a rear screened porch and finished basement, and the addition of the brick wall at the driveway were made early on and do not adversely impact the property. Other modifications including the addition of the tile garage overhang and reconfiguration of the windows and doors on the north elevation are relatively minor and are reversible. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the Florence E. Gibson Spec House 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.

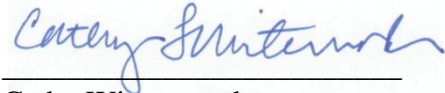
CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, staff recommends designation of the Florence E. Gibson Spec House as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C

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.



Tricia Olsen
Associate Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

TO/cw

Attachments: Draft Resolution
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 4/23/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/23/2009, to consider the historical designation of the **Florence E. Gibson Spec House** (owned by Angela Rock and Megan Humpal, 4771 Vista Lane, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4771 Vista Lane, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **465-300-08-00**, further described as Lots 4, 5, & 6, Block E, Kensington Park Extension, Map 1838 (filed June 2, 1925) 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.**, 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 **Florence E. Gibson Spec House** on the following finding:

(1) The property is historically significant under **CRITERION C** for its distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic architectural style and retains integrity from its period of significance, the construction date of 1927

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.** .

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