



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 13, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-001

HEARING DATE: January 26, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #1 – Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House**

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

APPLICANT: JMAN Investments Inc.; represented by BFS A Environmental Services

LOCATION: 6110 Camino del la Costa, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 357-141-0500

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House located at 6110 Camino de la Costa as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House located at 6110 Camino del la Costa as a historical resource under HRB Criterion A with a period of significance of 1924; under Criterion B with a period of significance of 1964-1970, 1972-1979 and 1983-2009; and under Criterion C and D with a period of significance of 1924. The designation includes the stone wall on the coastal bluff and stucco site wall along Camino de la Costa. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is a special element of La Jolla's historical and architectural development and retains integrity from its 1924 period of significance. Specifically, the resource is the oldest intact residential structure in the La Jolla Hermosa, the first subdivision within the La Jolla community oriented toward attracting year-round residents. Architecturally, the resource reflects the Spanish Revival influence which dominates the subdivision. Additionally, the resource is the only known structure designed by Master Architect Herbert Palmer within La Jolla Hermosa.
2. The resource is identified with Herbert York, a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was York's residence during the most productive years of his life as a national security advisor, advocate for the elimination of nuclear arms and proponent of international conflict resolution from 1964-1970, 1972-1979 and 1983-2009. Throughout the 1960s York was an advisor to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and in 1969 testified against use of the Safeguard ABM (antiballistic

missile system) before the Senate Armed Services Committee/Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee. In 1983 York founded the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation which promoted conflict resolution and international efforts to avoid war.

3. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1924 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a stucco exterior; red clay tile roof; varied roof forms including gabled, hipped and flat; two-story tower; courtyard; arcades with arched openings; arched wood entry door; arched windows, stucco chimney; wood windows; and decorative clay attic vents.
4. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Herbert Palmer, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality structures within La Jolla and the City of San Diego, and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1924 design. Specifically, the resource is significant as an excellent example of Palmer's work in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; a substyle of the Mediterranean Revival designs that Palmer is known to have specialized.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The property is located on a coastal bluff within the La Jolla Hermosa neighborhood of the La Jolla community and consists of a two-story, single-family residence and detached garage. The building is often referred to as "La Casa de los Amigos."

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Herbert York who is a historically significant individual and the name of Herbert Palmer, a Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by BFS Environmental Services, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C, and D and staff concurs. 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 subject resource is located within the La Jolla Hermosa neighborhood of the La Jolla community. Encouraged by the success of the Mission Beach development plan of John D. Spreckels, in 1923 eleven local businessmen and developers started La Jolla Properties, Inc. and announced the

opening of a new subdivision named La Jolla Hermosa. Within six months La Jolla Properties, Inc. had already begun to develop and improve land purchased along the coast bordered by Bird Rock in the south, Via del Norte to the north and La Jolla Boulevard to the east.

La Jolla Hermosa lots ranged from 75 to 80 front feet and extended 150 feet in depth. Ocean front lots sold for approximately \$2,000 which included public utility access, paved streets, curbs, sidewalks and alleys. Property owners had to comply with buildings restrictions. They could only construct one house per lot and the residence could not cost less than \$8,000 to construct. The building had to face the street. The property could not contain fowl, goats, cows, or other farm animals. All occupants other than servants or employees had to be Caucasian. The restrictions prohibited walls, fences, or hedges exceeding five feet. Construction would be done using only new materials, and the dwelling had to remain unoccupied until completion. All plans had to be approved by the tract architect, Edgar Ullrich.

Ullrich oversaw the designs of a talented team of architects including Herbert Mann, Thomas Shepherd, Herbert Palmer, Cliff May, Lilian Rice and Florence Palmer. Most residential designs followed the Spanish Revival styles made popular by the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition in Balboa Park; however, some designs were influenced by the Tudor and Craftsman styles. The 6110 Camino de la Costa property is the only known property within La Jolla Hermosa designed by Herbert Palmer.

