



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Landmark Designation Case Report

Hearing Date: May 4, 2016
Case No.: 2015-007181OTH
Project Address: **140 Maiden Lane**
Zoning: C-3-R Downtown-Retail
Block/Lots: 0309/019
Property Owner: Downtown Properties
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PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS & SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

140 Maiden Lane, historically known as the V. C. Morris Gift Shop is located on the north side of Maiden Lane between Stockton Street and Grant Avenue. 140 Maiden Lane is a two-story, wood frame and brick building with a rectangular plan and boxy massing. Originally constructed in 1911, the building was remodeled by master architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1948-49. The attached Landmark Designation Report contains a detailed building descriptions on pages 4-5.

The subject property is located in the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District. Maiden Lane is a two block street, more of a mews than a street, that begins in the middle of one end of Union Square and runs from Stockton to Kearny in between Geary and Post. The block on which the 140 Maiden Lane is located bisects the block between Post Street, Grant Avenue, Geary Street and Stockton Street. Maiden Lane contains a number of relatively tall buildings interspersed with two- and three-story shop buildings and is lined with upscale retail shops.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The exterior of the 140 Maiden Lane was designated as San Francisco City Landmark No. 72 in 1975. The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is the consideration to initiate amendment to the landmark designation to include the interior of 140 Maiden Lane under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.1 and Section 1004.6 and recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve of such amendment to the designation.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, landmark designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

- OBJECTIVE 2: Conservation of Resources that provide a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding.
- POLICY 4: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

Designating significant historic resources as local landmarks will further continuity with the past because the buildings will be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Landmark designation will require that the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features. Both entities will utilize the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed designation is consistent with the priority policies in that:

- a. The proposed amendment to the designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. Amendment of the landmark designation to include both the exterior and interior of 140 Maiden Lane will help to preserve an important historical resource that is significant as a rare extant Modern building designed by master architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

BACKGROUND / PREVIOUS ACTIONS

The exterior of the V. C. Morris Gift Shop located at 140 Maiden Lane was designated as San Francisco City Landmark No. 72 in 1975. The designation extends to the exterior features of the building only.

OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

If the Historic Preservation Commission decides to initiate amendment to the Article 10 landmark designation of the subject property, the item will be considered again by the Historic Preservation Commission at a subsequent hearing. At that time the Historic Preservation Commission may adopt a resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors support the amendment to the designation. The nomination would then be considered at a future Board of Supervisors hearing for formal Article 10 landmark designation.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

ARTICLE 10

Section 1004 of the Planning Code authorizes the landmark designation of an individual structure or other feature or an integrated group of structures and features on a single lot or site, having special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, as a landmark. Section 1004.1 also outlines that landmark designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission and the initiation shall include findings in support. Section 1004.2 states that once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for a report and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve, disapprove or modify the proposal.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, if the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors and without referral to the Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation.

In the case of the initiation of a historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission shall refer its recommendation to the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 1004.2(c). The Planning Commission shall have 45 days to provide review and comment on the proposed designation and address the consistency of the proposed designation with the General Plan, Section 101.1 priority policies, the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area. These comments shall be sent to the Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution.

Section 1004(b) requires that the designating ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors shall include the location and boundaries of the landmark site, a description of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and a description of the particular features that should be preserved.

Section 1004.4 states that if the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days.

ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK CRITERIA

The Historic Preservation Commission on February 4, 2009, by Resolution No. 001, adopted the National Register Criteria as its methodology for recommending landmark designation of historic resources. Under the National Register Criteria, the quality of significance in American history, architecture,

archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association, and that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or properties that have yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

PUBLIC / NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

There is no known public or neighborhood opposition to designation of 140 Maiden Lane as an Article 10 landmark. Supervisor Peskin has expressed his support for amendment to the designation. The Department will provide any public correspondence received after the submittal of this report in the Historic Preservation Commission's correspondence folder.

PROPERTY OWNER INPUT

The Planning Department has shared the designation report with the property owner and informed them of possible landmark initiation. The property owner is supportive of landmark designation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The case report and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff. The Department has determined 140 Maiden Lane meets the requirements for Article 10 eligibility as an individual landmark. The justification inclusion is outlined below under the Significance and Integrity sections of this case report.

