

Presidio Heritage Trust

2074 W. California Street

San Diego, CA 92110

Tel. (760) 715 8891

20 September 2023

The Old Town Chamber of Commerce Members,

The City Historical Resources Board Members,

The City of San Diego Planning staff, and

The Honorable Councilperson Jennifer Campbell, 2<sup>nd</sup> District

Colleagues,

A complete EIR (Environmental Impact Report) is warranted for the proposed Serra Museum A.D.A. parking project. As now proposed, this City project could entail severe adverse impacts. Numerous aspects warrant your further considerations.

This proposed A.D.A. project is within a nationally recognized and explicitly mapped landmark property. This internationally significant historic property, where Alta California began, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Properties. Included are the entire Spanish Presidio citadel ruins with a large church and Catholic cemetery, plus surrounding Presidio-era archaeological features.

This landmark Presidio property also is listed in the Sacred Lands File of California's Native American Heritage Commission, to further preserve this heritage. About 300 named individuals are buried in the cemetery here, both Native Americans and pioneering early soldiers, settlers, and craftsmen. Their names are posted prominently on the Park's kiosk and honorably viewed by many visitors. It is estimated that there now are about 80,000 direct family Presidio descendants after six generations.

City Planners are aware now, from the good May 2023 letter of the San Diego Archaeological Society by Jim Royle, that this A.D.A. project could adversely impact the "Casa Mata," a military casemate structure somewhat apart from the walled Presidio. This separate building was depicted on Vallejo's sketched diagram of the 1820s Presidio. Seemingly situated outside and somewhat above the Presidio's defensive perimeter palisade walls, the "Casa Mata" possibly could be located in the proposed A.D.A. project area.

RECON contracted a GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar) study in 2018 of the A.D.A project hillside; the full RECON technical report was finalized in 2022. The GPR report identified three “soil anomalies” of potential heritage significance: [1] one anomaly was apparently with “cobble, brick, and tile;” a [2] second anomaly interpreted as “flagpole, pit, lookout;” and [3] the third a “rectilinear feature,... possibly a small structure....(of) postholes and wall alignments” (2018, page 47). Presidio-era buildings typically had wall foundations of cobblestones; and the GPR report introduction (2018, page 2), noted the appearance of “extensive buried rocks,” and “even cobble concentrations.” The GPR report stated that “archaeological test units are recommended.” However, full archaeological test units have never been pursued.

Lastly, the proposed plan would bulldoze a portion of the historic cobblestone drainage culvert alongside Presidio Drive. This culvert was designed and constructed in the early 1930s by the C.C.C. (Civilian Construction Corp.) In the cultural landscape development of this heritage park, this cobblestone drainage culvert is an important historic design element. The proposed plan would destroy this cobblestone culvert along Presidio Drive where a new roadway intersection would be constructed to connect to the A.D.A. parking pad to Presidio Drive. This new intersection is posed for heavy construction to accommodate the access of ambulances and emergency vehicles.

A comprehensive EIR (Environmental Impact Report) is warranted for this proposed project.

Respectfully presented,

/s/ Paul G. Chace, Ph.D.,  
PHT Trustee, Archaeologist, and Land Planner





Done



Maison en Provence

820 Fort Stockton Dr

Address · San Diego, California



September 25, 2023

City of San Diego Historical Resources Board  
Chair Hutter and fellow Board Members  
1122 First Avenue  
San Diego, California 92101

RE: City of San Diego Historical Resources Board meeting September 28, 2023, Item #1 – *820 Ft. Stockton*

Chair Hutter and Board Members:

Please do not designate the Property located at 820 Ft. Stockton (Property). Our Historical Resources Research Report (HRRR), dated January 25, 2023 (revised May 19, 2023 and June 12, 2023), for the Property provides a significant body of evidence and associated historical evaluation against designation under the City of San Diego (City) Guidelines.

