Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2000

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board

SUBJECT: Historical Resources Board Agenda of May 25, 2000, Item 7 - TALMADGE GATES HISTORIC DISTRICT

APPLICANT: Talmadge Neighborhood Association (Charles Kaminski and Fred J. Lindahl)

OWNER: City of San Diego

LOCATION: Public right-of-way generally including Monroe Avenue from 44th Street to 49th Street, and 49th Street from Monroe Avenue to Adams Avenue, including a section of certain intersecting cross streets.

DESCRIPTION: Consideration of Historic Site Designation under HRB-CRITERION F (Historic Districts)

TODAY’S ACTION: Consider Designation of the Talmadge Gates Historic District; or Note and File

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Designate the Talmadge Gates District bordering the Talmadge community on the south and east based on being named after Norma, Natalie and Constance Talmadge, all silent film start and the wife and sisters of a major Talmadge investor and exemplifying the history of the Talmadge community, HRB-CRITERION F (Historical Districts).
BACKGROUND:

This item was initially brought before the Historical Resources Board at the November 17, 1999 meeting, at the request of Mr. Kaminski and Mr. Lindahl of the Talmadge Neighborhood Association. There was discussion about the merits of designating the gates individually or as a district. The Board directed staff to set the item for hearing as a historic district at the December meeting and requested that “infill” criteria be provided for restoration and future improvements. The item was subsequently continued to December and then March to allow time for staff to work with the community on issues raised related to historical district designation.

This item was brought before the Historical Resources Board by private individuals involved in the Talmadge District. The gates are located on the southern and eastern boundaries of the Talmadge neighborhood in eight locations. (There is some evidence there may have been additional gates in the past). If designated as a district along Monroe Avenue and 49th Street, the district would include the street right-of-way connecting the gateways, including an additional street section south and east of each gate, as shown on Attachment 1 to the attached district text.

ANALYSIS:

The ornamental gates surrounding the Talmadge Park Estates Unit #1 and Talmadge Park Unit #3 are commonly known as the Talmadge Gates. These gates line the southerly and easterly boundaries of the community established in 1925 by real estate developers Roy and Guy Lichty. Funded with substantial capital from Joe Shenick, president of the United Artists Corporation, the neighborhood was named after Shenick’s wife, Norma Talmadge, and her sisters Natalie and Constance, all silent film stars. The three sisters were noted silent film stars, starring in such popular films as “Forbidden Love” and “Intolerance”. At the zenith of their acting careers, the sisters hosted a dedication ceremony at Talmadge, on January 3, 1926. Over 10,000 San Diego residents, as well as famous actors including Buster Keaton and screen cowboy William S. Hunt were in attendance.

The gates were designed in the mid-1920’s by engineer Frank R. Carlson. They were cast in 1927 at Union Machine Works in San Diego, at 406 West Market Street. To date, no historical significance has been associated with either Union Machine or Frank R. Carlson.

The gates are wrought iron painted silver gray. They are approximately 10 feet wide and almost 15 feet high, and are decorated with fanciful curves and shapes reminiscent of Andalusian iron work. The gates south of Monroe Avenue have a symmetrical arch frame spanning the sidewalk with a decorative light fixture. The gates east of 49th Street have a flat arch frame crossing the sidewalk and an arched “giraffe” neck arm that supports a decorative light fixture (see Attachment).

Though not in completely original condition, with subsequent replacement of light fixtures on some gates with standard lights and fixation of neighborhood watch signs, the Talmadge Gates...
retain their unique character and establish a clean demarcation of the original southern and eastern boundaries of the Talmadge sub-division. The portion of the Talmadge neighborhood within the survey area of the “Greater Mid-City Historic Survey” (Milford Wayne Donaldson; 1997), generally west of Euclid Avenue, has been identified as a potential historic district. Board consideration of this district will be brought forth in late 2001. Restoration of the existing gates to original condition could be accomplished with minimal effort.

