

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2000 Mason Street

☐ not for publication

city or town San Francisco

☐ vicinity

state California code CA county San Francisco code 075 zip code 94133

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Wanda Wayne
Signature of certifying official

20 JUN 2011
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

8/8/2011
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ library

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Ranch Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: OTHER

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The North Beach Branch Library, built in 1959, is located at the oblique intersection of Mason Street and Columbus Avenue in the North Beach district of the City of San Francisco. Its sloping site is on the west edge of the Joe DiMaggio Playground. A commercial area lies to the east of the library on Columbus Street. The vicinity of the playground is densely residential with predominantly multi-story, multi-family dwellings built in the early 1900s. The library is a brick building, rectangular in plan, with an asymmetrical, low-sloped, gable roof supported on large, exposed glulam beams. The front and side elevations are single story; the rear elevation reveals the basement level and crawlspace. Mid-Century Modern in style, the building was designed to incorporate features of a suburban Ranch House such as the low, wide massing, low-sloped roof, exposed structural elements, large areas of glazing with a visual connection to open space, and a living room-like area with a fireplace. The library also features small commercial elements such as glazed entry doors with glazed side-lights and transoms, display case, and low inviting windows. The North Beach Library is in good condition with only a few signs of water intrusion at the ceiling and failing paint. The library has had very few alterations since its construction and it retains a high degree of integrity.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheet Section 7, Page 1.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1959

Significant Dates

1959

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Appleton & Wolfard

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The North Beach Branch Library, built in 1959, was designed by the San Francisco architecture firm, Appleton & Wolfard. The design is a good example of the Mid-Century Modern Ranch style that was popular in suburban Northern California but uncommon in the City of San Francisco, particularly for a public building. The firm of Appleton & Wolfard dominated the field of library design in San Francisco for almost fifteen years and was recognized nationally. The North Beach Library is based on a prototype created by Appleton & Wolfard and the City Librarian, Laurence Clarke to address modern library principles developed and distributed by the American Library Association after World War II. It is a physical representation of the Post-War goal for better, and equal, education. The most controversial of the Modern library projects in San Francisco due to its constrained site, Appleton & Wolfard creatively incorporated modern library principles into an appealing Mid-Century Modern composition at the North Beach Branch Library. The building retains a high degree of integrity and is the only unaltered Post-War Modern library in San Francisco. The North beach Branch Library is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the Post-War development of modern library principles. The Library is also eligible under National Register Criterion C at the local level of significance as a good example of Mid-Century Modern Ranch style applied to a public building.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See Continuation Sheet Section 8, Page 1.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

See Continuation Sheet Section 9, Page 1.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ☒ Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	10	551830	4183830	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Property is located within San Francisco Assessors Parcel Number Block 0075 and Lot 001. However, only the footprint of the building shall be included within the boundary. North from the intersection of Mason Street and Columbus Avenue, the Property is one hundred feet by forty two feet to the east. To the south, the trellis restroom is and additional eight feet by thirty two feet to the east.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Johanna Street, on behalf of Friends of Appleton & Wolfard

organization Johanna Street, Architect

date 31 August 2010

street & number 1423 15th Ave

telephone 415-287-4143

city or town San Francisco

state CA

zip code 94122

e-mail johanna@streetarchitect.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

San Francisco Public Library North Beach Bran.
Name of Property

San Francisco, CA
County and State

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name San Francisco Public Library

street & number 100 Larkin Street

telephone 415-557-4400

city or town San Francisco

state CA

zip code 94102

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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DESCRIPTION

The North Beach Branch Library is located at the intersection of Mason Street and Columbus Avenue and defines the western edge of the Joe DiMaggio Playground. The area surrounding the library is densely residential with a commercial district located on Columbus Avenue. The low massing of the structure allows views to Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill to the east, the Transamerica Building in downtown San Francisco to the southeast, and the San Francisco Bay to the north. The library is rectangular in plan featuring a low-pitched, gable roof, asymmetrically positioned. The front elevation of the library abuts the sidewalk of Mason Street and its west-facing red brick masonry wall is arranged in a saw-toothed pattern; a concrete planter is incorporated to take advantage of the triangular voids. Each north-facing fin of the saw-tooth is full height metal sash glazing in a wood frame, divided two over two. Original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, sit within the lower east glazing quadrants. The concrete and masonry of the west elevation has been painted in most pedestrian level areas due to vandalism. Nine, regularly spaced, deep, glulam beams articulate the wide eave of the front elevation.

There are two points of entry to the library located on either side of the brick wall centered on the roof peak. The upper entry defines the corner of the south elevation with wood frame glazed side, and transom, lites flanking non-original, glazed metal double doors. The flanking terrazzo planter has been in-filled and is painted in some locations. This entry is currently barricaded from use with a chain link fence due to handicap accessibility concerns. The other entry is located at a lower position due to the slope of Mason Street. It features similar non-original, glazed metal double doors with a wood frame glass transom that extends to the eave. A wood frame display case protrudes from the wall next to the doors. This is currently used as the main entry. The metal lettered sign was moved from its position on the masonry to the south of the upper entry, to center on the masonry between the two entries.

Columbus Avenue intersects Mason Street at an angle, which created a triangular open area in front of the south elevation of the library. A wood trellis supported on red brick piers, shades the large, south-facing, floor-to-ceiling, metal, sliding glass doors and connects to the wall of what was initially a public restroom. The restroom, though not internally connected, was part of the scope of work for the design of the library. It is a small, low, rectangular, red brick masonry building with a flat roof. Wood trellis elements function as a small eave. The south elevation of the restroom features two flush metal doors and the north elevation has six, regularly spaced, high, punched, square windows.

The east elevation of the library faces tennis courts and is a tall, brick masonry wall articulated with the same nine, regularly spaced, deep glulam beams as the west elevation. Six pairs of low, metal vents located to the north of the roof peak are the only interruption in the, partially painted, red brick masonry wall. To the south, the east elevation of the library is divided into five vertical strips. Original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, sit within each strip with a rectangular, concrete panel between floor levels. Fixed glazing fills in the spaces above the windows to the sloping eave. A flush metal door is positioned at the southern corner.

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The short, rectangular north elevation features a long band of original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, set below the side of a spanning glulam beam. The brick masonry wall is punctuated by ten metal vents regularly spaced. The western end of the north elevation has a brick walled exit stair enclosed with a metal gate and chain link fence.

Through the lower entry of the library, patrons are greeted with a long, curved, wood circulation desk at the open plan, main floor level. The interior side of the red brick masonry exterior walls is exposed and unpainted. The glulam beams are also exposed and articulate the acoustic tile ceiling. Florescent lights are arranged in square patterns and five square skylights are located near the eastern wall. The browsing area of the library, which overlooks the main floor, is located up half a flight of stairs to the upper entry landing and then up another half a flight stairs. Wood handrails flank both side of the stairs. The service area for the library staff is located below the browsing area, reached by a stair located beyond the circulation desk.

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SIGNIFICANCE

The North Beach Branch Library was designed by the firm of Appleton & Wolfard and built in 1959. Mid-Century Modern in style, the library is an excellent example of Post-War national library standards locally adapted for the City of San Francisco. The library is part of Appleton & Wolfard's portfolio of "outstanding branch libraries which gained national renown"¹ as remarkably different from previous "Carnegie" libraries and successfully modern.

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a steel magnate in the late nineteenth century. His philanthropy funded the construction of more than a thousand public branch libraries throughout the United States; seven within the City of San Francisco.² His secretary provided grant applicants with guidelines to help regulate construction of the many buildings. As such, Carnegie's influence on the appearance and layout of branch libraries was pervasive and lasted well after his philanthropic foundation stopped funding their construction. Carnegie libraries are symmetrically rectangular in plan, with the main floor located above a basement, situated half above grade and half below. A formal staircase leads to the main floor which is entered through a small vestibule. The main floor is mostly an open floor plan subdivided by low bookcases. Windows are placed six feet above the floor level on all sides of the building to line the walls with bookshelves but still allow for natural light. The Carnegie libraries were Neo-Classical in style reflecting the solemn importance of the democratic goals of the public library institution.

The prosperity of the 1920s allowed cities in the United States to finance their own construction of public branch library buildings. The appearance and layout of the city-funded projects tended to match, and are often confused with, the Carnegie-funded libraries. Demand for convenient branches outpaced construction and the trend of leasing spaces not specifically designed to be libraries persisted. When the Depression hit, libraries became more popular than ever. But funds for libraries decreased considerably during the 1930s, making it very difficult to serve the increased patronage. The United States Federal Government funded some library construction during the Depression through the Works Progress Administration in an effort to battle the severe unemployment. The Neo-Classical style started to disappear from library construction, in favor of more popular designs, during the 1930s.

After World War II, the United States quickly entered an era of affluence along with a population and construction boom. Funds for libraries were now available to address issues and theories that had been on hold since the beginning of the Depression. The American Library Association, the main professional organization for librarians in the United States since 1879, immediately identified this potential and published a document entitled Post War Standards for Public Libraries in 1943, followed by A National Plan for Public Library Service in 1948. These documents were used to promote, and became the basis of, the modern public library in the United States. The National Plan featured the following principles for library buildings:

¹ Clarke, Laurence. Letter. Fenreary 6, 1957.

