



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Landmark Designation Case Report

Hearing Date: February 17, 2016
Case No.: 2015-003877DES
Project Address: 35-45 Onondaga Avenue
Zoning: NCD – Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood
Commercial and P - Public
Block/Lots: 6956/016, 017
Property Owner: City and County of San Francisco
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PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS & SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

35-45 Onondaga Avenue, historically known as the Alemany Emergency Hospital and Health Center is located at the southeast corner of Onondaga Avenue and Alemany Boulevard. The former Emergency Hospital (35 Onondaga Avenue) is a one-story reinforced concrete and brick institutional building designed with Spanish Baroque influences, while the former Health Center (45 Onondaga Avenue) is a one- to two-story wood frame institutional building designed with Spanish Colonial Revival influences. Both buildings were designed by City Architect, Charles H. Sawyer, and constructed in 1933. The attached Application for Historic Landmark Designation, prepared by members of the New Mission Terrace Improvement Association, contains detailed building descriptions on pages 12-22.

The subject property is located in San Francisco's Excelsior / Outer Mission neighborhood. The immediate vicinity is largely characterized by one-story-over-raised-basement single-family residences along Alemany Boulevard, and by one- to four-story commercial and mixed use buildings along Mission Street. Several institutional properties are also present in the immediate vicinity, including a U.S. Post Office at 15 Onondaga Avenue, the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company's Randolph Office at 1875 Alemany Boulevard, and the Croatian American Cultural Center at 60 Onondaga Avenue. Balboa High School (City Landmark No. 205) is located a block away at the southwest corner of Onondaga Avenue and Cayuga Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is consideration of a community-sponsored Article 10 Landmark Application and consideration to Initiate Landmark Designation of the former Alemany

Emergency Hospital and Health Center as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.1.

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 designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. Landmark designation of 35-45 Onondaga Avenue will help to preserve important historical resources that are significant for their association with community healthcare; and designed by City Architect Charles H. Sawyer, are architecturally significant as examples of a type and period, and for conveying high artistic values; and finally for interior frescoes by noted artist Bernard Zakehim.

BACKGROUND / PREVIOUS ACTIONS

Following the submittal of a draft community-sponsored Application for Historic Landmark Designation, 35-45 Onondaga Avenue was added to the Landmark Designation Work Program during the Historic Preservation Commission's regularly-scheduled hearing on May 20, 2015.

OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

If the Historic Preservation Commission decides to initiate designation of the subject property as an Article 10 landmark, 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 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 35-45 Onondaga Avenue as an Article 10 landmark. The Department received a letter dated May 12, 2015 from the New Mission Terrace Improvement Association stating their support for efforts to landmark 35-45 Onondaga Avenue. 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 Real Estate Department and informed them of possible landmark initiation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The case report and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff. The Department has determined 35-45 Onondaga Avenue 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

35-45 Onondaga Avenue appears eligible for local designation due to its association with the expansion of community healthcare during the depths of the Great Depression. As described in the Application for Historic Landmark Designation:

Funded by a 1928 public bond measure and built in 1933, they [these buildings] extended the City's emergency hospital system to cover a growing and underserved part of town which today remains predominately populated with modest, single-family homes in a district with few architecturally significant buildings. These buildings were the final piece of the citywide emergency hospital system to be built. It was a system which was once nationally known and respected. The buildings are remnants of a noble, and once controversial, effort to provide free and efficient emergency health care to the district.

According to the Application for Historic Landmark Designation, the Emergency Hospital and Health Center operated until 1978, when San Francisco's Emergency Hospital System was discontinued. In response, Excelsior neighborhood residents demonstrated against the closure for more than a month. A more in-depth discussion of the buildings' use is included in the attached Application for Historic Landmark Designation on pages 23-34.

The buildings at 35-45 Onondaga Avenue also appear eligible for local designation for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period, and for conveying high artistic values. Designed by City Architect, Charles H. Sawyer, the buildings both demonstrate the influences of Spanish Revival style architecture, which was widely popular for institutional designs from the 1920s through the 1950s. A fuller discussion of Sawyer's career is included in the attached Application for Historic Landmark Designation on pages 35-40.