La Jolla Hermosa was La Jolla's first planned residential community and was modeled after the suburban developments occurring near other major United States cities. In contrast to the small vacation cottages built in the Barber Tract or La Jolla Village, La Jolla Hermosa was oriented toward attracting year-round residents. In April of 1925 the *La Jolla Light* reported that two homes and a sales office had been completed in La Jolla Hermosa. Comparison of historic aerials and water and sewer records confirm that the first two homes in La Jolla Hermosa were 6110 Camino de la Costa and 6215 Avenida Cortez. Examination of 6215 Avenida Cortez reveals that the property has been substantially modified. As such, the 6110 Camino de la Costa property is the oldest intact residential structure in the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision.

Significance Statement: The resource is a special element of the historical and architectural development of the La Jolla community and retains integrity to its 1924 period of significance. Specifically, the resource is the oldest intact residential structure in the La Jolla Hermosa, the first subdivision within the La Jolla community oriented toward attracting year-round residents. Architecturally, the resource reflects the Spanish Revival influence which dominates the subdivision. Additionally, the resource is the only known structure designed by Master Architect Herbert Palmer within La Jolla Hermosa. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

Herbert York, a nuclear physicist, was born in Rochester, New York in 1921. He received his B.S. and M.S. from the University of Rochester in 1943. After leaving Rochester, he joined the Manhattan Project as a physicist at Ernest Lawrence's Radiation Laboratory at Berkeley and at the Oak Ridge, Tennessee's Y-12 plant, where he worked on the electromagnetic separation of uranium 235. After World War II ended, York earned a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1949 and co-discovered the neutral pi meson. York became an assistant professor of physics at Berkeley in 1950

and oversaw the expansion of the California Radiation Laboratory, of which in 1952 he became the first director.

York was the director of research and engineering for the United States Defense Department from 1958 to 1961. While in this position, York supervised programs that cost the country about seven billion dollars a year to run and included most of the country's investment in developing weapons of the future. His superior, the Secretary of Defense, relied heavily on his expertise for making policy decisions.

In 1960 York suffered a heart attack and during his convalescence he was offered the chancellorship at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD). He accepted the position and served as the first Chancellor of UCSD from 1961 to 1964 while he resided at the first chancellor's house at 7510 Pepita Way. York's health did not improve in the manner anticipated and he resigned from the chancellorship in 1963. He remained on the job until a successor was named and Dr. John Galbraith replaced him as chancellor at the end of 1964. Throughout the 1960s York was an advisor to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and during the Carter administration he was a delegate at the strategic arms talks with the Soviet Union in Geneva and was the chief United States negotiator in unsuccessful talks with the Soviet Union to impose a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

At the end of 1964, York and his wife, Sybil, purchased the 6110 Camino de la Costa residence following his resignation from the chancellorship. York still continued to work for the university as a physics professor. In 1965, he traveled to Santiago, Chile as the head of a 12-member United States delegation for a United Nations conference on the application of science and technology to Latin America's economic progress. In 1969, York testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee/Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee regarding the Safeguard ABM (antiballistic missile system). In June 1969, York spoke on the ABM and the Arms Race with the Soviet Union before the World Affairs Council of San Diego at the El Cortez Hotel. Around the same time, he also acted as co-chairman in a scientific group opposed to President Nixon's proposed deployment of the Safeguard ABM system. At this time, York was urging to abandon the ABM stating that it was poorly designed for its purpose and would probably lessen rather than increase American security.

In 1970, York became vice chancellor of UCSD and later that year was appointed acting chancellor after the third chancellor resigned. During York's second term as chancellor from 1970-1972 he lived in the University House on Pepita Way. The Yorks moved back into the Camino de la Costa house in 1972.

Under the Carter administration York took a more active role in negotiations directly with the Soviet Union. He served as United States ambassador to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty talks in Geneva where he led an attempt to establish a comprehensive test ban with the USSR. During this time York lived in Switzerland. In 1983 he returned to his teaching position at UCSD and founded the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, which was based out of the university and organized research and seminars on conflict resolution and promoted international efforts to avoid war. York resided at the Camino de la Costa residence until his passing in 2009.