² Kelley, Tim. "Origins of the Seven San Francisco Carnegie Branch Libraries 1901-1921," Context Statement for the San Francisco Planning Department, January 2001, page 3.

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1. The library building should be easily accessible to its potential clientele.
2. The library building should be functional.
3. Standard types of library buildings should be developed.
4. Many public library buildings should be adaptable for expanded service in county or regional library systems.
5. The public library building of the future should be planned and equipped as a modern educational center.³

These principles were intended to be further developed at state and local levels to incorporate regional priorities. Librarians, planners and architects worked together to create innovative, modern, branch public library buildings based on the criteria defined by the American Library Association.

Branch libraries were a relatively new type of building intended to serve small local communities. Though rigidly defined by Carnegie at the beginning of the twentieth century, branch libraries were a focus of innovation by the 1950s. In fact, the underlying intention of the library buildings built after World War II was to be distinct from their Carnegie predecessors. Ralph Ulveling, Director of the Detroit Public Library and President of the American Library Association from 1945-46, wrote extensively about Post-War library construction and became a sought-after consultant.⁴ In a 1952 article for *Architectural Record*, he and his colleague Charles Mohrhardt, Associate Director of the Detroit Public Library, summed up one of the main design goals of the modern library. "The library is no longer a mere symbol of culture or a civic monument with pillars and impressive masses of steps; instead it is becoming a friendly place which reveals the resources within and invites one to share its hospitality."⁵

San Francisco and Laurence Clarke

In San Francisco, the last of the Carnegie-funded branch libraries were completed in 1921.⁶ From 1921 until 1951, while numerous branches were opened in leased spaces, the City built only three new branch library buildings: the Anza (1932), West Portal (1939) and Bernal (1940) Branches. In 1945, after thirty-three years as City Librarian, Robert Rea retired and was replaced by Laurence Clarke. "Clarke - a tall, energetic man with iron-gray hair - was in charge of the periodical department at the library during the depression."⁷ Invigorated by his new position and aware of the new standards promoted by the American Library Association, Clarke quickly started to advocate for more funds. The San Francisco Library had to continually increase personnel, acquire new books and modernization its facilities to meet theses new standards. Clarke found that the Board of Supervisors was most receptive to requests for funds to build single branch libraries, particularly in the more affluent and politically influential neighborhoods. He and local community organizers initiated one at a time, the construction of the Potrero (1951), Parkside (1951) and Marina (1954) Branches.

³ Joeckel, Carlton B. and Amy Winslow. *A National Plan for Public Library Service*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1948, pages 126-128.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Ulveling

⁵ Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling. "Public Libraries." *Architectural Record*, December 1952, page 149.

⁶ For a comprehensive history of the seven Carnegie Branch Libraries refer to "Origins of the Seven San Francisco Carnegie Branch Libraries 1901-1921." by Tim Kelley.

⁷ Streibigh, Bob. "Our Neglected Libraries: Do the People Care?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 17, 1952, page 21.

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Unlike the Potrero, the Parkside Branch Library, designed by Appleton & Wolfard, received a lot of attention. It was an experiment in modern library design based on the principles of the American Library Association and its success influenced almost fifteen years of local library building. A headline in the San Francisco Chronicle proclaimed "At Last, a Library with a Clubhouse Look" as if this was what everyone had been waiting for. City Librarian Laurence Clarke had worked closely with the architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard to create a proto-type building that embodied modern library theory promoted by the American Library Association. Clarke was quoted as saying "a public library must merchandise its services in much the same way as a successful bookshop sells its wares. It must entice people both young and old, to want to use it. Unfortunately, most existing public libraries look like a Water Department pumping station. Smart entrepreneurs make their cocktail lounges so attractive that you can't help but stay on for another drink. Why not libraries?"⁸ The Parkside Branch was the "pilot project and proving ground for the entire program of public library building and expansion in San Francisco" and received national acclaim as an excellent example of Mid-Century Modern design.⁹

The success of the Parkside project gave Clarke momentum to continue building branches. By 1953 the Planning Department had helped create a phased master plan using work developed for a failed 1948 ballot initiative. Phase One focused on under served neighborhoods and included a new branch building for North Beach, "Outer Sunset", "Lake Merced Area", Ingleside, Excelsior, and Bayview to be completed within five years. Phase Two included three additional new branch buildings with a five to ten year schedule and Phase Three included four more to be constructed in the 1960s.¹⁰ Phase Two and Three mostly involved the replacement of the "out-dated" Carnegie-era libraries and never came to fruition. By the end of the 1960s, Phase One was all but complete and the work was performed almost entirely by Appleton & Wolfard.

North Beach

The North Beach Branch Library was the fifth branch library built by Appleton & Wolfard. "No branch library stirred more controversy (or any, for that matter) than the North Beach branch. While several of the new branch libraries were located in newer areas of the city with significant space available for development, the North Beach branch was being constructed in one of the oldest and densest neighborhoods in the city. Not coincidentally, as Bill Simons of the San Francisco Chronicle had predicted well over a decade earlier, location proved to be the most controversial issue. Washington Square was ruled out. The Library Commission favored a triangular lot bounded by Columbus, Powell and Greenwich, just south of the North Beach playground. Nothing apart from discussions concerning the library's location happened for two years. Then in the spring of 1956 the Library Commission chose a site along the western edge of the North Beach playground, which required the elimination of one of three tennis courts. While the Recreation and Park Commission had to cede land for other libraries in other parts of the city – for the Marina branch for example – it protested such an intrusion in North Beach, because the neighborhood's recreational facilities were particularly limited. Mayor George Christopher intervened at this point... He first appointed a neighborhood committee to recommend an

⁸ "At Last, a Library With a Clubhouse Look," San Francisco Chronicle, October 28, 1951, page 9L.

⁹ "Report on a Plan for the Location of Public Libraries in San Francisco," San Francisco Planning Department, April 1953, page 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pages 24-25.

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alternative location to the playground site, and the committee concluded that the library be located on the triangular lot bounded by Mason, Columbus and Lombard. Christopher rejected this suggestion, because a block of Mason would have to be closed to create a buffer zone between the building and the streets surrounding it. It was perceived by some that such a move would create traffic and parking problems. The site was also thought to be too small and too expensive. In the end, Christopher essentially mandated that the library be located at the playground site. The Parks and Recreation Commission relented.¹¹

Location and accessibility

Location and accessibility were important modern library elements in both the American Library Association's National Plan and the Master Plan developed for San Francisco in 1953. On a large scale, convenient locations were a part of an effort to assure that all people, throughout the country, had access to a public library and to encourage use of the system. By 1956, the Federal Government issued the Library Services Act. The initiative was directed towards rural areas but it validated the work underway in San Francisco, continuously expanding library service to all areas. On a smaller scale, convenient locations, in the early 1950s, were associated with shopping districts. Post-War America was experiencing an economic boom and shopping districts were heavily trafficked. Influential librarian/consultants such as Ralph Ulveling and Charles Mohrhardt, encouraged the location of branch public libraries within these busy shopping districts to "attract" more people to the library and make picking up a book as easy as buying a loaf of bread.¹² Despite the extended controversy over its location, the North Beach Branch is convenient to a shopping district.

Post-War libraries embraced elements of retail design to fully benefit from their shopping district context. Appealing views of the interior of the library, that revealed books and a pleasant atmosphere, were carefully planned to attract patrons in much the same way as a retail building. The easily accessed front entry doors were predominately glass surrounded by glazed sidelites and transoms, a direct reference to a storefront assembly. At the North Beach Branch, Appleton & Wolfard attempted to take up as little of the precious playground space as possible by setting the front elevation of the library up against the sidewalk of Mason Street rather than setting it back like many of the other libraries. The relationship of the building to the sidewalk is the most retail-like of the San Francisco Post-War libraries. The North Beach Branch retains its original storefront-like entries and even features a retail style display case located near the entry to highlight the books and media inside the library.

The formal staircases of the Carnegie Libraries were attractive architectural elements but they made the libraries more difficult to navigate for the elderly and physically handicapped. The stairs also acted as a symbolic barrier. The temple-like qualities of a formal stair might deter patrons from feeling welcome to enter the building. Without stairs, Post-War libraries were as easily accessible as the stores in the nearby shopping district. The North Beach Library had two points of entry due to a sloping site. One was recessed toward Columbus Avenue and the other recessed toward Mason Street. The Mason Street entry brought patrons directly to the curved circulation desk and main library floor level. The Columbus

¹¹ "North Beach Branch Library Historic Resources Technical Report," Carey & Co., April 30, 2009, pages 8-10.

¹² Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling. "Public Libraries." Architectural Record, December 1952, page 152.

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Avenue entry, initially considered the main entry, was five steps higher and led to the browsing area up another four steps which overlooked the main library floor. Although the addition of steps was generally discouraged at the time this was necessary to achieve other important design elements. The steps employed at the North Beach Branch were designed at a comfortable human scale with convenient handrails, and were very unlike the grand stair cases of the Carnegie Libraries.