The former Alemany Health Center building at 45 Onondaga Avenue also contains two significant interior murals, "Birth" and "Community Spirit," painted in 1934 by the noted artist, Bernard Zakheim. These murals are located on the fireplace chimney at were funded by the State Emergency Relief Administration. The mural entitled "Birth," located on the lower half of the chimney, has been largely painted over but is considered a good candidate for restoration. Zakheim's work in San Francisco also included notable murals for the San Francisco Jewish Community Center (1933); Coit Tower (1934); and at the University of California San Francisco's Cole Hall (1935-1936) and Toland Hall (1938). A broader exploration of Zakheim's career is included in the attached Application for Historic Landmark Designation on pages 44-56.

INTEGRITY

The buildings seen relatively few alterations since their construction and retain more than sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling to convey association with their original design and use. The principal alterations to the Alemany Emergency Hospital at 35 Onondaga Avenue include the removal of the original paired wooden vehicle doors forming the ambulance entrance and the interior remodeling of the ambulance bay. Principal alterations to the Alemany Health Center at 45 Onondaga Avenue include the installation of an accessible entrance ramp and the removal of four metal balconettes at the second story windows.

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:

35 Onondaga / Alemany Emergency Hospital

Exterior Features Character-Defining Features

- All exterior elevations, architectural ornament and roofline
- Four bay composition consisting of three symmetrical arched bays toward the west and an arched bay with a lower roofline toward the east.
- Brick cladding consisting principally of red-colored stretchers alternating with darker-colored headers.
- Cream-colored terra cotta cladding and ornament, including bands of profiled terra cotta outlining the arched bays and entry, terra cotta ornament within the tympanums of the arched window bays featuring scrolls topped by urns and crosses, and terra cotta beltcourses featuring pairs of colonettes topped by finials
- Central entry featuring a pair of partially-glazed and paneled wood doors with an elaborate cream-colored terra cotta surround featuring flanking colonettes and a floriated frieze with a central cartouche. This composition is crowned by scrolling ornament, candles, and a plaque reading "Alemany Emergency Hospital," surmounted by an entablature and a shield with a cross at center.
- Metal and glass light fixture hanging from the center of the entry arch.
- Arched bay to the west (former ambulance entrance) featuring terra cotta cladding and a wood frame opening, surrounded by rusticated terra cotta cladding.
- Roofline featuring two courses of brick turned at a 45-degree angle to create a zig-zag effect, crowned by a parapet covered with red clay tiles.
- Double-hung wood windows with shouldered surrounds.
- Wire-glass skylights (some screened with non-historic materials on the interior).

Interior Character-Defining Features

- Entry vestibule featuring tan-colored wall tiles with blue-colored tile borders, blind arches and a vaulted ceiling.
- Cream-colored tile wainscot with tan-colored tile border. In many areas the tile appears to be covered with textured wallpaper, which is not character-defining.
- Wood doors with wooden transoms, including tan-colored tile work outlining the door and transom openings (see attached plan).
- Blue-colored wall tile used within various examination rooms (see attached plan).
- Two large open rooms toward the west end of the building (see attached plan).
- Staircase to basement featuring cream-colored tile with tan-colored border.

45 Onondaga / Alemany Health Center

Exterior Features Character-Defining Features

- All exterior elevations, architectural ornament and roofline.
- Combination hip and gable roof clad with Spanish Clay tiles.
- Irregular massing with a one-story wing fronting Onondaga Avenue connecting to a two-story wing toward the rear.
- Rounded tower at the intersection of the one- and two-story wings featuring an arched entry niche flanked by grid niches and metal and glass lights, a punched window opening, and a roofline featuring zig-zag stucco relief, pipe vents and a conical roof clad with Spanish clay tiles.
- Courtyard featuring rounded stucco walls, a decorative iron gate with shield ornament, iron fencing, and a curving seat bench on the interior.
- Double-hung wood windows with ogee lugs.
- Gabled wing facing Onondaga Avenue featuring a pointed arch tripartite window with wood sashes and turned wood mullions, as well as clay pipe vents beneath the gable end.
- Tripartite vents on upper facade of one-story wing facing Onondaga Avenue.
- Secondary entry facing Alemany Boulevard featuring a recessed vestibule with wood door and transom.
- Brick chimneys.
- Copper rain gutters (portions missing).