The time frame of Herbert York's historic significance spans from the 1950s to the 1980s; however, the 6110 Camino de la Costa property is the resource best associated with his significant achievements. York's career began as a nuclear physicist; however, his most significant

achievements occurred in the 1960s and 1970s after his health forced him to step away from researching and developing weapons for the Department of Defense and he began to serve as an advisor to various presidential administrations. He eventually became an advocate for the elimination of nuclear arms. York owned the Camino de la Costa property from 1964 until his death in 2009 and it served as his primary residence from 1964-1970 and 1972-1979. He also lived at the property from 1983-2009 when he founded the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation. Modifications to the property are minimal and do not impact integrity of location, feeling, setting and association as it relates to HRB Criterion B.

Significance Statement: The resource is identified with Herbert York, a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was York's residence during the most productive years of his life as a national security advisor, advocate for the elimination of nuclear arms and proponent of international conflict resolution from 1964-1970, 1972-1979 and 1983-2009. Throughout the 1960s York was an advisor to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and in 1969 testified against use of the Safeguard ABM (antiballistic missile system) before the Senate Armed Services Committee/Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee. In 1983 York founded the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation which promoted conflict resolution and international efforts to avoid war. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion B.

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 two-story, single family residence and detached garage constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in 1924. The house is setback from the street and sits behind a low stucco wall and gate. The one-story main portion of the house is covered with a gable roof and is situated on the coastal bluff to the southwest providing direct access to the Pacific Ocean. Two, one-story wings with flat roofs extend towards the street forming a courtyard with an original fishpond at the center. The main arched wooden entry door is accessed from an uncovered scored concrete porch on the southwestern side of the courtyard. A two-story tower with hipped roof is located on the northwest corner of the structure. Non-flat portions of the structure's roof are covered in red clay tile. The ocean façade features a balcony covered with a shed roof that extends the length of the main portion of the house. On this façade a basement level is visible below the balcony. Fenestration includes wood windows in a variety of sizes and operations and includes arched windows on the ocean façade. A detached garage with maid's quarters above is located near the street at the southeast corner of the property. This structure follows the same architectural vocabulary as the main residence.

Modifications to the property are minimal and are primarily on the ocean façade. Between 1934 and 1939 the rear balcony was extended approximately 11 feet to the north and partially enclosed. The extension resulted in modifications to the fenestration on this façade. A shed roof was constructed over the new and original portions of the balcony. Sometime between 1934 and 1946 the previously open space below the balcony was enclosed and converted to a finished basement. Four original windows on the ocean façade were replaced with fixed-pane windows sometime after 1946. Other modifications include the replacement of the garage door, the addition of wrought iron grilles on the arches of the north wing arcade, the insertion of half windows in the arches of the south wing arcade and the replacement of the fishpond tiles. These modifications do not impair integrity of design, material, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. Its vocabulary is influenced by Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic or Renaissance precedents. The style became popular after the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 and reached its height in the 1920's and early 1930's before rapidly declining in the 1940's. Identifying features include a low-pitched roof with little or no eave overhang, red tile roof covering, stucco exterior wall finishes, an asymmetrical façade and arches above doors and principle windows. Common decorative details are patterned tiles, carved stonework, large focal windows, wooden or iron window grilles, decorative vents and balconies.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Colonial Revival style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including stucco exterior; red clay tile roof; varied roof forms including gabled, hipped and flat; two-story tower; courtyard; arcades with arched openings; arched wood entry door; arched windows, stucco chimney; wood windows; and decorative clay attic vents. Therefore, staff recommends 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.

Herbert "Herbie" E. Palmer was born in Sandringham, England, in 1879. His mother was a lady-in-waiting at the court of Queen Victoria and his father was rumored to be the Prince of Wales, who became known as King Edward VII.

In 1912, Palmer came to the US and began working as an engineer in Maryland. He then moved to New York, where he practiced architecture. In 1923, he married Florence Buchanan and the two moved to La Jolla, where they established their professional practice as "Palmer and Palmer, architects and builders." They built several houses in La Jolla before they divorced in 1926. After the Palmers dissolved their personal and professional relationship, they both established independent architectural design/build practices. Florence has been established by the City of San Diego's Historical Resources Board as a Master Designer.

