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Mission Hills Historic District Appeal Fails

*100 years (and 2 days) after
the filing of the original
subdivision map of Mission
Hills on January 20, 1908*



San Diego — Kevin Faulconer’s motion today at San Diego City Council to deny the appeal of the Mission Hills Historic District was unanimous. The decision by the Historic Resources Board (HRB) last July 16, 2007 stands. Residents now have one more reason to celebrate their historic community’s centennial that officially began last Sunday.

In 2002, after witnessing the loss of a beautiful two-story Craftsman in their historic neighborhood, concerned residents decided to form a historic district to preserve and protect its outstanding early 20th century architecture. Residents asked the city to create a historic district for the subdivision that was originally filed as *Mission Hills* by George Marston et. al, just over one hundred years ago. Budget woes were on the horizon even six years ago, so the city asked the residents to prepare their own historic district report. The residents submitted San Diego’s first resident’s prepared historic district package in September 2004. The Mission Hills Historic District includes 75 homes along the 1800 block of Sunset Blvd., Lyndon Road and Sheridan Avenue, this small area features many of the neighborhood’s most significant older homes.

The diverse genres of architectural styles built between 1908 and the beginning of World War Two include Craftsman, Mission and Spanish Revival, Dutch Colonial, Greek Revival, Prairie-School Style, Tudor Revival. The first bungalows built in Mission Hills in 1908-1909 are included in the district. Additionally, several Master Architects and Builders such as Morris Irvin, Emmor Brooke Weaver, Nathan Rigdon, David Owen Dryden, Richard Requa, William S. Hebbard together with extraordinary craftspeople designed and built homes in this early San Diego streetcar trolley suburb. Furthermore, many of San Diego’s leading political, social and cultural leaders lived in the Historic District during the first half of the 20th century including R.E. “Pappy” Hazard, singer Alice Barnett Stevenson, rose man and propagator Forrest Heatt, newspaper man Milton McRae, and other notable and interesting characters.

“I am quite sure that Mr. Marston is beaming up in heaven today, as a bit of his vision gains official historic status. He realized the importance of historic preservation long ago and his dream of the City Beautiful Movement continues with the designation of the Mission Hills Historic District.” Said Allen A. Hazard one of the applicants for the district. “Recognizing, preserving and protecting our history is one of the most important things we can ever do. I am proud of what we have accomplished today.” says Hazard.

Last summer, on July 16, 2007, the HRB unanimously approved the district. Two residents appealed that decision in a vain attempt to stop the district despite its overwhelming resident’s

support of 70%. The appellants made a variety of claims disagreeing about the benefits of living in an historical district, however the City Council found there to be no basis for the appeal.



A large audience of about 60 Mission Hills neighbors and historic preservation supporters came out to support the historic district that many had worked on to obtain or desired for their own area. Letters of support also came from local preservation organizations such as Save Our Heritage Organisation, Mission Hills Heritage, Hillcrest History Guild and University Heights Historic Society as well as the western branch of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the State Office of Preservation in Sacramento. Proponents of the district presented information to

the City Council that countered the claims made by the appellants and to clarify the benefits of historic preservation and historic districts. Neighbors testified about the long and sometimes difficult process and University of San Diego Professor Andrew Narwold presented his findings from a new study that will be published later this year in the journal entitled: *International Real Estate Review*. The study found that demonstrates sixteen percent (16%) higher property values for historic designated homes in the 92103 and 92104 San Diego zip codes.

“Now we feel like we can begin the celebration of our centennial year. Said Janet O’Dea, one of the applicants for the district. “We are grateful to all of our neighbors and supporters who came down to city hall to affirm the conclusions by the historic resources board or who sent in letters of support. Clearly, a decisive majority wanted this historic district to protect this wonderful community from reckless demolitions and now it will serve as an area of living history for generations to come. For that we are most grateful.”

Soon, specific community design guidelines shall be implemented that help residents appropriately maintain their historic homes. Plans are also under way to install Mission Hills Historic District signs along Sunset Boulevard.

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