SIGNIFICANCE

Completed well before the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum opened in 1959, the V. C. Morris Gift Shop was Wright's first realized exploration of the internal spiral concept the two share and which he frequently returned to in his later work. Its single bold arch on the façade, reminiscent of H.H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan, provides a basis for the increase in historical referencing which would undergird his most successful buildings of the fifties. And upon its completion, it electrified the architectural world not only for its architecture, but for its radical interpretation of a retail store. Wright's unconventional design for the V. C. Morris Shop was a rejection of the formal principles of store design, yet it inspired and gave direction to subsequent 20th century building. As the only building constructed in San Francisco by Frank Lloyd Wright, the V. C. Morris Gift Shop is also significant as a rare extant Modern building designed by the master architect.

INTEGRITY

140 Maiden Lane was originally constructed at its current location in 1911. The building has not been moved. Maiden Lane is a narrow, two block long street that is more like a mews. With its two-story mass,

140 Maiden Lane is set between two relatively tall buildings and the rest of the street is interspersed with two- and three-story buildings. The street is still home to upscale shops and hotels in the district. With its nearly flat, windowless façade, the exterior of the building retains its feeling of a solid wall. The interior of the building retains its light filled, circular inner volume with curved ramp giving one the feeling of entering another world. As a result, 140 Maiden Lane retains its location, feeling, setting, and association.

140 Maiden Lane retains the design features that were present during the established 1948-1959 Period of Significance. Prominent exterior design features and materials include the building's boxy, stout mass, nearly flat, windowless façade, vertical band of raised bricks with illuminated voids, arched opening with four concentric bands of stretcher course bricks, horizontal band of coping above white translucent squares with raised key design, recessed entry with curved glass tunnel, and buff colored stretcher brick. The interior, likewise, displays high integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The interior retains its two-story volume, curved interior walls, and spiral ramp with circular wall openings and niches, and acrylic plastic concave and convex domes held by brass tubing at ceiling. Historic interior finishes such as the rough textured wall concrete cladding and rectangular and square concrete slabs laid in an irregular pattern on floor; and historic interior fixtures such as the brass hanging planter, built in mahogany shelves, cabinets, and benches; and some furniture such as mahogany stools and tables are also extant. Although the interior underwent restoration in 1997, extant materials and design reflect the quality of construction, materials, and workmanship as evidenced by Wrights beautifully detailed drawings. This restoration appears to retain nearly all of its original Wright designed features and do not detract from the building's significance or design intent. As a result, the V.C. Morris Gift Shop retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Whenever a building, site, object, or landscape is under consideration for Article 10 landmark designation, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to identify character-defining features of the property. This is done to enable owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

As identified by Planning Department staff, the character-defining features of the buildings include the following:

The character-defining *exterior* features of the building are identified as the exterior elevation facing Maiden Lane, including but not limited to form, massing, structure, architectural ornament and materials identified as:

- Rectangular building plan and boxy, stout massing
- Nearly flat, windowless façade
- Vertical band of raised bricks with illuminated voids
- Arched opening with four concentric bands of stretcher course bricks
- White translucent squares with raised key design below horizontal band of coping
- Recessed barrel vaulted entry with curved glass and planter
- Buff colored stretcher brick cladding
- Flat roof with two ridge type skylights

The character-defining *interior* features of the building are identified as:

- Two-story volume
- Curved interior walls
- Recessed barrel vaulted entry with curved glass and display shelf
- Spiral ramp with circular wall openings and niches
- Acrylic plastic concave and convex domes held by brass tubing at ceiling
- Brass hanging planter
- Built in mahogany shelves, cabinets, and benches
- Rough textured concrete wall cladding
- Rectangular and square concrete floor slabs laid in an irregular pattern

BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE

The proposed landmark site encompasses Assessor's Block 0309, Lot 019 on which the subject building is located.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