The purpose of this letter is to communicate the following,

1. Historical research under Criterion A, provided on pages 10-17 and pages 21-28, demonstrates that the Property does not represent a special aspect of the City's development history. Moreover, the Property does not represent any special aspect of development in the Uptown Community Plan area or the Mission Hills Neighborhood as explained in great detail in the HRRR. The Property is typical of all development of its era; is not special in any way;
2. Historical research under Criterion C, provided on pages 32-40, demonstrates that the Property no longer embodies the essential character defining features of the Craftsman style due to significant alterations, as well as the building's poor condition related to material and structural deterioration and documented by an analysis prepared by architect, James Gates, *820 Fort Stockton Structural Evaluation, dated February 2, 2023*;
3. Historical research under Criterion D, provided on pages 40-47, demonstrates a lack of supporting evidence as required by the City's Guidelines, for eligibility under Criterion D; and
4. Ultimately, the Property is not eligible for historical designation due to cumulative impacts of integrity loss, as provided on pages 17-20 and pages 154-175.

The historical nomination submitted by IS Architecture provides no evidence to the contrary. No new information has been presented to change the conclusions of the HRRR. As such, we ask the HRB to accept staff's recommendations and *not* designate the Property under any of the City's criteria. We will be available at the September 28, 2023 hearing if you should have any questions.

Best regards,



Jennifer Ayala

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**obr**  
ARCHITECTURE ART EVENT

September 26, 2023

City of San Diego Historical Resources Board  
Chair Hutter and fellow Board Members  
1122 First Avenue  
San Diego, California 92101

**RE: City of San Diego Historical Resources Board meeting September 28, 2023, Item-1 820 Fort Stockton Drive**

Chair Hutter and Board Members:

Thank you for your attention to this matter. obrARCHITECTURE would like to lend our support for the Board's previous decision of NOT designating this property as an historic resource. Our firm has completed many projects within the City of San Diego, several of which were either designated historic resources or under consideration for designation. We know that the Historical Resources Board takes these matters seriously and impartially, and believe that you have made the right decision regarding this property as well.

Additionally, our office occupied this property for a period of six months during 2022. While the building is interesting, and the neighboring community has a strong fondness for it, we found the building to be in severe disrepair. Furthermore, many modifications have been made to the building that have eroded any historic character that might have otherwise been contributing factors.

Again, we support the Board's original position on this matter and encourage the Board to maintain their position.

Sincerely,



Garrick Oliver, AIA, Founding Principal

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MEMO

**To:** City of San Diego Historical Resources Board  
**cc:** Jennifer Ayala, Property Owner's Representative  
**Re:** Historical Resources Board Item # 1, 820 Ft. Stockton Drive  
**Date:** September 28, 2023  
**From:** Marie Burke Lia, retired historical resources consulting expert

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During my career, working on historical resources in the State of California from 1982-2020, my firm represented the owners of more than four hundred historic properties and assisted them with local, state and federal government agencies which supervise or regulate historical properties.

Under my supervision, my team of architects and historians researched the historic significance of 1,000s of San Diego properties and, where appropriate, nominated them to local and national historic registers. A significant portion of my practice involved facilitating the rehabilitation of buildings or the redevelopment of sites containing historic resources.

However, not all buildings qualify and there are times when a resource no longer embodies historical significance due to a lack of **Integrity**. According to the City's Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria (Guidelines), eligible historical resources must retain **Integrity** (including, Location, Design, Materials, Feeling, Setting, and Association). According to the Guidelines,

"Historical Resources, eligible for designation by the HRB, must meet one or more designation criteria and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their historical significance."<sup>1</sup>

820 Ft. Stockton no longer retains its **Design, Material, Workmanship and Setting** aspects of **Integrity**, and, according to the research, it does not have an **Association** aspect of **Integrity**. Due to its lack of Integrity, 820 Ft. Stockton, is no longer able to convey historic significance and should not be designated under the City's Guidelines.

Please do not designate 820 Fort Stockton as a City of San Diego historic resource as it is not eligible under the City's Guidelines.

