TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
DATE: JANUARY 10, 2005 CMR:104:05
SUBJECT: 323 UNIVERSITY AVENUE: RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD AT THE REQUEST OF HAYES GROUP ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS ON BEHALF OF MELANIE BARRY PROPERTIES, OWNER, TO RECLASSIFY A CATEGORY 3 BUILDING ON THE CITY OF PALO ALTO'S HISTORIC INVENTORY TO CATEGORY 2 PURSUANT TO MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 16.49 (HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE)

RECOMMENDATION
The Historic Resources Board (HRB) and staff recommend that the City Council reclassify the property located at 323 University Avenue as a significant building in Category 2 consistent with the definition of Historic Category 2 in Section 16.49.020(b).

BACKGROUND
The building at 323 University Avenue, designed by Birge Clark, is an elaborate version of the Spanish Colonial Revival style with strong classical overtones in the pilasters at the edges of the building on both the first and second floor and in the seven arches across the upper façade. The lower façade shop front originally featured a pair of recessed entry doors, plate glass display windows, and a tile base, a design approach that Clark would afterward use in most of his downtown commercial buildings up through the early 1930s.

The building is architecturally and historically significant as Birge Clark’s first commercial building in the Spanish style, although it retains classical elements from Clark’s earlier period when he designed buildings very similar to the classically inspired stucco buildings seen on Main Streets throughout America. After the construction of 323 University Avenue, Clark developed a more rustic and less classical approach to Spanish design. Therefore, 323 University Avenue is a transitional building containing both the classical elements of his earlier career and the Spanish approach that would become his signature style.

The upper façade of the building has been preserved in its original form. The existing lower façade design, which eliminated the original recessed entries, was built in 1966 for a new tenant; research by staff and the applicant has not uncovered evidence of any
alteration to the building prior to 1966. The rear of the building, which faces a pedestrian alley, was altered in the 1980s by the current tenant, Medallion Rugs, to provide larger windows for an upstairs conference room; and in its present altered form it does not appear to possess historical significance. An interior photo of the 1930s in the archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association shows that the existing extension of the rear mezzanine along the side of the store to the front of the building is not original (although the rear staircase and rear mezzanine are historic).

HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD REVIEW
The HRB, at its meeting on May 19, 2004, reviewed the application for the historic designation of the building at 323 University Ave (see Attachment A).

The applicant’s architect, Ken Hayes, informed the Board that the property owners are considering restoration and redevelopment of the property. The Board noted that the designation in Category 2 would also make the property eligible for certain development-based incentives for preservation and rehabilitation including a floor area bonus, parking exemptions, and participation in the Transfer of Development Rights program. Mr. Hayes was unsure of whether the property owner would pursue use of these incentives.

The HRB voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation and recommend that the City Council reclassify the property at 323 University Avenue as a significant building in Category 2. The HRB motion identified character-defining features of the building to be included in the Category 2 designation including, but not limited to (1) the entire upper story façade including the tile roof, (2) the eave detail at the roof, (3) the arcaded windows, (4) the ornamental iron railing, (5) the first floor, the flanking pilasters and the lintel, and (6) additional character-defining features that may be identified by qualified opinion in the future.

DISCUSSION

- Upon designation in Category 2, demolition of the building at 423 Kipling Street, and located in the downtown CD zone, would be prohibited unless certain conditions were met as set forth in PAMC 16.49.060.

- Upon designation in Category 2, the Architectural Review Board review of proposed alterations or additions to the building would be required to include referral to the Historic Resources Board for recommendations, as provided in PAMC 16.49.050 (1)(A).

- Upon designation in Category 2, the building would be subject to maintenance regulations for historic structures as set forth in PAMC 16.49.080 and the enforcement provisions set forth in 16.49.090.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment B: Verbatim Minutes of the HRB Meeting of May 19, 2004.