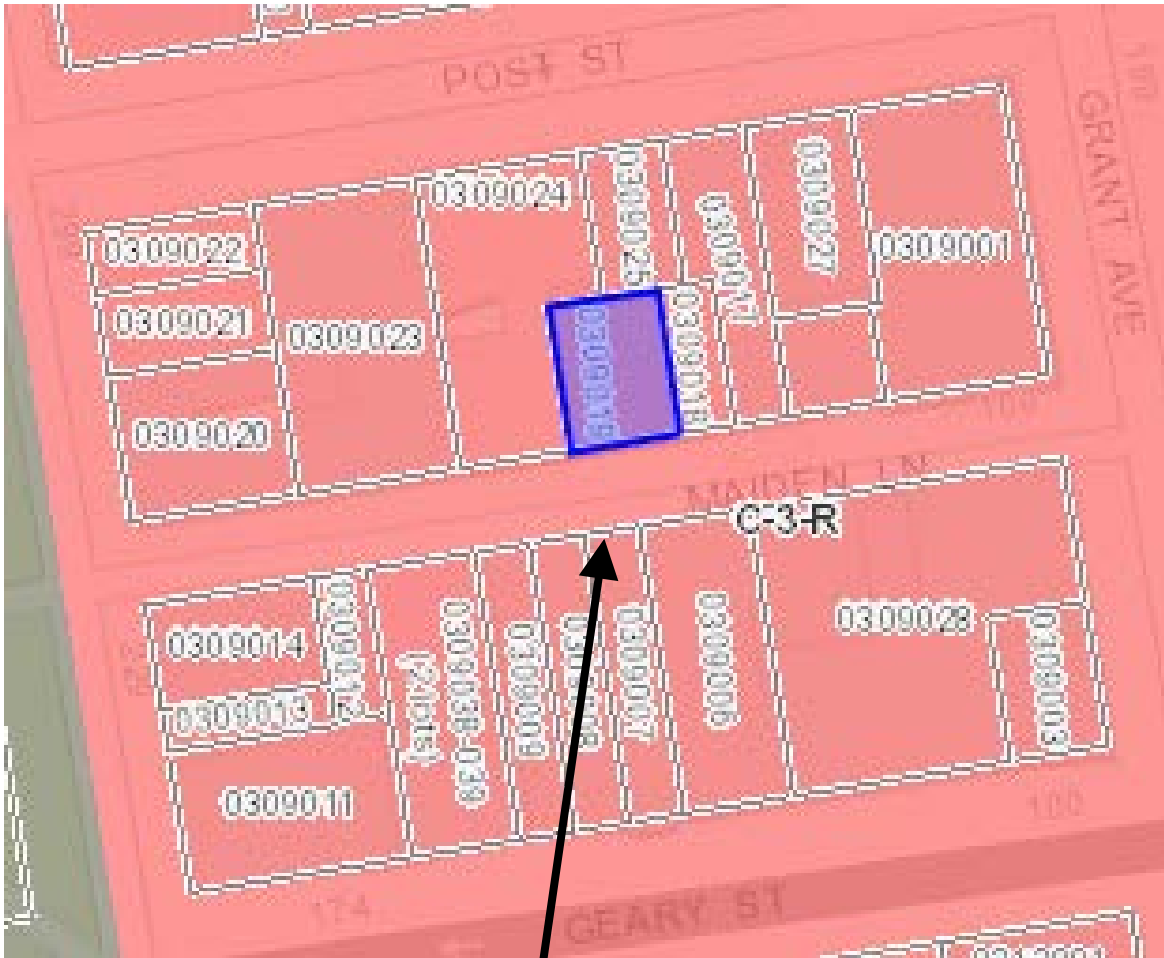
Based on the Department's analysis, 140 Maiden Lane is eligible for amendment to the existing Article 10 Landmark designation as a rare extant Modern building designed by master architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission initiate amendment of Article 10 Landmark designation for 140 Maiden Lane.

Under Article 10, The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval or approval with modifications of the proposed initiation of amendment to 140 Maiden Lane landmark designation. If the Historic Preservation Commission approves initiation, a second hearing will be held to consider whether or not to recommend amendment of the landmark designation to the Board of Supervisors. A copy of the motion of recommendation is then transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which will hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation (Section 1004.4). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days (Section 1004.5).