Interior Character-Defining Features

- Lobby with double-height volume, gable ceiling with wood beams, and vertical board wainscot with flat board trim.
- Central fireplace featuring tile cladding with a floral tile accent, wooden brackets with carved floriated ornament and Fleur-des-lis supporting a wood mantle, and a tapered plaster chimney rising through a wood balcony with a decorative iron railing at the second floor.
- Bernard Zakheim frescoes on the fireplace chimney (one on each floor); the mural on the first floor is partially painted over.
- Metal candle sconces flanking the fireplace.
- Wood staircase with turned wood balusters and vertical board wainscot.
- Gabled ceiling at second floor landing of staircase.
- Doorways flanking the fireplace on the first floor and arched doorways flanking the chimney on the second floor.
- Metal railing in punched window opening at second story of rounded tower.

BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE

The proposed landmark site encompasses Assessor's Block 6956, Lots 016 and 017 – on which the subject buildings are located.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

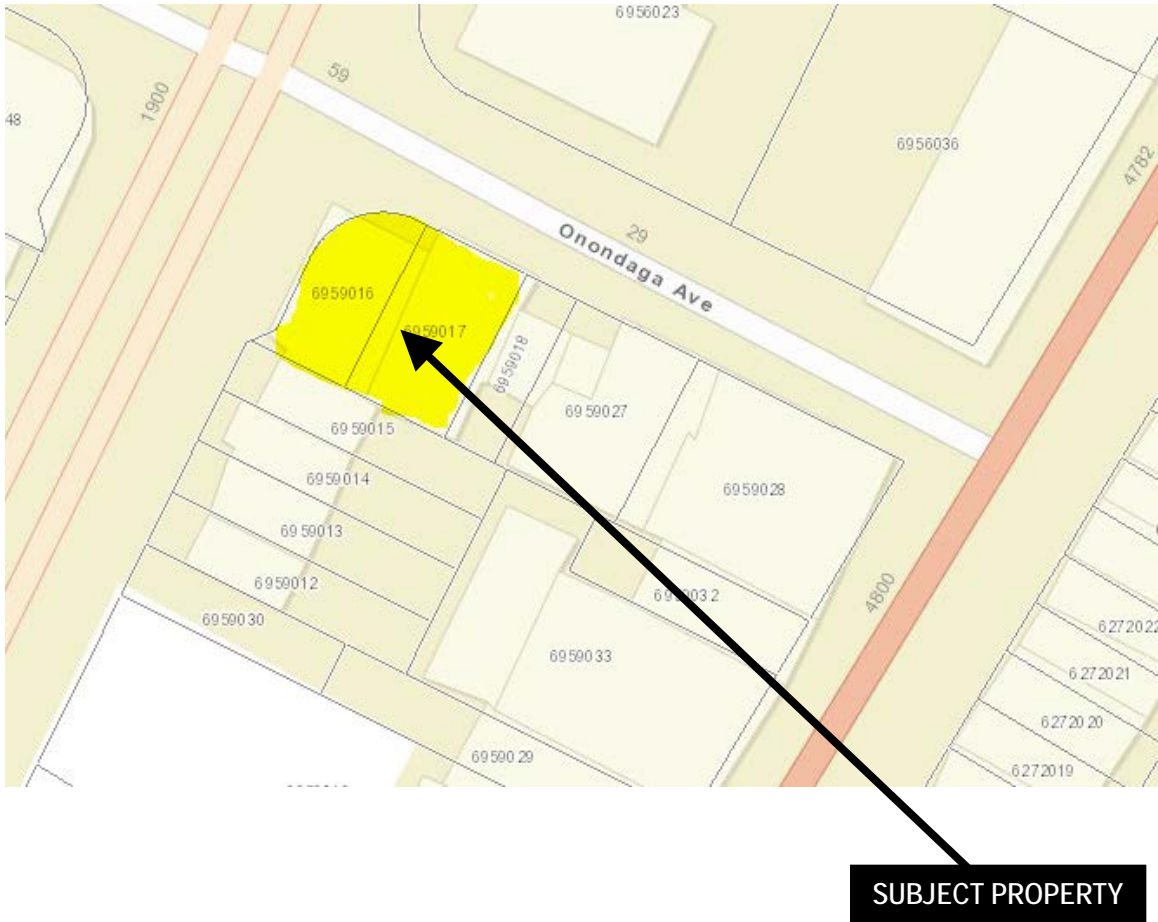
Based on the Department's analysis, 35-45 Onondaga is eligible for Article 10 Landmark designation for its association with community healthcare, as well as significant architectural expressions and examples of a type and period, and for conveying high artistic values. The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission initiate Article 10 Landmark designation of 35-45 Onondaga Avenue.