Sincerely,  
Marie Burke Lia, retired historical resources consulting expert

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<sup>1</sup> City of San Diego. Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria. Page 3.

Paul Englert

2206 Fort Stockton Drive, San Diego, CA 92103

I am a 15 year resident of North Mission Hills, and previously lived for 4 years in South Mission Hills. We are members of the Mission Hills Heritage Organization.

Prior to moving to our current residence, we owned a home in the College Area, and I served as Vice President of the College Area Community Council (CACC) – representing East and West College Areas, Alvarado Estates, and El Cerrito – and served on the CACC for three years.

I have witnessed the City of San Diego mishandle many issues, and this current historic review by the City of San Diego Historic Resources Board is likely the worst case of promoting misinformation and a blatant attempt to gaslight San Diego citizens that I have ever seen.

I would fully support the City whenever it looks to balance a developer's interest with that of the local community. HOWEVER, in this case the City is actively ignoring documented historical information, promoting false-flag reasoning by a greedy developer, and threatening to ruin both the integrity and treasured resources of Mission Hills and it's local community.

- Board members should be aware that the staff report was written after the City had made a ministerial decision that this property is not historic and to not submit the property for the board's consideration. Under these circumstances, where the report appears to be written to support the City's pre-determined decision, the staff report is inherently suspect. As such, board members should approach the staff report with a healthy skepticism.
- The staff report is setting a more stringent criteria standards compared to previous evaluations. In the past, properties near the streetcar line and purpose-built for rental housing in the years before the 1915 exposition were considered historically significant due to their contextual association with the exposition. However, in this staff assessment, these well-established factors are no longer deemed adequate to justify such an association. This shift in standards raises questions about consistency and fairness in the evaluation process.
- This duplex craftsman with its artistic clinker brick chimneys; its period porches; its wood clapboard siding; its low-pitched, cross-gabled roof with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; its exposed roof rafters and decorative beams - would be instantly recognized by any area resident from 1912 as the classic craftsman bungalow at that corner. In short, the property still exhibits nearly all the character-defining features of the Craftsman Style of Architecture.
- Last year the developer removed multiple sections of siding and a portion of the balustrade on the Fort Stockton porch. To say the building is not historical based on integrity rewards the developer for effectively demolishing the bungalow's historic features.



- The staff report claims that it is “unclear how involved” Master Architect William Wheeler was with the design of the iconic craftsman bungalow. However, the nomination report cites an Evening Tribune article dated 5/29/1912 that attributes to Wheeler the plans for the “three flat buildings to cost \$9000 for P.D. Griswold at Ghetti and Goldfinch streets on the northeast corner”. This evidence clearly attributes the resource to Master Architect William Wheeler.
- Contrary to staff's claim, the property's alterations are not extensive, and they align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation. The alterations to the rear should not be cited as diminishing the property's historical significance or significantly affecting integrity of design. Alterations to the porch on the Fort Stockton elevation have photographic and physical evidence that can support an easy restoration of the lost elements.
- The substantial support for Mission Hills Heritage's nomination underscores the community's deep interest in safeguarding the property. This groundswell of support is a testament to how the property resonates with residents who recognize its value beyond mere bricks and mortar. The fact that this nomination has garnered substantial backing demonstrates that the property holds a special place in the hearts of those who value San Diego's history. In light of widespread community support, it is imperative that the HRB carefully considers the property's historical significance and its place within the broader historical narrative of San Diego.
- The property stands out as a rare single-story duplex, designed with the foresight of accommodating the influx of visitors expected during the 1915 Exposition and intentionally located adjacent to the Streetcar line's development. When an Ad was placed to describe the property to potential renters, the ad specifically calls out proximity to the car line as a benefit. Its historical value is closely tied to its proximity to the streetcar line, making it an essential part of the historical tapestry of San Diego's influential streetcar system development. Its strategic placement near the streetcar line reflects an intentional effort to cater to the transportation needs of the time, adding to its historical significance.
- Per the Guidelines for the Application of the Designation Criteria, “Integrity is the authenticity of a historical resource's physical identity clearly indicated by the retention of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance.” This iconic craftsman bungalow clearly satisfies this guidance. The minimal and reversible alterations to a portion of only one of the two front porches of this duplex do not mar the resource's clear integrity.
- The second (Nexus) report submitted by the owner devotes a substantial amount of ink to the deteriorating conditions on the property and concludes that the property lacks integrity. But condition is not integrity and much of the deterioration is reversible. Furthermore, a substantial amount of the deterioration and alteration cited is not visible to the public (on a side or rear aspect not easily seen from the street).