Mid-Century Modern Home

While elements of retail design were employed to attract people to the libraries, residential qualities were used to make patrons feel at ease so that they would stay longer and return often. Mid-Century Modern homes were predominantly single-story, located outside of urban centers and featured a convenient location for an automobile. They were set back from the street with ample front and rear yards. Open floor plans and abundant glazing filled the interiors with natural light and diminished the barrier between interior and exterior. The technology developed during World War II was now available for private consumption and houses were filled with all sorts of new tools and inventions. Radiant floor heating, provided a comfortable environment and the fireplace was no longer required for warmth but used as a location for relaxation. These domestic design elements appeared in mid-twentieth century public branch library construction. The North Beach Branch is residentially scaled; single story with an open floor plan. It features a living room-like space with a fireplace and carefully planned glazing allowing for a well lit interior area and visual connection to the exterior.

The architectural style of the North Beach Branch was also residential. It referenced the popular elements of suburban properties being built in the area by developers such as Joseph Eichler. Joseph Eichler (1900-1974) was a prolific real estate developer, building over 11,000 homes in California between 1950 and 1974.¹³ His homes were predominantly based on the designs by Anshen & Allen and utilized exposed beams, extensive glazing and low (or no) sloped roofs. The beams, over-hang, massing and roof shape of the North Beach Branch are all elements of this popular regional style of Mid-Century Modernism. This style was unusual for the land-strapped City of San Francisco as it required wide lots to accommodate the low, expansive massing.

Windows and Light

Architects during the middle of the twentieth century, used large areas of glazing to dissolve the barrier between interior and exterior. Philip Johnson took this idea to the extreme with his 1949 Glass House. Architects also used windows to deliberately manipulate natural light to create a particular interior ambiance. In libraries designed after World War II, the aim was to provide abundant diffuse natural light evenly throughout the building. Appleton & Wolfard carefully positioned large expanses of glass on the north and east elevations of their branch public libraries. Then they used light colored walls and floors to bounce the diffuse light to all surfaces of the library. While views to the south and west were often advantageous, the windows had to be shaded from allowing direct, glaring sunlight into the library. Appleton & Wolfard employed a deep overhang along with a creative zig-zag shaped wall and their signature trellis feature to prevent unwanted direct light within the North Beach Branch Library.

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Eichler

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Florescent lighting was also used to illuminate the interiors within the Post-War branch libraries. It was arranged regularly throughout the ceiling to evenly light the open floor plan. The Post-War period was a time of rapid change and people were generally optimistically forward looking which encouraged flexible, adaptable design. The evenly lit space of the library anticipated changes to the layout and use. Ralph Ulveling and Charles Mohrhardt, reiterated in their 1952 article for *Architectural Record*, "Illumination should be evenly distributed over the public service area so that freestanding bookcases, tables and other equipment may be moved to new positions and still be well-light."¹⁴ Appleton & Wolfard creatively positioned the utilitarian light fixtures in the North Beach Branch to create an attractive ceiling that also served the functional requirements of even light.

Appleton & Wolfard

Abraham A. Appleton was born in the summer of 1887 in San Francisco.¹⁵ He attended the University of California at Berkeley and studied architecture under John Galen Howard until 1908.¹⁶ A staunch Classicist, Howard most likely influenced Appleton to go on to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. On his return to San Francisco, Appleton worked for William C. Hays, a "faculty and professional colleague"¹⁷ of Howard. In 1913, Abraham Appleton proposed to Hilda Oser.¹⁸ They married and had one child, Robert Oser Appleton. Robert would later become an architect and join his father's firm.

By the early 1920s, Abraham Appleton had partnered with Samuel Lightner Hyman. Hyman had also attended the University of California at Berkeley and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Noteworthy in Hyman & Appleton's oeuvre are a significant number of buildings designed for the San Francisco Jewish community; the seven-story Mt. Zion Nurse's Building located on Sutter Street at Scott Street (built in 1925, now demolished), the Hebrew Home for the Aged, (built in 1923) and the Eureka Benevolent Society Building.¹⁹ The Sinai Memorial Chapel for the Chevra Kadisha, the Jewish Holy Burial Society, located on the northwest corner of Divisadero Street and Geary Boulevard (built in 1937) is an elegant example of the firm's Art Deco Style.²⁰

Appleton was active in, and respected by, the local architectural community, and in 1940, became president of the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In 1948, his partner Samuel Hyman died; by this time, Harold Wolfard was playing a key role at the firm. Harold Nelson Wolfard was born October 6, 1907 in Laramie, Wyoming but lived most of his life in Berkeley. He attended Berkeley High School followed by the University of California at Berkeley, graduating with a degree in Architecture in 1931. He worked as a draftsman during his education and interned at several offices after graduation before joining Hyman & Appleton in 1936. Wolfard left Hyman & Appleton to

¹⁴ Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling, "Public Libraries," *Architectural Record*, December 1952, page 152.

¹⁵ *American Architects Directory* R. R. Bowker LLC., 1955

<http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/1956%20American%20Architects%20Directory.aspx>.

¹⁶ Winter, Robert, *Towards a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California*. University of California Press: Berkeley, page 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, page 33.

¹⁸ "Engagements and Weddings on Calendar," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1913, page 26.

¹⁹ "Abraham A. Appleton," Obituary, *San Francisco Examiner*, August, 25, 1981, page B7. "Mt. Zion History" <http://mountzion.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/history/index.html>.

²⁰ "Abraham A. Appleton," Obituary, *San Francisco Examiner* August, 25, 1981, page B7.

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Continuation Sheet

North Beach Branch Library

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work on the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition with the California Commission but never really severed relations.²¹

Once work for the Exposition was completed, Wolfard returned to Hyman & Appleton. He received his license in 1940 and within a few years became a partner at the firm. The firm of Appleton & Wolfard worked on numerous project types including, residential, religious and institutional throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Appleton's aptitude with Jewish religious building continued with his new partner with the construction of Temple Emanu-El (1948) in San Jose and Temple Beth Sholom (c. 1950) in San Leandro. The eight San Francisco Public Branch Libraries, however, represent the firm's most distinguished achievement, with articles in nationally published magazines such as *Architectural Record*. Wolfard played the major role in the design of the San Francisco Branch Public Libraries from 1951 to 1966. His name almost exclusively appears on the drawings in the box labeled "approved by". Appleton's son, Robert also worked on the drawings with Wolfard and probably did a significant amount of the drafting. His name often appears on the drawings in the box labeled "drawn by". The senior Appleton only signed the North Beach Branch drawings.

The North Beach Branch Library was such an extended and controversial project that it, no doubt, tried the patience of everyone involved. Something of Wolfard's nature can be derived from an incident at one of the public meetings for the North Beach Branch. A Library Commissioner wrongly accused Wolfard of negligence and the statement was printed in the newspapers the next day.²² Obviously incensed, Wolfard immediately presented a resignation letter for the project to the Library Commission stating that "no such project can be successful without the mutual confidence and trust necessary between architect and client which has been rather publicly denied..."²³ He went on to remind the Library Commission of his past projects: "a very real contribution to Library Architecture in America."²⁴ Harold Wolfard was clearly aware and proud of his achievements in modern library design. The Library Commission formally apologized and the Appleton & Wolfard design for North Beach was completed but Wolfard, still perhaps harboring some bitterness, did not sign the drawings.

Appleton & Wolfard continued to work together through the 1960s and elements of their successful San Francisco branch public libraries appeared in other projects such as the Sonoma United Methodist Church (c.1955) and the San Francisco County Fair Building (1960) in Golden Gate Park. The firm was dissolved in the 1970s. Harold Wolfard died in 1977. Abraham A. Appleton died in 1981. In his obituary, Appleton was described as "one of the titans in the local architectural world."²⁵

²¹ Wolfard, Harold Nelson. "Application for Licensure as an Architect in California." 1937.

²² "Library Plan Approved, Architect Is Under Fire." *San Francisco Chronicle*. May 2, 1957, page 3.

²³ Wolfard, Harold. Letter. May 1, 1957.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Abraham A. Appleton." Obituary. *San Francisco Examiner* August, 25, 1981, page B7.

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North Beach Branch Library

Name of Property
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Criterion A

The North Beach Branch Library is significant under National Register Criteria A for its association with events stemming from the optimistic fervor in the United States after World War II during which librarians promoted new standards and theories which became the basis of the modern library. The American Library Association called for creating a repeatable "standard" library type that was accessible, functional, adaptable, and modern. The Post-War Modern public library was developed by librarians, architects, and planners. In San Francisco, City Librarian Laurence Clarke and the architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard developed a nationally recognized prototype branch library building that successfully conformed to Post-War modern library trends and incorporated local ideals. The North Beach Branch Library was based on the prototype and was part of a carefully planned and deliberate building campaign. The North beach Branch Library is the remaining unaltered example out of five Post-War Modern libraries built in San Francisco from 1945-1962.

Criterion C

The North Beach Branch is significant according to National Register Criteria C as an excellent contribution to Library Architecture in San Francisco in the mid-twentieth century. The Appleton & Wolfard-designed library creatively addressed the principles of the Post-War modern library described by the American Library Association as accessibility, functionality, adaptability, and modernity. The design incorporated appealing retail elements such as storefront windows, a display case and artificial illumination. Appleton & Wolfard also integrated the popular, regional, suburban residential qualities typical of Mid-Century Modern design in Northern California. The North Beach Library features exposed glulam beams, wide over-hang, low sloped roof shape, and a living room-like area with a fireplace to evoke the comforting feelings of a home. Appleton & Wolfard were nationally recognized for their library design and are responsible for the most libraries in San Francisco. The North Beach Branch Library has not been rehabilitated since it was constructed fifty years ago and is the only library of its period that retains significant amounts of the original furniture, including shelving, tables and chairs. It possesses a high degree of integrity.