The Talmadge Community

Situated near present-day San Diego State University, the affluent community was advertised as a self sufficient community, a place from which “residents could send their children to school from Kindergarten through college and not have to move.” Building restrictions resulted in high quality homes in a well designed neighborhood, isolated by canyons on the north and west and set off by the gateways on the south and east. The Talmadge area was called by the San Diego Union newspaper on July 28, 1925, “the city’s most attract close-in residential tract.” Architectural types vary, from Spanish Colonial Revival to Victorian to Classical. Though the Great Depression would shortly dampen the real estate market, the Talmadge community grew rapidly. Talmadge has retained both its unique qualities and value throughout the twentieth century. As mentioned earlier, a potential historic district has been identified and will be processed in the future.

The Historic District Document

The Talmadge Estates Gateways Historic District is attached. The document includes a short background, description of the district, and implementation criteria. Attached to the district text are a map of the district, including the location of gates and street lights, a map of the Talmadge Estates Historic District, a map of Proposed New or Restored Gates, a map of Proposed New Traffic Circles and Islands, and detailed drawings of the two types of gates and the street lights. This information will be added to the original submittal prepared by Kaminski and Lindahl in November, 1991.

The implementation criteria addresses design issues related to alterations, maintenance, building materials, and reconstruction standards. In addition to the gates, other types of improvements to the district include street lights, sidewalks, street trees and landscaping. Restoration of all of these features is recommended, as is the addition of street trees where there are non-contiguous sidewalks. Much of the district has 10-foot wide sidewalks contiguous to the curb and therefore cannot easily accommodate street trees.

There was some discussion at the November 17, 1999 hearing regarding the community’s desire to add new gateways unrelated to the original gateways, to encompass a larger, modern day definition of the boundaries of Talmadge. It is staff’s understanding that the new gateways would be located outside of the proposed district and therefore will not need to be addressed as part of the district criteria. Even if the new gates were to be within the district boundaries, they
could be constructed provided they did not mimic the historical design, and could be clearly identified as a later addition per U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards. The Historic District text notes that a traffic circle was recently built at the intersection of Adams Avenue, 49th Street, Lorraine Drive, and that it should be landscaped.

CONCLUSION:

After reviewing the historical report submitted by the applicant, staff recommends that the Talmadge Estates Gateways Historic District has enough historical value to warrant historical district designation under Historical Resources Board Criterion F (Historic Districts). The period of significance will be late 1920s and 30s suburban development of San Diego, an era of special connection to Spanish/Andalusian revival and Hollywood figures. The attachment to this report provides design guidelines for incorporation into the Talmadge Gates Historic District to assist in future design-development review by staff.

ALTERNATIVE

Rather than designating the gates as a district, they could be designated individually. This is not recommended because the gates are integrally related in their significance.

Lara Evans
Associate Planner

Attachments: 1. Talmadge Gates Historic District
2. Original Talmadge Gates Report from Applicants
TALMADGE GATES HISTORIC DISTRICT

BACKGROUND

Talmadge is located east of Kensington and west of the College Area. Development began in 1925 and was essentially completed in 1953. The gates were constructed from 1926 through 1928 and formed the landmark entryways into Talmadge Park Unit #3 and Talmadge Park Estates Unit #1. The gates are located on the southern and eastern boundaries of the Talmadge neighborhood in eight locations (See Attachment 1). There is some evidence that there may have been additional gates in the past, especially at 44th Street where there are patches left in the sidewalk. The area is zoned predominately for single-family dwellings with multiple-family dwelling unit zoning south of Monroe Avenue.

DESCRIPTION

The gates are constructed of wrought iron and are located to identify key entrances to the historic subdivisions of Talmadge Park Unit #3 and Talmadge Park Estates Unit #1. They are approximately 10 feet wide and approximately 15 feet in height and are painted silver-grey. The architectural features include fanciful curves and shapes reminiscent of Andalusian fused ironwork. The gates south of Monroe Avenue have a symmetrical arch frame spanning the sidewalk with a decorative light feature in the middle of the structure. The gates east of 49th Street have a flat arch frame crossing the sidewalk and an arched "giraffe" neck arm that supports a decorative light fixture.