SAVE OUR HERITAGE ORGANISATION



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Demolition Threatens Mission Hills' Red Bungalow

Barry Hager - Mission Hills Heritage

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May/June 2023



Undated photo of the Griswold family outside their home at 820 Fort Stockton Drive in Mission Hills. Courtesy Ron May

For the last 110 years, the Craftsman bungalow now affectionately known as the "Red Bungalow" or the "Red House," has graced the northeast corner of Fort Stockton Drive and Goldfinch Street near the eastern entrance to the Mission Hills neighborhood. The bungalow at 850 Fort Stockton Drive was built in 1912 for Perry and Olive Griswold, whose family lived there for more than 20 years. The Red Bungalow is unusual in that it was originally built as a duplex with two full-size porches, one facing Fort Stockton and the other facing Goldfinch. Featuring two clinker brick chimneys, a low-pitched roofline, multiple gables, and wide eaves, the bungalow embodies Arts and Crafts aesthetics.



Red Bungalow when it was the neighborhood pet shop, c. 1970s. Courtesy Vintage San Diego

In 1947, as the surrounding area changed after World War II, the bungalow began a new use as the Mission Hills Pet Shop, a Mission Hills fixture for over 40 years. In 1996, the bungalow became *Maison En Provence*, also known as "The Little French Store," operated by Marielle and Pascal Gial. Generations of Mission Hills and other residents have memories of visiting both stores.



The Little French Shop charmingly decked out for customers in an undated photo. Courtesy Marielle and Pascale Gial

When Marielle and Pascal retired in 2021, a Los Angeles-based developer bought the property and the lots surrounding the bungalow. Initially, in 2021, the developer/owner sought a preliminary review to determine whether the building was historically significant. This report to the City of San Diego concluded that the building was eligible for designation under multiple criteria. The report also disclosed that the developer planned a multi-story project on the site and claimed that, despite the bungalow's historical value, it would need to be removed or demolished. Upon learning of these plans, Mission Hills residents embarked on a petition drive. With 1,161 signatures, they presented their petition to the city in 2022.

However, in its continued quest to demolish the Red Bungalow, the developer recently submitted an entirely new historical research report. This second report, from a different consultant, blatantly ignores, and is completely at odds with, the first report

and concludes that the Red Bungalow is not eligible for designation under any criteria. This suggests that the developer is "result shopping" with consultants, in hopes of achieving its goal of demolishing the building.


Furthermore, the developer's new report places great emphasis on the building's deteriorated condition. In 2022, the developer removed various original materials from the building, including a portion of a porch balustrade and multiple sections of siding, exposing these areas to the elements, and accelerating the property's deterioration. To date, the developer has not replaced any of these materials or otherwise sought to protect the structure.



Mission Hills Heritage disagrees with the developer's new report and, given the community's high interest in saving the Red Bungalow, the group has submitted detailed comments to city staff. SOHO has also submitted comments challenging the developer's recent report. The Red Bungalow is an early example of adaptive re-use for a new purpose and it is our hope that the proposed project will be modified to incorporate the Red Bungalow for yet another use.


The city's Historical Resources Board is very likely to consider the Red Bungalow for historical designation in the coming months. Mission Hills Heritage will update the community when we learn the hearing date. Hopefully, this beloved bungalow and long-time corner beacon will be restored, preserved, and enjoyed for many generations to come.

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