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North Beach Branch Library

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<http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000076501>

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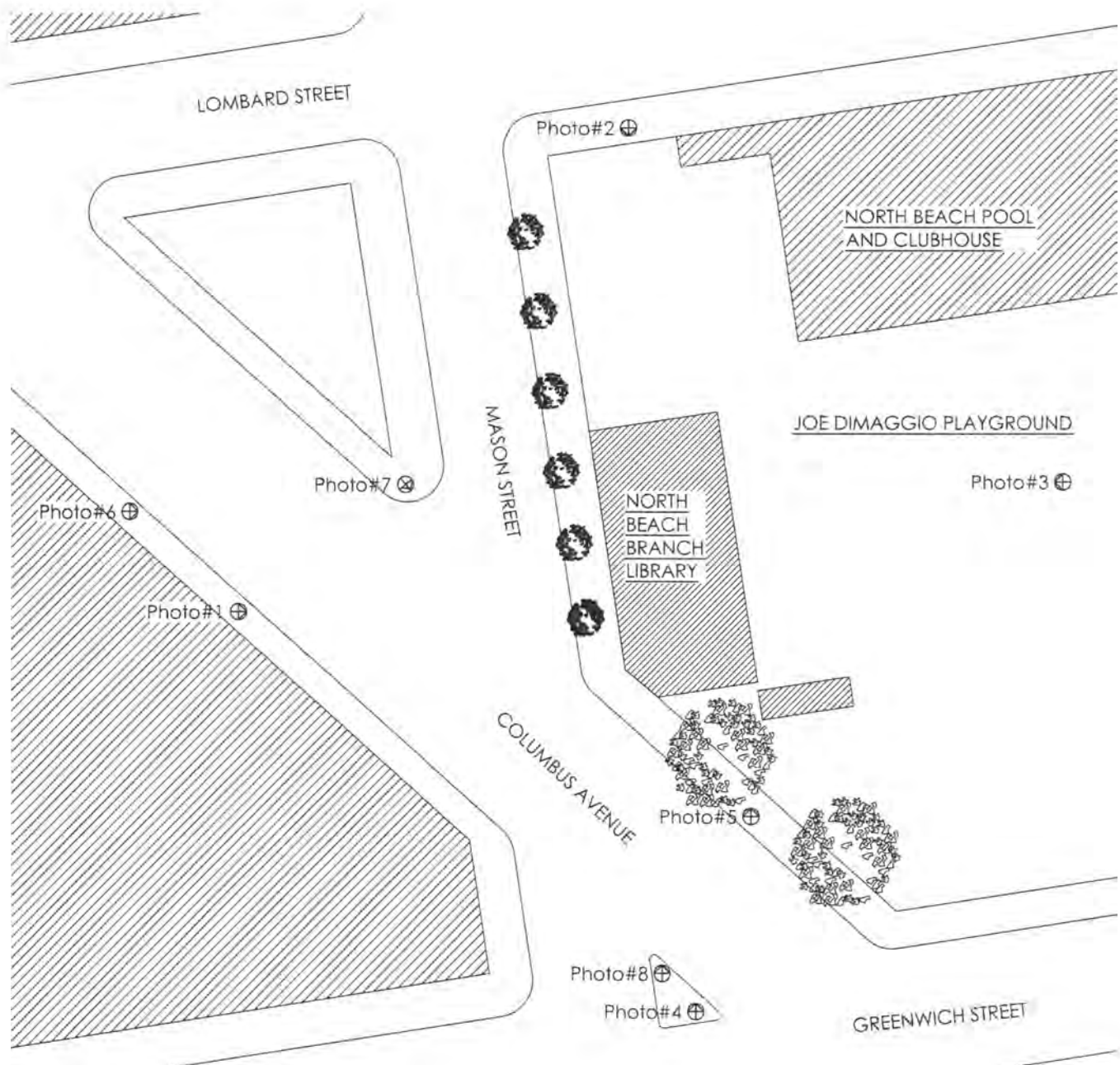
California

County and State

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SKETCH MAP



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North Beach Branch Library

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California

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PHOTO LOG

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #1 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0001)
West (front) elevation, camera facing east.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #2 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0002)
North (side) elevation, camera facing south.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #3 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0003)
East (rear) elevation, camera facing west.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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North Beach Branch Library
Name of Property California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documents Page 3

Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #4 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0004)
South (side) elevation, camera facing north.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #5 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0005)
Detail of south elevation, showing glazed sliding doors at reading room, camera facing north.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #6 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0006)
Context of property, west (front) elevation with Coit Tower shown in distance, camera facing southeast.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #7 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0007)
Context of property, detail of west (front) elevation with the Transamerica Building shown in distance

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California

County and State

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along Columbus Avenue, camera facing southeast.

Name of Property: North Beach Branch Library
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Johanna Street
Date of Photographs: March 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 1423 15th Ave., San Francisco, CA

Photo #8 (CA_San Francisco County_North Beach Branch Library_0008)

Context of property, looking at southwest corner of building along Mason Street, San Francisco Bay in the distance, camera facing north.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page _____

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 11000501

Date Listed: 8/8/2011

San Francisco Public Library
North Beach Branch
Property Name

San Francisco CA
County State

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

9/3/2011

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Significance:

The Area of Significance under Criterion A is amended to add: Education

These clarifications were confirmed with the California SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, San Francisco

DATE RECEIVED: 6/24/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/20/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/04/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/09/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000501

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT ___ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Completed in 1959, the Modernist building reflects the important efforts of local community leaders to provide modern, progressive educational and cultural amenities to the San Francisco community in the immediate post-war era. Coming on the heels of the prototype Parkside Branch Library (1951), also designed by prominent local architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard, the 1959 North Beach Branch Library reflects the characteristic design forms associated with the city of San Francisco's innovative mid-century library development program. The building's low, sloping roof, prominent glazing, modest residential scale, open plan, and fully modernist treatment, were all common elements of the important first phase of post-war library construction in the city illustrating the tenets of modern library design then emerging from national and regional sources. The North Beach Branch is one of the most intact extant examples of this important period in local civic and educational development.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Criteria A & C

REVIEWER Paul R. Lusignea DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE 202-354-2229 DATE 8/8/11

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR (Y/N)

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



CA - SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY - NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY - 0001



CA-SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY-NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY-0002



CA- SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY- NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY- 0003



CA-SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY-NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY-0004



CA - SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY - NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY - 0005



CA-SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY- NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY-0006



CA - SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY - NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY - 0007



CA- SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY- NORTH BEACH BRANCH LIBRARY- 0008



San Francisco
San Francisco Co.

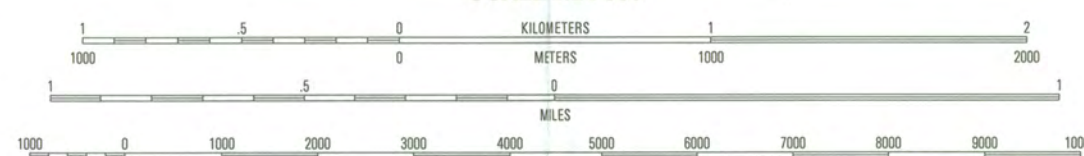
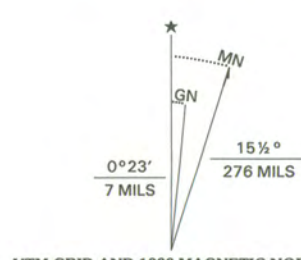
North Beach
Branch Library
UTM References
E 551830
N 4183830

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1956. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery taken 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1956. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999.

North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 10 10 000-foot ticks: California Coordinate System of 1927 (zone 3).

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 25 FEET
SUPPLEMENTARY CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
NATIONAL GEODEIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

SAN FRANCISCO NORTH, CA
1995

NIMA 1559 IV SW-SERIES V895



SOM

May 20, 2009

Mindy Linetzky
Bond Program Administrator
San Francisco Public Library
190 Ninth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103-2603

Dear Mindy,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review your plans for the new North Beach Branch Library.

I think it is an exceptional project that will be a very positive addition to its North Beach neighborhood. My specific comments are as follows.

Site Plan

The project is particularly well conceived in terms of its relationship to its urban context and the specific opportunities afforded by its site. The current urban fabric at Columbus and Lombard is particularly weak. The triangular surface parking lot bounded by Columbus Avenue, Lombard and Mason Streets diminishes the strong neighborhood form that otherwise defines North Beach. It is a residual space and the acute angle at Mason and Columbus is a confusing intersection for vehicular traffic and unfriendly for pedestrians.

The proposed Library site, occupying the triangular parking lot, will positively transform this portion of North Beach. The street and neighborhood edge will be defined and an empty void replaced by an appropriately scaled civic structure. The building will truly be a neighborhood lantern.

Narrowing Mason Street will result in a friendlier pedestrian environment. However, the alternative, which closes Mason Street, will create a much more significant amenity for the neighborhood. The removal of this short piece of Mason Street will clarify neighborhood traffic patterns and create a significant new neighborhood open space.