Over the years, some of the original gates have been removed. One of the pair of gates is missing on Estrella Avenue at Monroe Avenue. Other locations may include 44th Street, Menlo Avenue, and 47th Street at Monroe Avenue. Additional research is needed to determine whether gates existed at these locations.

Pedestrian-oriented street lighting was also constructed at the time the gates were installed. There are 41 of the "Marbelite" standards within the district, which appear to be all or most of the original number. The lights did not extend beyond the one-half block south of Monroe or the one-half block east of 49th Street.

The condition of sidewalks within the district varies but many are deteriorating. Street trees are mostly sporadic and include a variety of species. Long time residents have stated that the streets were consistently tree lined until some years ago when probably due to disease, the City removed many of the trees and never replaced them. A traffic circle was recently installed at the intersection of Adams Avenue, 49th Street, and Lorraine Drive for traffic calming purposes. Community representatives have expressed an interest in developing landscaped medians, pop-outs and other street enhancements to both enhance the street and reduce vehicle speed.
Currently efforts are underway by the Community to establish a Maintenance Assessment District ("MAD") in Talmadge. The MAD, if approved by the community property owners in cooperation with the City, will fund the restoration, installation and maintenance of historic gates, new gates, landscaped medians, right-of-way landscaping, streetscape improvements, community identification signs, sidewalk repairs, pedestrian-oriented street lights, streetside trees, raised stamped crosswalks, traffic circles, statuary, fountains, banners/graphics, ornamental structures and special projects.

These historic gates form an architectural spine through the Talmadge neighborhood, which today includes the early Units #1 and #3. The spine should be preserved and enhanced through restoration of existing gates as well as the identification and construction of the missing gates.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Gates

   Gates should be retained for their historical significance. These structures should be preserved and rehabilitated by retaining and restoring the structure's original fabric and materials, consistent with the U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

   A. ALTERATIONS

   No alterations or modifications may be made to the historic gates without full review and permit from the Historic Resources Section of the Planning and Development Review Department.

   B. MAINTENANCE

   The gates should be preserved from deliberate or inadvertent neglect. Repairs to any portion of the gates may be made, consistent with the U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards, with original materials when possible and the use of original methods of construction if feasible. Available original design drawings should be used as a basis for any maintenance work.

   C. HISTORIC RESTORATION WORK

   The following materials are to be used for the restoration and rehabilitation of the gates:

   1) Iron of varying types and sizes. Refer to Attachments 4 and 5 for iron work details.

   2) Ornamental lighting consistent with the historic character.
a) For the design of the "giraffe neck" light fixture, use the Novalux Ornamental Lantern Unit, G.E. Cat# 246185, if available or similar to original design. See Attachment 5 for details. Custom fabricated fixtures are permitted. Original designs should be used as a basis for restoration of the historic gates.

b) For the symmetrical arch frame spanning the sidewalk with the decorative light feature in the middle of the structure, use the Novalux Ornamental Lantern Unit, G.E. Cat# 246153, if available or similar to original design. See Attachment 6 for details. Custom fabricated fixtures are permitted. Original designs should be used as a basis for of the historic gates.

c) The ornamental lighting base should be constructed of a 4" bronze base or equivalent. See Attachment 6 for details.

d) Where non-visible features of the structure are concerned, such as interior structural systems, electrical systems or mechanical systems, it is expected that contemporary materials and technology will be employed.

D. RECONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

1) Reconstruction may be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a gate structure when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the resource.

2) Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.

3) Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic sites. A reconstructed resource will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic site in materials, design, color and texture.

4) Where non-visible features of the structure are concerned, such as interior structural systems, electrical systems or mechanical systems, it is expected that contemporary materials and technology will be employed.
5) A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.

E. NEW CONSTRUCTION

1) The Community has expressed interest in constructing new gates at various locations within Talmadge. New gates may be constructed at these locations with materials and forms that are consistent with the original historic gates but not exact replicas of the historic gates. Signage or other means will be used to differentiate a new gate that was not part of the original district.

6) Where non-visible features of the structure are concerned, such as interior structural systems, electrical systems or mechanical systems, it is expected that contemporary materials and technology will be employed.