Herbert Palmer designed numerous houses in La Jolla and specialized in the Mediterranean Revival style. His designs emphasized outdoor activity areas such as garden courtyards and terraces. Palmer believed residences should provide protection from the natural world as well as the social evils of society, help release women from the drudgery of household work, provide a sense of privacy, and express the character of the occupants. A sense of balance between beauty and functionality was important to him.

Palmer intended to open an architecture school in La Jolla, but this plan became infeasible due to the Great Depression. The La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club was built on the intended site. However, between 1927 and 1932, he built the Casa de las Joyas (HRB #1067, known locally as the Taj Mahal), which was intended to be the residence of the school's president (who would be Palmer). He used the house as his personal residence for several years.

At least five of Palmer's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the McClintock Storage Warehouse/Bekins Bldg. (HRB

#145), the Ella Strong Denison House (HRB #400), the H.R. and Olga McClintock/Herbert Palmer & Milton Sessions House (HRB #866) and the Casa de las Joyas (HRB #1067).

Herbert Palmer designed the 6110 Camino de la Costa property for original owners Robert and Lena Pilcher in 1924. The property is representative of Palmer's signature use of Mediterranean Revival styles in custom residential buildings.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains good integrity and continues to reflect Palmer's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is significant as a residential example of Palmer's work in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; a substyle of the Mediterranean Revival designs that Palmer is known to have specialized. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Herbert Palmer.

CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.

The property at 6110 Camino de la Costa has not been listed on or formally determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

The property at 6110 Camino de la Costa is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.


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 Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House located at 6110 Camino de la Costa be designated under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the development of La Jolla with a period of significance of 1924; under Criterion B for its association with Herbert York with a period of significance of 1964-1970, 1972-1979 and 1983-2009; and under Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style

with a period of significance of 1924; and under Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Herbert Palmer with a period of significance of 1924. The designation includes the stone wall on the coastal bluff and stucco site wall along Camino de la Costa.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

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Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 1/26/2023

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/26/2023, to consider the historical designation of the **Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House** (owned by York Sybil D Tr, 6110 Camino de la Costa, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **6110 Camino de la Costa, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **357-141-05-00**, further described as BLK 1A LOT 10 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 Herbert York/ Herbert Palmer House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of La Jolla's historical and architectural development and retains integrity from its 1924 period of significance. Specifically, the resource is the oldest intact residential structure in the La Jolla Hermosa, the first subdivision within the La Jolla community oriented toward attracting year-round residents. Architecturally, the resource reflects the Spanish Revival influence which dominates the subdivision. Additionally, the resource is the only known structure designed by Master Architect Herbert Palmer within La Jolla Hermosa. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B as a resource identified with Herbert York, a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was York's residence during the most productive years of his life as a national security advisor, advocate for the elimination of nuclear arms and proponent of international conflict resolution from 1964-1970, 1972-1979 and 1983-2009. Throughout the 1960s York was an advisor to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and in 1969 testified against use of the Safeguard ABM (antiballistic missile system) before the Senate Armed Services Committee/Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee. In 1983 York founded the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation which promoted conflict resolution and international efforts to avoid war. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(3) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1924 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a stucco exterior; red clay tile roof; varied roof forms including gabled, hipped and flat; two-story tower; courtyard; arcades with arched openings; arched wood entry door; arched windows, stucco chimney; wood windows;

and decorative clay attic vents. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(4) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Herbert Palmer, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality structures within La Jolla and the City of San Diego, and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1924 design. Specifically, the resource is significant as an excellent example of Palmer’s work in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; a substyle of the Mediterranean Revival designs that Palmer is known to have specialized. 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 designation shall include the stone wall on the coastal bluff and stucco site wall along Camino de la Costa.

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:

BY: _____
TIM HUTTER, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

RECORDING REQUESTED BY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

6110 Camino de la Costa, San Diego, CA 92037

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **357-141-05-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**