The proposed use of this new open space, pedestrian promenades and a secure children's play area, will add immeasurably to the neighborhood's social vitality. It will be important to make sure the fencing enclosing the tennis courts, as repositioned on Greenwich Street, do not create a negative urban edge. Additional study is warranted along Lombard, Powell and Greenwich Streets to ensure neighborhood porosity and access through the site.

The Library Architecture

The schematic drawings are very promising. The triangular plan is clear and efficient. Of particular note is the porosity provided at the first level. The through-block connection linking Columbus Avenue and the Mason Street right-of-way is a very successful feature. The vertical circulation within, associated with this plan connection, is also very successful as it allows non-library community activities to take place on the upper level without interrupting library security.

The exterior massing and organization is also successful in maintaining a civic presence while respecting the neighborhood's scale in its façade articulation. To the extent that more glass is possible, especially in the adult reading room, it would be a positive addition. As the architecture is further developed, the architects should be further encouraged to consider carefully the interior and exterior scale and design opportunities inherent within the acute corners on Columbus Avenue.

In summary, the proposed new library as represented in the schematic design drawings and full build-out masterplan represent a thoughtful design approach for this ill-defined corner of North Beach. It will be an important addition to our city and as proposed it represents a gift to the neighborhood.

Sincerely,



Craig W. Hartman, FAIA
Partner

cc: Marsha Maytum

Date: August 2, 2011

To: The National Register of Historic Places

Attention: Paul Loether, National Register Chief
Carol Shull, Interim Keeper
Paul Lusignan, Reviewer for California

Re: North Beach Branch Library

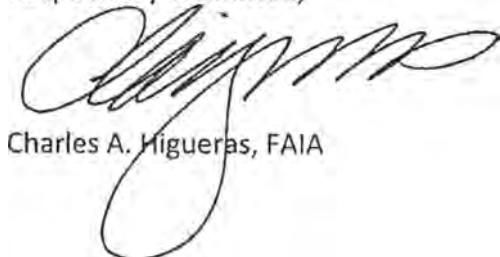
This letter is offered on the matter of the worthiness of the North Beach Branch Library to earn national landmark status. Among the several libraries designed by the architectural firm of Appleton and Wolfard, the North Beach Branch library is in my opinion, an aberration. The most salient characteristics that distinguish their best work are not evident at North Beach. The best examples of their work at the Merced, Parkside, Marina, Eureka Valley branches all provide welcoming forecourts and a gentle entry sequence from the street, enlivened with landscaping that softens the edges, and with large expanses of glass that provide a transparent view of readers and books. At the interior, the informal configuration of spaces allows for ease of circulation, on a single level, with easy access to exterior courtyards for reading and repose. NONE of these are successfully present at North Beach.

The historical record tells us that the original consideration of the library site at the North Beach playground was controversial, ultimately yielding a site that was intensely constrained and disadvantageously irregular in shape, yielding a too-small library; this shoe-horned solution proved damaging – the architects rendered their least impressive design among their several and impaired library service in North Beach for 50 years.

There is no doubt among those of us who know our City's architecture well that we have many exceptional buildings that merit honoring and even national recognition, but the North Beach Branch library is not among them. As a San Francisco native and resident and licensed architect, I cannot support the possible action to list this building on the National Register.

As final comment, I would urge the National Register to be extra-discriminating as it regards such a listing because to do otherwise, calls into question the legitimacy of the process and undermines future *appropriate* recognition and preservation of our worthiest buildings.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles A. Higuera', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Charles A. Higuera, FAIA

Carol Shull/WASO/NPS
08/03/2011 09:48 AM

To Paul Lusignan/WASO/NPS@NPS
cc
bcc
Subject Fw: San Francisco North Beach Library designation

Paul,

FYI and the file.

Carol D. Shull
Interim Keeper of the National Register
of Historic Places
Chief, Heritage Education Services
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
202-354-2234
FAX: 202-371-1616

----- Forwarded by Carol Shull/WASO/NPS on 08/03/2011 09:48 AM -----



Julie Christensen
<julie@surfacework.com>
08/02/2011 07:49 PM

To Carol_shull@nps.gov, Paul_loether@nps.gov
cc Mindy Linetzky <Mindy.Linetzky@sfdpw.org>, Jill Bourne
<jbourne@sfpl.org>
Subject San Francisco North Beach Library designation

Ms. Shull, Mr. Loether:

I am writing to ask that you NOT add the North Beach Branch Library in San Francisco to the National Register of Historic Places.

I have served for 16 years as a volunteer with community groups dedicated to improving community services and quality of life in our extremely dense and diverse neighborhood. While the listing of the North Beach Branch Library will not prevent its removal and the return of it site, after 50 years, to recreation use, we are very concerned that the listing may have important adverse effects on our constituents. Primarily, we are concerned that the listing may be misused to make some of our projects peripheral to the library less competitive for federal and state grant funding.

Is the branch library worthy of listing? Our local Historic Preservation Commission, after 19 months of consideration, could only muster a 4-3 vote for local listing, a recommendation which was overturned 10-1 by our city council. The same Commission could not pass a resolution either supporting or opposing the listing recommendation at the state level. Many in the preservation community, in the press and city government have castigated the branch library review process at the HPC as preservation run amok. On the other hand, the larger planning project (which requires removal of the existing library and reclamation of that land for its original park use) has won 7 consecutive unanimous votes of approval at 4 city commissions and 3 city council hearings.

We are certain you are being encouraged by listing proponents to valiantly defend a maligned building. Seven years of review and consideration have resulted in a broader consensus that there are better examples of these architects and this era, and, while our community deeply reveres its past, it is better served, in this case, by a move forward.

Sincerely,

Julie Christensen
Friends of Joe DiMaggio Playground
San Francisco, California
W: (415) 552-7774

SOM

September 14, 2009

Mr. Charles Edwin Chase
President
San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission
1650 Mission Street
Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94110

Re: North Beach Branch Library

Dear Charles:

This spring I was asked by the San Francisco Library Commission to provide an architectural peer review of the proposed design for the new North Beach Branch Library, designed by Marsha Maytum of Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects. That review, which was discussed with the Library Commission, is summarized in a letter to Mindy Linetzky of the Branch Library Improvement Program and is enclosed with this letter. In short, I found the proposed design to be an exceptional project which will at last bring an architecturally distinguished and neighborhood-friendly library to North Beach.

The new design will be light-filled and will possess a rare generosity of civic spirit in its openness to the neighborhood. Importantly, the new library design brings with it the opportunity to create a delightful new neighborhood park and to bring a new pedestrian-friendly cohesiveness to this part of North Beach by correcting a confused existing street alignment.

In reviewing the new library design and the overall site masterplan, I became reacquainted with the existing library which I first came to know when our children used it 15 years ago. Virtually every civic quality the proposed new library design and its long-term masterplan possess is lacking in the existing. When I first encountered the existing library I remember thinking how the warmth of the books and the library staff stood in contrast to the building's introverted, cramped and dark interior. The stepped, partial level changes between the entrance and the major interior spaces provide one of the few interesting architectural qualities but also further break up an already small interior and render it inaccessible to those in wheelchairs.

The lack of architectural generosity found on the inside continues to the exterior where the library meets the neighborhood with unfriendly blank walls, a confusing, single entry and undistinguished architectural details and massing. I am not a student of the work of the library's architects, Appleton & Wolfard. Perhaps their other San Francisco libraries are worthy works of architecture but I would urge the Historic Preservation Commission to not elevate the existing North Beach Branch Library to landmark status. This is not a question of a building's style being currently out of fashion. It is a simple question of architectural excellence. Whether defined by today's architectural values or the 2000 year old dictums of Vitruvius, this building does not rise to a level of historic importance.

Listing projects lacking in merit greatly diminish the importance of Historic Landmark Designation in San Francisco. Listing this library will prevent remedying the architectural and urbanistic shortcomings of the building and its site. I urge the Commission to preserve this most important tool - Landmark Designation - for more worthy examples.

Sincerely,



Craig W. Hartman, FAIA
Partner



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING + URBAN RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION

654 Market Street
San Francisco, California
94105

415.761.8726
415.761.7391

www.spur.org

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September 15, 2009

Charles Chase AIA
President
Historic Preservation Commission
San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission
City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: North Beach Branch Library

Dear President Chase,

The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) would like to express its support for planning staff's recommendations regarding the potential Historic Landmark Designation of San Francisco's Appleton & Wolford branch libraries (Landmark Designation Case Report 2008.0968L, September 16th, 2009). In particular, we would like to support the staff recommendation that the Historic Preservation Commission **not** initiate designation of the North Beach Branch library.

The current North Beach Library is slated to be demolished and rebuilt on a triangular lot directly opposite the site, thereby freeing up valuable open space on Joe DiMaggio Playground. The closure of Mason Street will provide even more open space in this area. The new structure will provide the neighborhood with an attractive, light-filled, state-of-the-art facility. The plan for both the library and the new open space are thoughtful and will greatly benefit the neighborhood.

