



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 13, 2022 REPORT NO. HRB-22-033

HEARING DATE: October 27, 2022

SUBJECT: **ITEM #07 – 750 West Fir Street**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: JMAN AT THE Q LP; represented by Heritage Architecture & Planning

LOCATION: 750 West Fir Street, Downtown Community, Council District 3
APNs 533-224-0701 and 533-224-0702

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 750 West Fir Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 750 West Fir Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The resource is a seven-story, mixed-use Contemporary style structure located in the Little Italy neighborhood of the Downtown Community. The parcel also contains the A.W. Pray Rental (HRB #277), originally located at 1907 Kettner Boulevard, which was relocated to 1918 India Street as part of the development of the resource.

The property was located within the boundary of the 1988-1991 Downtown Survey conducted by the Center City Development Corporation, but was not identified in the survey because the current structure was not yet built. The A.W. Pray Rental was identified as being individually significant at its original 1907 Kettner Boulevard location.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Heritage Architecture and Planning, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion D. Staff disagrees and does not find the site to be significant under any HRB Criteria. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.



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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 resource is a seven-story, mixed-use, Contemporary style structure constructed in 2010. The exposed frame of the building is made of board-formed, cast-in-place concrete with floor-to-ceiling glazing along each floor and metal accent panels. Visually, the West Fir façade is divided into two parts; the western portion features horizontal ribbons of windows with concrete balconies defining each floor and the eastern portion is a rectangle clad in metal panels with a glass void in the center. A vertical concrete element divides the two sections. The building has commercial restaurant spaces on the first floor which are articulated with glass storefronts. The India Street façade incorporates the A.W. Pray Rental (HRB #277), a Victorian Eclectic residence that was relocated from Kettner Boulevard to the current location as part of the development project.

While the 2010 building reflects a Contemporary architectural style, not enough time has passed to thoroughly evaluate its importance to the history of San Diego as a good example of an architectural style under HRB Criterion C. Eligibility under this criterion may be reevaluated at a future date pending submittal of additional information and analysis. Therefore, staff is not recommending designation under HRB Criterion C at this time.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

The subject property at 750 West Fir Street was designed and constructed by Jonathan Segal, FAIA. Segal was born in South Carolina and raised in Manhattan Beach, California. He received his architectural degree at the University of Idaho. After graduating, he moved to San Diego and began working for Homer Delawie, a recognized modernist architect. He later worked for Antoine Predock, who was then designing an auditorium at UCSD. Around 1988, Segal began his first design-build project. Due to the success of this project, he quit his job working for Predock and began his own firm. In his future projects, he continued to purchase his project sites and act as both the architect and developer of his projects. He has built residential, mixed-use and live/work buildings. In the 1990s and 2000s, he constructed smaller multi-unit buildings (maximum of 3 stories and 20 units) that emphasized exterior space using outdoor walkways and stairways and street-level parking plazas. Beginning in 2010, he began to construct taller, mixed-use buildings made of concrete and glass. Although these buildings did not include the exterior circulation of his earlier buildings, they still emphasized an indoor-outdoor connection by using balconies, floor-to-ceiling windows, and creating voids between building sections that allow for natural light to enter the center portions of the building's overall mass. Segal's projects have been recognized as exceptional at the local, state, and national levels. In 2003, he became the youngest architect in the history of San Diego to be inducted into the AIA College of Fellows. His projects have received more National AIA Residential

architect awards than any architect in San Diego history, and more than 70 local, state, or national distinctions. Segal also lectures on the “Architect as Developer” mode in which he has worked.

[The City of San Diego Historical Resources Board's Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) does not require a resource to be a certain age in order to be eligible for historic designation if the property meets at least one of the designation criteria. [The Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Code](#), give some guidance regarding the historic significance of properties under 45 years of age: “in rare instances, properties which have not yet achieved 45 years of age may be historically significant... Such resources must be proved to have exceptional significance in their contribution to recent history, as documented by a preponderance of evidence.”

The City of San Diego’s Historical Resources Board established Segal as a Master Architect and Builder with the designation of the Mr. Robinson/ Jonathan Segal Building located at 3752 Park Boulevard, HRB #1402. At the hearing, the HRB specifically acknowledged Segal’s “Architect as Developer” process and noted that the height of his architectural career was “from 1991 to the present, and likely into the future.” Much of Segal’s designation as a Master was based on the significant amount of accolades awarded to him for his projects, his general body of work and contributions to the recent development of San Diego. Additionally, he is the youngest San Diego architect inducted into the AIA College of Fellows. Segal currently has two buildings on the San Diego register: the Mr. Robinson/ Jonathan Segal Building and the North Parker/ Jonathan Segal Building (HRB #1466).

The subject resource was completed in 2010 during a time that has already been established by the HRB as the height of Segal’s architectural career. The building reflects both Segal’s design aesthetic through the use of exposed board-formed concrete and large expanses of floor to ceiling windows. Additionally, the resource reflects Segal’s “Architect as Developer” process and is significant as the first mixed use building that left his previous design strategy behind in favor of high-rise structures. While the resource may be notable as an example of Master Architect and Builder Jonathan Segal’s work, at this time the building is only twelve years old and cannot be determined to be exceptionally significant. While the resource has won awards at both the local, state and national levels, it has not gained the same number of accolades as other Segal projects. The Mr. Robinson building (HRB #1402), constructed in 2015, won five awards at the national level and the 2014 North Parker project (HRB #1466) won four national awards. Additionally, the Cresta, a 2012 single family residence in La Jolla, also won four national awards. In comparison, the subject resource has only won one national award. Because the property has not reached a level of exceptional significance, staff is not recommending designation at this time. More information may be provided at a later date to establish significance of the resource under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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. 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, it is recommended that the property located at 750 West Fir Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

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Attachment(s):

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover