



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 14, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-059

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of August 27, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers 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 James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers House located at 4771 Vista Lane as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1927 under HRB Criteria A, C, and D, including the interior elements of the entry hall, living room and dining room. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource exemplifies a special element of the Gibson City development as the home of James and Florence Gibson, and as a featured home in Gibson City advertisements.
2. The resource embodies distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style of architecture and retains integrity from its 1927 period of significance.
3. The resource is a notable work of master architect, Charles Salyers, as an example of his early work, in particular as development architect at the Gibson City development.



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## BACKGROUND

This item was continued from the April 23, 2009 meeting of the Historical Resources Board. At that time, the consultant concluded that the property was significant under HRB Criteria A, B, and C. Staff concurred that the property is significant under Criterion C, but not A or B. At the request of the board, the consultant has submitted a revised historical report and addendum with additional information on the builder and the interiors. This report maintains that the house is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, and C, and additionally concludes that the property is significant under Criterion D.

The house is a one story plus basement Spanish Eclectic style home built in 1927, in the Gibson City development of the Kensington community. The date of construction is supported by the Residential Building Record and Water/Sewer connection records. The revised report includes new information regarding the first occupant and architect of the house. The report identifies James and Florence Gibson, developers of Gibson City and the owners at the time of construction, as the first occupants according to the city directories; and Charles Salyers, a recognized Master Architect, as the architectural designer of this house and all others in the Gibson City development. This is substantiated by advertisements for the development dating from 1927 that identify him as the designer.

Taking the information in the revised report and addendum into account, staff has determined that the appropriate name, based on the HRB naming policy is the James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers House. This name incorporates the first owners and occupants and recognizes the name of the Master Architect.

## ANALYSIS

After review of the revised report and addendum, staff maintains that the property is not significant under HRB Criterion B, but concurs with the consultant that in addition to being significant under HRB Criterion C, the property is also significant under HRB Criteria A and D, 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 addendum to the revised consultant report provides additional information on the significance of the property under HRB Criterion A as it relates to the Gibson City development and the property owners, James and Florence Gibson. The addendum indicates that the property exemplifies special elements of the Gibson City development, which was widely publicized in 1927. The Gibsons exerted an unusual level of control over the architectural style and standard of construction in their development through the hiring of a single development architectural designer, Charles Salyers, an established Master Architect in the City of San Diego; and a supervising contractor, Robert Brown. This ensured that all architectural design and construction was of the same standard of excellence throughout the development. In addition to serving as an

example of the high quality architectural and construction standards of the Gibson City development, the subject property at 4771 Vista Lane was the residence of James and Florence Gibson at the time of the Gibson City development, and was featured in Gibson City advertisements. Staff feels that this elevates the significance of the property within the Gibson City development and recommends that the property be designated under HRB Criterion A.

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

Staff does not recommend designation under criterion B, please see the staff report dated April 9, 2009 (attached) for a discussion of this criterion.

*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.*

Staff recommends designation of the property under HRB Criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic style architecture, as outlined in the report dated April 9, 2009. Please see this staff report (attached) for a discussion of the exterior of the property.

At the April 23, 2009 hearing, the Board requested that the applicant provide additional information regarding the interiors of the building. This information has been provided in the revised consultant report, and the consultant proposes that the interiors of the entry hall, living room, and dining room be included in the designation. The entry hall runs the length of the covered arcade and includes original features such as a red and white checkerboard tile floor, arched wood panel doors with original hardware, iron wall sconces, and a cove ceiling with a wood picture rail. The living room is accessed from the entry hall through a large original arched doorway leading down wooden steps. The floor is quarter sawn oak with a narrow mahogany band near the perimeter. Original single light French doors with original glass hardware flank the original fireplace. While the mantle is not original to the house, it has been in place more than 60 years and is included in the interior nomination. The living room ceiling is vaulted with original box beams. Accessed from the living room by an arched opening, the dining room features an original hardwood floor in the same pattern as the living room, original wood windows, and an original wood coffered ceiling. The dining room fireplace and hearth are original, and although, like the living room, the wood mantle is not original, it was added sometime prior to 1941 and is included in the nomination. Staff supports the inclusion of these interior elements into the 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.*

New information in the revised consultant report and addendum indicates that the subject property was designed by Charles Salyers, who served as development architectural designer for the Gibson City development. Born in 1900, Charles Salyers first arrived in San Diego at the age of nine. As a young man, he actively engaged in the local building industry, at which time he became skilled in the design and construction of private homes. According to the consultant report, Salyers was hired in 1927 as the development architectural designer for Gibson City, prior to becoming a licensed architect. This important commission provides insight into the early

phase of his career, and demonstrates that he was already viewed as a skilled architectural designer. Seeking to advance his profession, he was granted an architect's license in 1932, and was thereafter recognized as a prolific residential designer. In 1935, he was selected to design the home of businessman Paul E. Stake which, to this day, serves as a rare and intriguing domestic interpretation of the Streamline Moderne style. It is for this home, HRB Site #356, that Salyers was established as a Master Architect.

Already an accomplished builder and architect, Salyers further expanded his repertoire through the pursuit of a career in public administration. In 1941, he was recruited by officials at the newly-founded County Surveyor's Office to serve as their first Chief Building Inspector. He relinquished his position in 1948, though, when Governor Earl Warren appointed him Chief of the State Division of Housing. After serving in this capacity for two years, he returned to his home in San Diego, where he proceeded to design and construct single-family homes.

Salyers retired from practice in 1966 – after a career that spanned nearly forty years – and spent his later years discreetly managing apartment complexes throughout the city. While he was no longer at the forefront of public affairs, he did earn a considerable degree of notoriety when, in an unprecedented move, he successfully relocated an entire apartment building from Point Loma to Golden Hill. He remained in San Diego until his death in 1974.

The subject house, designed by Salyers for the Gibsons, is a notable example of his early work, in particular as development architectural designer at the Gibson City development. As such, staff recommends designation of the subject property as under Criterion D.

#### 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 James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers House located at 4771 Vista Lane as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1927 under HRB Criterion A, as a special element of the Gibson City development; criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic style architecture retaining integrity from its 1927 period of significance; and criterion D as a notable example of the early work of Charles Salyers, in particular as development architectural designer at the Gibson City development.

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.



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Tricia Olsen  
Associate Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

TO/cw

Attachments: Draft Resolution  
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover  
Staff Report dated April 9, 2009

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 8/27/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 8/27/2009, to consider the historical designation of the **James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers House** (owned by Angela Rock & 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. 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 James P. and Florence E. Gibson/Charles Salyers House on the following findings:

(1) The resource is historically significant under HRB Criterion A as it exemplifies a special element of the Gibson City development as the home of James and Florence Gibson, and as a featured home in Gibson City advertisements. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing; and

(2) The resource is historically significant under HRB Criterion C as it embodies distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style of architecture including a low pitch red tile roof, stucco exterior finish and chimney, covered entry arcade supported by stucco arches, arched focal windows, wood frame windows and doors, and retains integrity from its 1927 period of significance. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing; and

(3) The resource is historically significant under HRB Criterion D as it is a notable work of master architect, Charles Salyers, as an example of his early work, in particular as development architect at the Gibson City development. 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 well as the interior portions of the entry hall, living room, and dining room, 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
NINA FAIN  
Deputy City Attorney