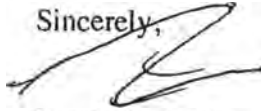
It is worth noting that the Joe DiMaggio Playground has been existence well before the construction of the existing library in 1959. As we understand it, the library was originally sited in the playground against neighborhood opposition largely to avoid reducing automobile traffic on Mason Street. Removing the existing library and improving the quality of open space within Joe DiMaggio Playground honors the history of the park, supports sustainable urbanism, and allows an important new library to move forward.

Finally, we wish to express some policy concerns with regards to the designation of non-linear historic district for public buildings. While we of course note that many of our existing public structures are historically important and worthy of Historic Landmark Designation, we need to be mindful of other important values San Franciscans hold - including supporting public education and providing critical city services. Landmarking public buildings as a district may make it more difficult to renovate city owned structures in a cost effective manner, thereby impacting the ability to provide services. It is important to reserve Historic Landmark Designation

for the most important and worthy structures, so that we can preserve the best of our history while enabling the city to continue to fulfill its other important policy objectives.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (415)-644-4292.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SK', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Sarah Karlinsky
Deputy Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JR', written to the right of the first signature.

Cc: John Rahaim, Planning Director
Julie Christensen
SPUR Board of Directors

pierluigi
serraino

architect, writer, editor,
curator, and educator

1935, Argonne, Illinois
Education: Harvard University

teaching and writing about
modern architecture

San Francisco, September 29, 2009

Re: North Beach Library Assessment

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Pierluigi Serraino, addressing you in my capacity as expert in Mid-Century modern architecture with a focus on California- North and South. Among my publications, I have authored two books that deal specifically with the post-war heritage in California and surveyed a great many figures neglected in the canonical accounts on California Modernism. These books are *Modernism Rediscovered* (Taschen, 2000, and at its 2nd reprint), and *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism* (Chronicle Books, 2006). Both texts have been used as key references in institutions of higher learning on the East and West Coast, as well as in the deliberation of the landmarking of buildings by minor figures within the institutional accounts of California modernist architecture. My in-depth knowledge of the period is the reason why I was brought in so as to provide an alternative point of view to the value of the North Beach Library designed by Appleton & Wolfard as stated in the report prepared by Carey & Co. Inc.. This brief write-up provides counterpoints to what the report exhibits as features that would make the North Beach Library appear eligible to be landmarked individually and as part of a cluster of other libraries designed by the same firm.

I will premise my intervention by expressing my sincere gratitude to what this committee is appointed to achieve. The preservation of the mid-century modern heritage is at its infancy, with no fully agreed upon criteria on how to evaluate the large, yet not infinite, inventory of post-war structures. The debate surrounding the process of whether or not to landmark the North Beach Library gives the community at large an opportunity to reflect on what is worthwhile preserving vis-à-vis what can be replaced with contemporary structures. What is being debated, here, is the architectural merits of the North Beach Library on one side and the role of the firm Appleton & Wolfard in the larger context of post-war developments in Northern California and the San Francisco Bay Area in particular. In doing research in this instance, a major point of distinction between more ancient periods and the mid-century modern interval is that beside the typical primary and secondary resources, that is archives, unpublished records, photographs, and published literature in trade and academic journals, some of the very people that designed those buildings or lived the circumstances that brought them into existence in the first place are occasionally still with us. Furthermore, other people who also lived those times and were steeped in architectural practice, building industry, or media coverage are also equally available to us. We can talk to them, and learn first-hand unrecorded reactions. Their personal assessment of those times is a vital resource in our contemporary understanding of Mid-Century modern architecture.

On the Architectural Merits of the North Beach Library

The Carey & Co. Inc. report (a 33-page document) takes a bird eye view of how the site developed in the context of its planning history, the political circumstances that propelled the civic desire for a library in North Beach, and a brief summary of the larger historical changes that took place in post-war library architecture. Only at page 14 does the firm's name- Appleton & Wolfard- appear with an appraisal of the importance of this practice in the expansion of San Francisco and in the building of its library infrastructure. A survey of individual libraries from that firm is outlined with insertion of bibliographic and newspaper clips references. Page 20 of the report concludes with a statement summarizing the value of the libraries as a unified body of work:

Their libraries are all-single-story buildings, usually featuring unpainted brick cladding and at least one wall of windows, a combination of an asymmetrical gable with a wide eave overhang and a flat-roof ell, a pergola, and exterior patio, and while most of San Francisco's libraries faced neglect during the postwar period, the Appleton & Wolfard branch libraries generated public interest and professional recognition for model improvements in library design.

On Criterion C/3 of page 24, the paragraph reads

While one can argue that the North Beach Branch is not the best library designed by Appleton & Wolfard, it nonetheless illustrates a particular aspect in the firm's career.

It is my contention that the North Beach Library fails to meet the Criterion C/3 for multiple reasons:

- On Friday September 26 I paid a visit to Imogen Cunningham's son Rondal Partridge, noted architectural photographer who surveyed Northern California architecture from the late forties to the mid-seventies, who lives in Berkeley. In his entire career he has never heard of the firm Appleton & Wolfard. He photographed regularly for *Life* magazine and for architects such as John Carl Warnecke and Mario Ciampi;
- Over two weeks ago I met with Henrik Bull, noted architect for his early residential designs in the Bay Area and founder of Bull Stockwell and Allen, and asked his opinion on the library. Mr. Bull believes that the North Beach Library is of no architectural significance for San Francisco;
- On Saturday September 27 at the celebration of the College of Environmental Design 50th birthday. I spoke with Waverly Lowell, Curator of the Environmental Design Archives, and whose career has been about collecting and preserving the archives of architects of great national and local significance in Northern California. She does not believe that the North Beach Library is a building of any particular architectural merit and expressed no interest in gathering the Appleton & Wolfard archive;
- The firm has left no impact on the architectural culture of the San Francisco Bay Area, nor is being held as a referent of standard;
- Typically architects have their completed buildings professionally photographed for their own record and for gaining access to publication and recognition in magazines. The list of photographers who recorded the building activity in the Bay Area is somewhat short. Roger Sturtevant was the most sought after, followed by a later generation of architectural photographers: Morley Baer, Earnest Braun, Rondal Partridge, Dean Stone & Hugo Steccati, Karl Riek, Philip Fein, Philip Palmer, Fred Lyon, Lucia Dandeleit and Roy Flamm. The North Beach Library does not seem to be photographed by any of the photographers who chronicled Northern California Modernism;
- The work of Appleton & Wolfard did not appear in the seminal article published on December 1952, largely dedicated to Public Libraries in the United States and listing two public libraries and featuring a

third one from architectural firms located in Northern California. None of them are from Appleton & Wolfard. That same article on page 152 under II. Site and Building under the *Buildings* heading reads: *The most readily noticeable exterior features characteristic of recent public library buildings are entrances at sidewalk level and the generous glass areas in the front. The more accessible entrance, without steps or terraces makes it as easy to enter the library as to enter the neighboring shops.*

While this is factually true in the exterior, this accessibility is in fact compromised in the interiors where there are flights of stairs connecting the upper level to the lower level where the actual collection and the main entry are;

- The report makes a reference to Alvar Aalto's work. Maybe the Viipuri Library of 1935 in former Finland now Russia known for the split level section (see fig. below). However a design reference is a customary practice among peers who admire each others' work;



- While following the precepts of an exemplary design as broadcast by *Architectural Record*, the magazine of the architecture profession, is certainly good practice, it provides virtually no reason to landmark any building. The sharing of architectural idioms and guidelines is part of being current with the professional knowledge.

There are many buildings in San Francisco worth the institutional attention of this committee. The North Beach Library is not one of those.

Sincerely

Pierluigi Senzino

North Beach EIR

Brent MCDONALD [ondarosa@sbcglobal.net]

Sent: Tuesday, October 05, 2010 10:56 PM**To:** Bill.Wycko@sfgov.org**Cc:** David.Chiu@sfgov.org; BLIP; lizzy@arcadia-garden.com; rm@well.com; c_olague@yahoo.com; wordweaver21@aol.com; plangsf@gmail.com; bill.lee@flysfo.com; mooreurban@speakeasy.net; hs.commish@yahoo.com

Mr. Bill Wycko

Planning Department

City & County of San Francisco

1650 Mission Street

Suite 400

San Francisco, California 94103

Re: North Beach Library Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Mr. Wycko:

I am writing to you in regards to the pending review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report. As a member of the North Beach Community I can vouch for the public process that has helped shape the EIR under current consideration. Although there are a few *connected individuals* who are attempting to hi-jack a process that has produced a thorough and complete EIR, I urge you ignore these people and listen to the majority voice of the North Beach Neighborhood. As a grass roots neighborhood effort we crafted and thoroughly reviewed multiple options. The closure of Mason Street has been happening on a regular Sunday Basis without detriment to the neighborhood. Alternate designs were considered that configured the Library many different ways, including looking at reusing the poorly crafted ode to the suburban ranch house. As a neighborhood we have come to consensus on a design that produces the greatest benefit to the neighborhood. Yet some individuals are trying any and all angles to kill the project. Just because an argument can be made, does not mean that it should be made.