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Exhibits
- B. Draft Resolution initiating amendment to the designation
- C. Landmark Designation Report
- D. Draft landmark ordinance
- E. Ordinance 22-75
- F. Supervisor Peskin Letter
- G. Community Support Letter

Zoning Map



SUBJECT PROPERTY



Aerial Photo

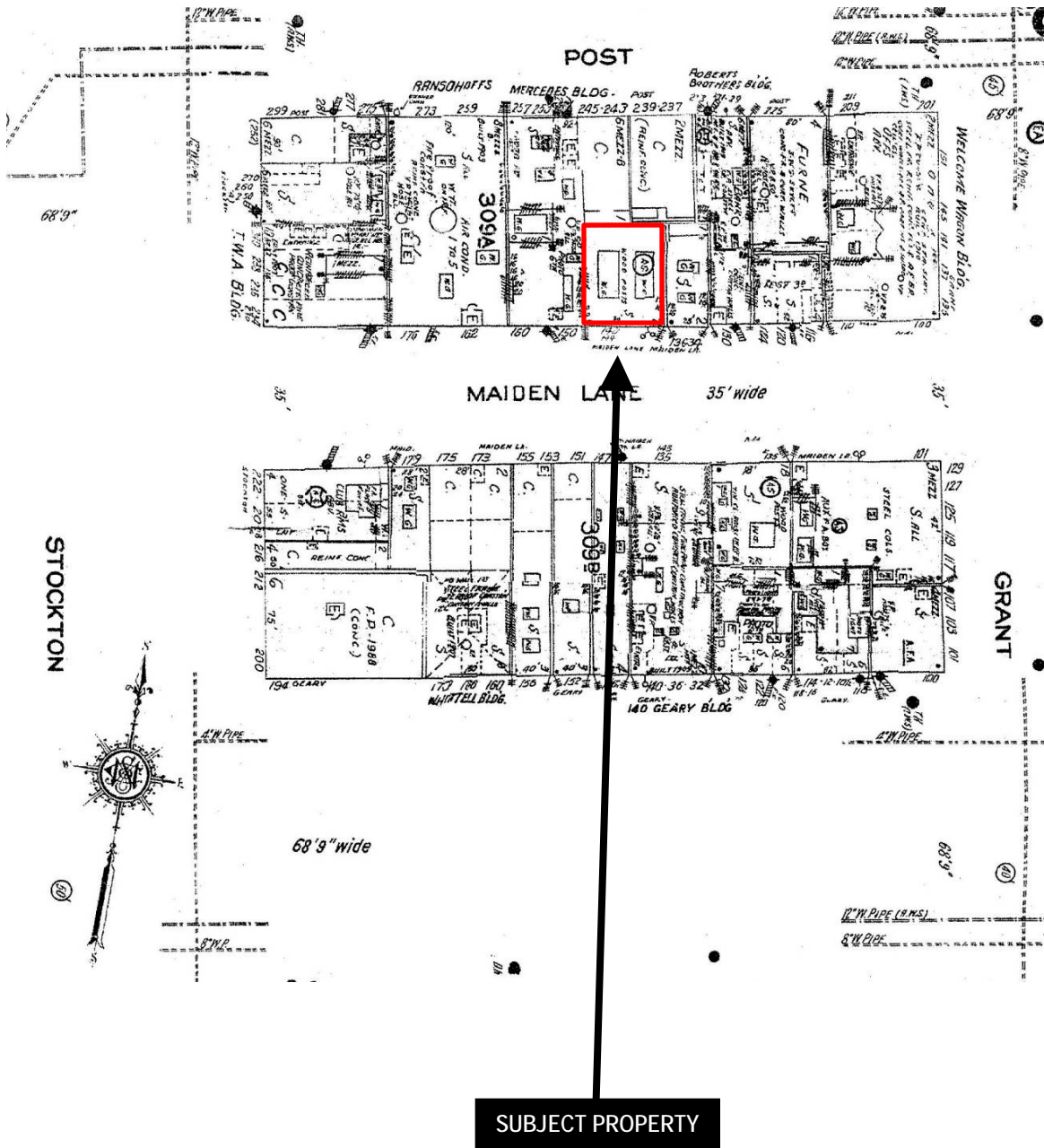


SUBJECT PROPERTY



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Case Number 2015-007181OTH
V. C. Morris Gift Shop
140 Maiden Lane

Sanborn Map*



*The Sanborn Maps in San Francisco have not been updated since 1998, and this map may not accurately reflect existing conditions.

Article 10 Landmark Designation
Case Number 2015-0071810TH
V. C. Morris Gift Shop
140 Maiden Lane

Site Photo - Exterior



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V. C. Morris Gift Shop
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140 Maiden Lane
V. C. Morris Gift Shop
140 Maiden Lane

Site Photo - Interior



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