



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 8, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-018

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of March 22, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #14 – Woolworth Building**

APPLICANT: Applicant, represented by Jaye MacAskill
Owned by the City of San Diego

LOCATION: 3067-3075 University Avenue, Greater North Park Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Woolworth Building located at 3067-75 University Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Woolworth Building located at 3067-75 University Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1949 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 Streamline Moderne architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a flat roof and parapet; stucco exterior; a ribbon of three-lite steel frame and sash awning windows at the second floor separated by raised stucco blocks with horizontal banding, all accented by a long, raised stucco surround that runs the width of the building; a metal raceway that also runs the width of the building between the first and second floors; and an aluminum and glass storefront flanked by a material resembling black marble.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the applicant's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The City of San Diego owns the building, and members of the Redevelopment staff and the Real Estate Assets Department are aware of the application. The building is a two story commercial structure located on University Avenue a few blocks east of 30th Street, in the heart of North Park's commercial district.

The historic name of the resource, the Woolworth Building, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the Woolworth Company, who constructed the building for use as a department store.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Jaye MacAskill, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C, but not Criterion A. 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.

The applicant's report states that the Woolworth Building reflects special aspects of the neighborhood's cultural, social and economic development, in addition to its aesthetic and architectural contribution to the neighborhood. Specifically, the report states that Woolworth's was one of the first major national retail chains to move into the North Park neighborhood following World War II, and that the Streamline Moderne architecture represents a notable aspect of the architectural development of North Park's commercial district in the immediate post-WWII era. However, it does not appear that the Woolworth Building contributed to the cultural, social or economic vitality of the neighborhood to any greater degree than its contemporaries; and there is no information in the record that the establishment of Woolworth's stimulated economic development in the neighborhood. In regard to architectural and aesthetic development, staff finds that the building's Modern/Streamline Moderne design does not appear to reflect a special element of the neighborhood, and that significance related to architecture is better addressed under HRB Criterion C. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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 3067-75 University Avenue is a two story commercial building constructed in 1949 in the Streamline Moderne style. The building features a flat roof and parapet; stucco over brick and concrete block walls; and a reinforced concrete foundation. At the second level, a ribbon of three-lite windows accented by a raised stucco surround runs the width of the building. These steel frame and sash windows are operable at the upper two-thirds and fixed at the lower one third. A set of three windows is centered on the façade and flanked by two sets of paired windows. Stucco divides with horizontal detailing are present between the sets of windows, adding to the horizontal emphasis on the building façade. A metal raceway that once contained Woolworth signage runs the width of the building between the first and second floors. At the ground floor, the aluminum and glass storefront is flanked by a material resembling black marble. Two recessed entrances are present at the west and east ends of the façade. Original terrazzo flooring with the Woolworth name is present at each entry door. Modifications are

limited to the introduction of raised stucco block detailing at the second floor c.1965 and the removal of the Woolworth signage at the raceway.

The San Diego Modernism Context Statement identifies c.1925-1950 as the period for Streamline Moderne architecture, which is characterized primarily by flat roofs with coping or flat parapets; an asymmetrical façade; horizontal massing and emphasis; smooth stucco or concrete exterior and horizontal accents and restrained detailing. The style is characterized secondarily by curved building corners; curved horizontal railings, overhangs and coping with horizontal projections above doorways and at the cornice line; steel sash windows; corner windows; glass block and round “porthole” windows.

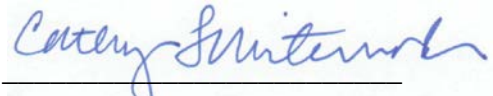
The subject building exhibits all of the primary features of Streamline Moderne architecture with the exception of an asymmetrical façade. In addition, the building displays secondary features including curved horizontal projections in the form of the raceway, and steel sash windows at the second floor. The limited modifications do not alter the character defining features of the building or significantly impair its integrity as a Streamline Moderne commercial building. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Streamline Moderne architecture by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, as detailed in the Modernism Context Statement. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject building under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Streamline Moderne architecture and retains integrity to the 1949 period of significance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Woolworth Building located at 3067-75 University Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1949 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the character defining features of Streamline Moderne architecture and retains integrity to the 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 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 3/22/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/22/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Woolworth Building** located at **3067-3075 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104**, APN: **453-152-03-00**, further described as BLK 2 LOT W 7.73 FT LOT 4 & ALL 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 Woolworth Building on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Streamline Moderne architecture and retains integrity to the 1949 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a flat roof and parapet; stucco exterior; a ribbon of three-lite steel frame and sash awning windows at the second floor separated by raised stucco blocks with horizontal banding, all accented by a long, raised stucco surround that runs the width of the building; a metal raceway that also runs the width of the building between the first and second floors; and an aluminum and glass storefront flanked by a material resembling black marble. 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