From what I understand one of most significant derailing arguments currently being made by the "Conoscenti" is that the Library is a historic resource that should be preserved. I know we

all generally know what "Conoscenti" means, but I wanted to check the spelling and the definition I ran across just fit so well that I will repeat it here ...

persons who have superior knowledge and understanding of a particular field, esp. in the fine arts, literature, and world of fashion

... Well I too have a knowledge of these things, having attended school in Rome Italy at ICCROM. ICCROM is an international center for the study of the preservation and restoration of Cultural property. Since the existing library building is clearly not an Architectural gem, it is at best a building representing the cultural heritage of a blip in time. The fallacy of this argument is that this blip in time, the expansion to the suburbs and the automobile have absolutely nothing to do with North Beach. In other neighborhoods the argument could be made, but it is an extremely weak argument when one looks at North Beach, the turn of the century central City neighborhood made up of Italian and Chinese Immigrants

Please allow us a new library that my children's children can someday use and support the DEIR as crafted!

Sincerely

Brent McDonald
ONDAROSA ARCHITECTS
129 JASPER PLACE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133
PHONE: 415-362-7441



San Francisco Public Library



November 10, 2010

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

The San Francisco Public Library ("Library") was notified on October 10, 2010, of the nomination of the North Beach Branch of the Library for the National Historic Register. As a department of the City and County of San Francisco, the Library has jurisdictional authority over this property, a 5,500 square foot building that is located on city land that is managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. Please accept this letter as notification that the Library strongly opposes this nomination.

The San Francisco Public Library currently operates 7 branch libraries designed by the firm of Appleton & Wolford between 1951 and 1966. Of them, the North Beach branch is the least representative of and most lacking the architectural characteristics of the Appleton & Wolford style:

- It lacks the single-level ranch styling, light and openness, and connection to landscaping that exists in the other branches designed by the same firm.
- The North Beach branch is compromised by a constrained location between park amenities, on a steep grade that requires a four-level, fragmented floor-plan.
- The design does not embrace the park site nor offer a civic presence, but instead features large blank walls facing the street and park.

The existing North Beach Branch Library has been noted by the architectural community as "the least successful among our collection of historic libraries," "the least welcoming to the public and has the least civic character of all the libraries," and the "least impressive design among [the architects'] several." As an aberration from the city's branch libraries designed by Appleton & Wolford, the North Beach Branch does not provide a good representation of the modern public library movement, nor can it successfully be used for its original purpose – providing public library service.

The question of the architectural and historic merit of the North Beach Branch Library has been the topic of discussion before the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) over the past 15 months. Although the recommendation to designate North Beach Branch Library as a landmark building was forwarded to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on September 1, 2010, the HPC had debated this issue several times and was eventually split on the recommendation (4:3). On November 1, 2010, the Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject the recommendation of landmark status for the North Beach Library. On November 9, 2010, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors finally voted to reject landmark status for the North Beach Branch Library.

The San Francisco Public Library supports historic preservation when merited. The Library has renovated and preserved 18 public libraries and has been recognized for preservation excellence with the following awards:

- AIA Special Achievement Award (3/5/09)
- Governor's Historic Preservation Award for the Noe Valley Branch Library restoration (11/21/08)
- California Preservation Foundation Design Award for the Noe Valley Branch Library restoration (9/19/09)
- Historic Restoration Award from the American Public Works Association for the restoration of the Richmond Branch Library (2/25/10)
- 2010 DPW Employee Recognition Award for the Bernal Heights Branch Library renovation (5/21/10)

In addition, six branch libraries designed by the firm of Appleton & Wolford are being updated and preserved for future generations.

The Library understands that this nomination will be considered by the California State Office of Historic Preservation and may subsequently be calendared for discussion before the State Historical Resources Commission. If the North Beach Branch Library nomination is calendared before this commission, the Library will expect to be contacted in advance so that we may attend and provide information regarding our objection to this nomination.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

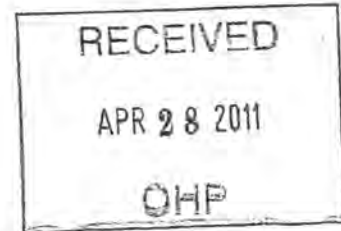


Luis Herrera
City Librarian

Cc: Jay Correia, Registration Supervisor, SHPO
Jill Bourne, Deputy City Librarian, SFPL

Inge S. Horton
2363 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94116
ingehor@pacbell.net

April 27, 2011



State Historical Resource Commission

Attn: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Re: National Register Nomination of the North Beach Branch Library

Honorable Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the National Register Nomination of the North Beach branch of the San Francisco Library.

The North Beach branch library was designed in 1959 as the fifth of eight branch libraries in San Francisco by the architectural firm of Appleton and Wolfard. The building possesses a high level of integrity and displays many of the characteristics of the Appleton and Wolfard designs. The style resembles the California mid-century modern residential architecture favored at the time and shows a clear departure of the formal Carnegie libraries built before World War II. The modern libraries were inviting in a "clubhouse like setting," often in city parks, with comfortable furniture and fire places, and low maintenance materials.

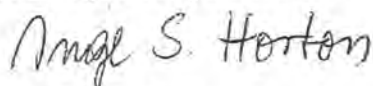
One of the features I am especially impressed with is the well-designed lighting of the libraries. The architects, mainly the lead architect Harold Wolfard, paid special attention to the natural lighting of the reading rooms and the avoidance of glare. On the south façades, wide overhangs of low-pitched roofs prevented the high sun from entering the buildings while on the west facades projecting brick walls shade the interior from the glaring low afternoon sun. Fluorescent lights affixed to the ceiling complement the

natural lighting when necessary. The materials of brick walls, cork flooring to lower the noise level, Glulam beams supporting the roof, floor to ceiling windows connecting the interior with the outside, and light colored walls to reflect the light are simple and require low maintenance. The entrances features showcases for the display of new books, posters or seasonal decorations.

Although the North Beach branch library shares many of these features, it is different from the other libraries such as the Parkside, Marina, and Merced branches on account of its location in a densely populated and fully developed part of town, North Beach. In order to save as much open space as possible it was designed as a multi-story library which is accessible from two street levels, one leading directly to the circulation desk, while the other opens to a browsing area a few steps above.

In summary, the North Beach branch library merits inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places because it is significant as an excellent example of the path breaking library architecture developed by Appleton and Wolfard in the post World War II period. Since the library has not been changed since it was built it possesses a high degree of integrity. Proposals developed by preservation architects of the *Friends of the Appleton and Wolfard Libraries* demonstrate that the North Beach Library can be rehabilitated and expanded to meet current code standards and added space requirements and preserve more open space than the proposal developed by the City. It is not necessary to demolish another of the Appleton and Wolfard libraries to provide the public with an adequate library facility in North Beach.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.



Inge S. Horton

A San Francisco preservation activist and

Author of the recently released book

Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area

The Lives and Work of Fifty Professionals, 1890-1951

<http://www.womenarchitectsca.com>



April 28, 2011

By Electronic Mail

California Office of Historic Preservation
State Historic Preservation Officer
c/o Jay Correia
1725 – 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

RE: North Beach Library: National Register Nomination

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

On behalf of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, I am writing to express our support for listing the North Beach Branch Library on the National Register of Historic Places.

By way of background, Telegraph Hill Dwellers is a neighborhood organization, founded in 1954 to represent the residents of Telegraph Hill and North Beach. One of San Francisco's oldest community organizations, THD was founded to perpetuate the historic traditions of these areas and has been actively involved with land use and preservation issues affecting North Beach for over four decades.

As carefully and professionally documented in the National Register Nomination, the North Beach branch library building is eligible for listing under National Register Criteria A for its association with broad nationwide library modernization and program reform, and under National Register Criteria C because the Appleton & Wolfard designed branch public libraries in San Francisco are innovative examples of mid-twentieth century modern design in Northern California. The North Beach Branch Library has undergone very few alterations since its original construction and poses a high level of architectural integrity.

We therefore urge the State Historical Resources Commission to approve the nomination of North Beach Appleton & Wolfard-designed branch library for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

Nancy Shanahan
Vice President
Co-Chair, Planning & Zoning Committee

P.O. BOX 330159 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133 • 415.273.1004 www.thd.org

Founded in 1954 to perpetuate the historic traditions of San Francisco's Telegraph Hill and to represent the community interests of its residents and property owners



Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries

April 28, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

TO: State Historic Preservation Officer and State Historical Resources Commission
ATTN: Mr. Jay Correia
RE: NORTH BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
SUBJECT: SUPPORTING LETTER
ATTACHED: Supporting Photos and information

We enthusiastically support listing North Beach Library on the National Register of Historic Places. The North Beach Library is the best mid-century modernist structure in San Francisco's North Beach. The Library Department's technical reports, independent historians and the Planning Department concur that the North Beach Library has high architectural, historical and cultural significance. The North Beach Library has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources, as well as a thematically-related Multiple Property Listing. Possessing the highest architectural integrity of the Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, its rehabilitation would be the showcase library---a symbol of the social-democratization of the American library and contributions as a community living room and cultural melting pot.



North Beach Library is the best example of mid-century modernism in San Francisco's North Beach.



In the future, North Beach Library may be fronted by a new city park along the Columbus Avenue axis.



North Beach Library and Joe DiMaggio Playground have been neighborhood magnets for decades.



Vince, Joe and Dom DiMaggio are also integrally linked with the history of this site in North Beach.