2. Street Lights

The Marbelite pedestrian-oriented street lights that were constructed during the historical time period are contributing to the district and may not be removed or altered in any manner that would affect their historical significance. They will be maintained and reconstructed as needed according to the same standards as the gates. See Attachment 4 for details. Some lights within the district do not match the original historic Marbelite street lights and should be replaced when feasible. The design of new or replacement lights will be in substantial conformance with the design of the historic lights within the district.

Banners/graphics may be added to the ornamental streetlights. The mounting structure should not damage the historic fabric and be such design that it can be removed.

3. Streetscape

The following guidelines should be the basis of review and approval of encroachment permits by the Planning and Development Review Department.

A. Sidewalks/Raised Stamped Crosswalks

Sidewalks should be given priority for repair or replacement where needed. The design of replacement sidewalks will be in substantial conformance with the historic design of sidewalks on adjacent properties including location, width, elevation, scoring pattern, texture, color, and material to the extent that the design is approved by the City Engineer. If desired, raised stamped crosswalks may be included within the district.
B. Driveways

Existing driveways may be maintained and new driveways may be permitted if in conformance with the requirements of the applicable City codes.

C. Parkways and Street Trees

All existing street trees should be preserved when feasible or replaced if necessary. New trees should be provided where there are non-contiguous sidewalks and should be the same species as the existing trees fronting the site, the most prevalent species on the same street, or trees that meet City of San Diego street trees recommendations, and are consistent with the area’s period of significance (1920’s).

New trees should be spaced at appropriate intervals to meet City street placement guidelines. Trees should be located adjacent to the curb and in a landscaped parkway strip. Trees should not block the views of the historic gates and should be spaced away from them by at least 20 feet.

D. Medians/Bulb-outs/Traffic Circles/Diverters

If medians/bulb-outs/traffic circles/diverters are desired, they should be designed with low ground cover, small trees, or hardscape in order to maintain the original scale of the street and avoid view blockage to the gates.

Ornamental lighting may be permitted within Medians/Bulb-outs/Traffic Circles/Diverters.

If desired, the existing traffic circle at Adams Avenue, 49th Street and Lorraine Drive may be provided with landscaping, trees, and other special features such as ornamental structures and lighting.

E. Encroachments

Encroachment permits will be granted subject to review of the Historical Resources Section of the Planning and Development Review Department. The proposed encroachment will be reviewed against per the guidelines contained herein and otherwise as to conformance with U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards and its effect on the historical resources of the Talmadge Gates Historic District.

4. PLAQUE SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship plaques for the Talmadge Gates have been identified as a way to have
corporate sponsorship of rehabilitation costs. Plaques should be permitted and follow the
guidelines set by the Historical Resources Board. Plaques should not include any form or
type of garish advertisement. Plaques could be imbedded in the ground, beneath the
structure, and may have an inconspicuous logo or description of the sponsoring party(ies).

Attachments: 1. Map of Talmadge Gates Historic District
               2. Map of Proposed New or Restored Gates
               3. Map of Proposed New Traffic Circles and Islands
               4. "Giraffe Neck" Gate Details
               5. Symmetrical Arch frame Gate Details
               6. Marbelite Pedestrian-Oriented Lighting Standard Details
Proposed New Talmadge Gates within Historic District
Proposed Restored Talmadge Gates within Historic District
Form 13, Mission Ornamental Iron Works
1765 Logan Ave., San Diego, California
are prepared to furnish and erect these
structures complete.

NOTE:
- 3" angle iron welded onto square tube
- 1/2" square iron rod
- Cable to be installed inside 2" square iron tube
- 2" perforated base for lamp
- 2" x 2.5" iron
- 1/2" x 1/2" iron
- 1/2" x 1/2" iron
- 3/4" x 3/4" iron
- 1 1/2" x 1 1/2" iron
- 1 1/2" x 1 1/2" iron
- 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" iron
- 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" iron
- 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" iron
- 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" iron

ATTACHMENT 5

DETAILS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF IMPROVEMENTS IN
ROAD DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT No. 82.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY CALIFORNIA

4285-L