Under Article 10, The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval or approval with modifications of the proposed initiation of 35-45 Onondaga Avenue as San Francisco landmarks. If the Historic Preservation Commission approves initiation, a second hearing will be held to consider whether or not to recommend 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. Community Sponsored Article 10 Landmark Application
- B. Draft Resolution initiating designation
- C. Draft landmark ordinance

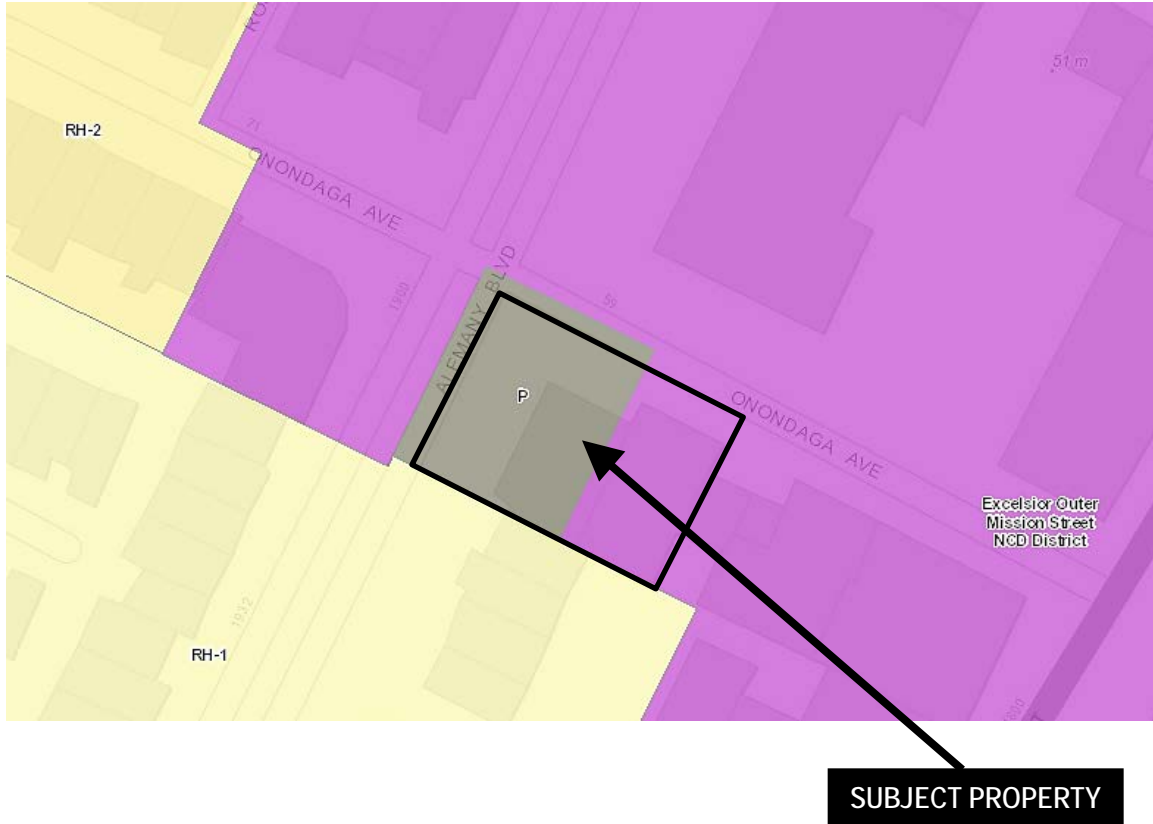
Parcel Map



SUBJECT PROPERTY



Zoning Map



SUBJECT PROPERTY



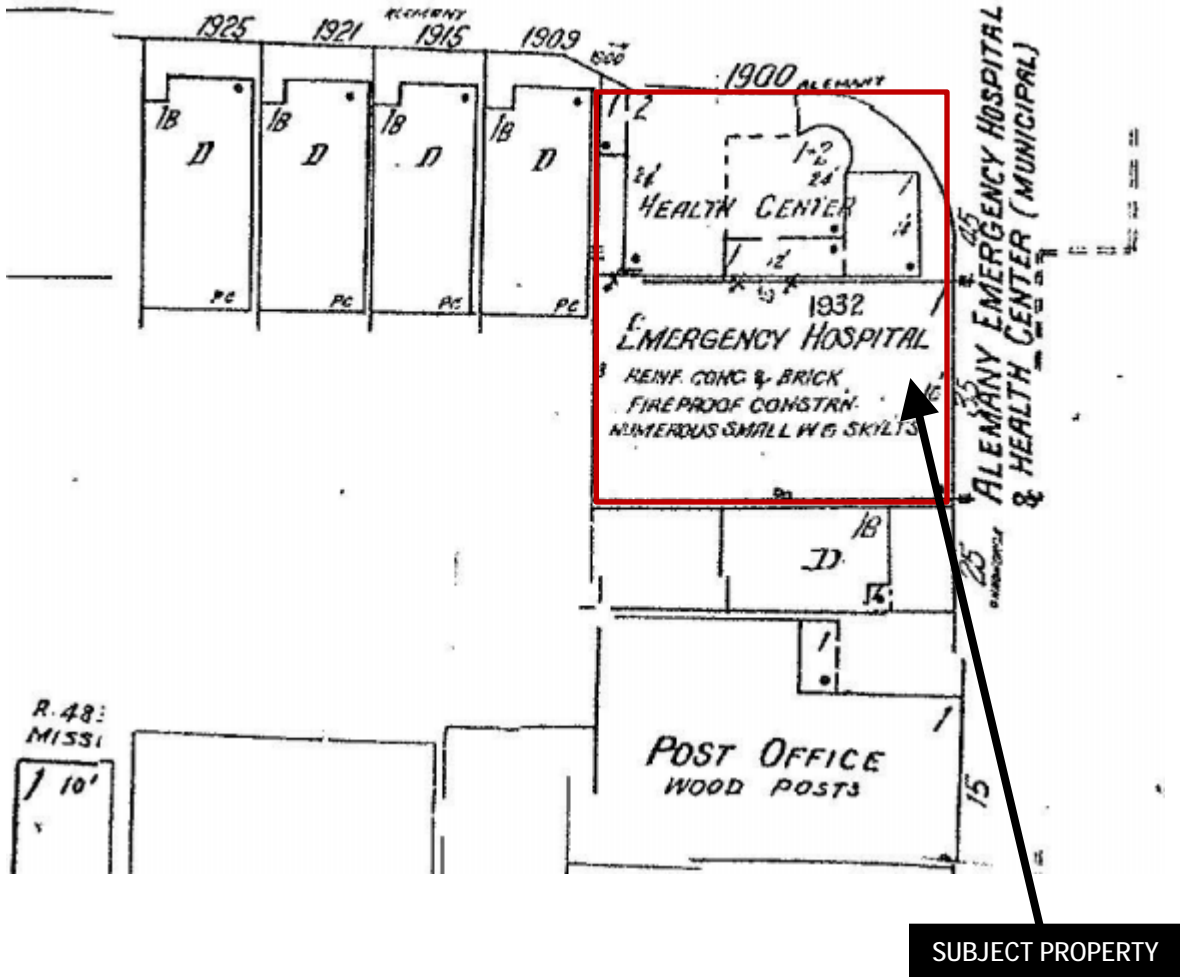
Aerial Photo



SUBJECT PROPERTY



Sanborn Map*



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



Site Photos



Consideration for Initiation of Article 10
Landmark Designation
35-45 Onondaga Avenue
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