The North Beach Library is eligible for listing under National Register Criteria A, associated with nationwide library modernizations and reforms; and National Register Criteria C, as innovative mid-twentieth century modern design in Northern California. The listing is an important step in energizing recognition for the largely ignored legacy of modernism and cultural movements of the post-WWII era.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

National Trust for Historic Preservation, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, DOCOMOMO, San Francisco Preservation Consortium, Architectural historians and Preservation professionals, Telegraph Hill Dwellers, North Beach Neighbors, Library Citizens Advisory Committee of the Board of Supervisors, Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods, San Francisco Tomorrow, Parkmerced Residents Organization, Sunset Parkside Education & Action Committee, Coalition for a Better North Beach Library & Playground, Save Mason Street, Friends of North Beach Library, Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, and many residents.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WRITER OF THIS LETTER:

As a founding member of Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, I am an architect whose work ranges from historic preservation to new structures with a variety of scales. I am a past Board Member of San Francisco Architectural Heritage and was inducted into its Lillienthal Society. I am active in the San Francisco Preservation Consortium and other preservation organizations and committees. Representative Projects: Sprackels Temple of Music (*National Endowment for the Arts Award, California Preservation Award...*), Conservatory of Flowers Master Plan & Schematic Design (*National AIA Honor Award*), Sharon Building (*DPW Team Award*), Coit Tower Accessibility/ Pioneer Park (*SF Beautiful Beautification Award*), projects within San Francisco City Hall, Opera House and Veterans Building.

Yours Truly,

Howard Wong, AIA

Email: wongaiia@aol.com

Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries

Phone: (415)-982-5055

Judith Hoyem
4042-17th Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
Phone and Fax: (415)552-1259
E-mail: Jhoyem@sbcglobal.net
April 29, 2011

California Office of Historic Preservation
State Historic Preservation Officer
c/o Jay Correia
1725 - 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

Historic Preservation Commission
City and County of San Francisco
Attn: HPC Commissioners
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

I am writing to express my support for listing the North Beach Branch Library on the National Register of Historic Places.

As a 40-year resident of San Francisco, I have long had a great appreciation for the City's unique historic and architectural heritage. I am active in the Preservation Community seeking to ensure that inevitable changes in the built environment to meet the needs of the future do not destroy the living connection with the past, its still-vibrant and valuable architecture and the history embodied therein.

As documented in the National Register Nomination, the North Beach branch library building is eligible for listing under National Register Criteria A for its association with broad nationwide library modernization and program reform, and under National Register Criteria C because the Appleton & Wolfard designed branch public libraries in San Francisco are innovative examples of mid-twentieth century modern design in Northern California. The North Beach Branch Library has undergone very few alterations since its original construction and possesses a high level of architectural integrity. I therefore urge the State Historical Resources Commission to approve the nomination of North Beach Appleton & Wolfard-designed branch library for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

I thank you for your consideration of these thoughts and moreover for your recognition of San Francisco's rich but largely underappreciated legacy of modernism and cultural movements of the post-WWII era.

April 29, 2011

page two

Listing in the National Register will provide formal, national recognition of this important building, and may save this building from demolition.

Yours Truly,

Judith Hoyem

Correia, Jay

From: Kathy Howard <kathyhoward@earthlink.net>
Sent: Friday, April 29, 2011 6:51 AM
To: Correia, Jay
Subject: San Francisco North Beach Library nomination to National Register

To: Jay Correia

Please accept the nomination of the San Francisco North Beach Branch Library, because of its historical, architectural, and aesthetic merit.

Often we are too quick to destroy something, because we are familiar with it. We need to step back and appreciate the character and origins of a place. Historic preservation allows us to experience the world as it was in another time, and adds depth and character to the experience of the City. San Francisco is a richer place because of the variety of architectural styles that reflect the eras that produced them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Katherine Howard, ASLA

1243 42nd Avenue
SF CA 94122

San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch
San Francisco, San Francisco County
Staff Report

The North Beach Branch Library, built in 1959, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern Ranch style that was popular in suburban Northern California but uncommon in the City of San Francisco, particularly for a public building. The North Beach Branch Library is based on a prototype created by Appleton & Wolfard and the City Librarian, Laurence Clarke, to address modern library principles developed and distributed by the American Library Association after World War II. Appleton & Wolfard creatively incorporated modern library principles into an appealing Mid-Century Modern composition at the North Beach Branch Library. The library is a local, physical representation of significant Post-War events that led to a change in how libraries serve the public, as well as the local events that led to the expansion of San Francisco's public library system.

The library is a brick building, rectangular in plan, with an asymmetrical, low-sloped, gable roof supported on large, exposed glulam beams. The front and side elevations are single story; the rear elevation reveals the basement level and crawlspace. Mid-Century Modern in style, the building was designed to incorporate features of a suburban Ranch House such as the low, wide massing, low-sloped roof, wide over-hang, exposed structural elements, and large areas of glazing with a visual connection to open space. Appleton & Wolfard's design also incorporated appealing retail elements such as storefront windows, a display case, artificial illumination, and a living room-like area with a fireplace to evoke the comforting feelings of a home. Appleton & Wolfard were nationally recognized for their library designs and are responsible for designing more libraries in San Francisco than any other architectural firm.

The North Beach Branch Library has not been rehabilitated since it was constructed fifty years ago and is the only library of its period in San Francisco that retains significant amounts of the original furniture, including shelving, tables, and chairs. The Library retains a high degree of integrity. The Friends of Appleton & Wolfard organization is the applicant. OHP has received one letter of opposition and nine letters of support for the nomination. Staff recommends the State Historical Resources Commission determine that the North Beach Branch Library eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A and Criterion C at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1959 for both contexts. Staff further recommends the State Historic Preservation officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register.

Jay Correia
State Historian III
April 29, 2011

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY NORTH BEACH BRANCH
San Francisco County, CA

National Register Review Comments

The North Branch Library was part of a significant public initiative to create a modern library system to serve the growing population of the City of San Francisco in the post-World War II period. Beginning with the prototype Parkside Branch in 1951, city leaders, the city librarian, and the architectural firm of Appleton and Wolfard set out to conceive a thoroughly modern public library building and expansion program that would emphasize the most innovative principals of contemporary library design and development, as espoused by leading national professional organizations.

Phase one of the city's library plan would result in the construction of eight branch libraries, each built to the innovative plans of the Appleton and Wolfard design firm, that would come to represent the city's most substantial capital expenditure in the library modernization movement. These efforts vividly reflected the city's significant post-war, vision in support of public education and providing critical city services in a time of rapid expansion and civic growth. The Appleton & Wolfard designs would embody the principals of emerging, mid-century American public library design theory, which had witnessed substantial change after World War II, reflecting the era's significant shifts in the social and cultural patterns. Libraries were envisioned serving not only as stoic book repositories, but centers that facilitated broader public education, provided resources for people to enjoy the latest in entertainment and technology, and offered spaces for community members to congregate for a variety of community interests and activities.

The passage of the Library Services Act of 1956 along with the publication of national standards for public libraries brought forth significant changes in the focus of many library systems emphasizing the libraries' new role in facilitating self-education, wholesome recreation, and positive social development. In their time, these libraries were acknowledged as radical departures from the more centralized, classically designed Carnegie library programs of the early twentieth century. Their success in providing direct neighborhood access to library services, particularly in growing suburban and high density areas of the city, while incorporating modern, efficient, neighborhood-scale civic buildings dramatically changed the look and character of the city's library system. The North Branch Library is significant under Criterion A for its association with the significant local efforts at educational reform and library modernization patterned after emerging national programs of the post-war era.

Appleton and Wolfard's designs for the first phase of branch libraries fully realized the modern aesthetics and functional design requirements being promoted by national library associations in their new standards, while also incorporating the architect's own personal vision for local Modernist library design. The architects successfully integrated contemporary functional library needs with design features commonly associated with California suburban ranch design in order to better create an architectural aesthetic compatible with neighborhood placement, including the use of low-profile, horizontal roof planes, exposed structural roof supports, open floor plans, and abundant glazing.

Interiors became welcoming, well lit, open plan areas, with spaces for both personal work and communal activity. The resulting designs of the first phase buildings represented a significant local collection of Modernist civic architecture.

The particular design of the North Beach Branch fully conveys the characteristic design forms associated with San Francisco's innovative mid-century library development program by Appleton and Wolfard. Among the extant first phase designs, the North Beach Branch retains a relatively high level of integrity from the historic period revealing its key design elements and functional plan. While the design of the North Beach Branch was somewhat restricted by its compact, urban setting, the library never-the-less successfully incorporated Appleton & Wolfard's most identifiable design elements. The unique nature of the integration of design and setting at the North Beach Branch lends the building a particular significance within the context of their library work reflecting the particular flexibility of their design vocabulary. The North Branch Library is significant under Criterion C as one of the most intact examples of the important local library design program created by Appleton & Wolfard, which produced innovative, Modernist civic designs during a period of rapid local development.

The evaluation of historic architectural resources must find a balance between purely aesthetic considerations, which may unnecessarily value high-art masterpieces, and a vision of the resources as reflections of their particular time and place within a given context. Consideration of which resource is the single "best" example, which has been kept up better, or which works best in today's environment, should not overwhelm the consideration of resources within their particular context and particular point in time.

Paul Lusignan, Historian
National Register of Historic Places

1132 Broderick St.
San Francisco, CA 94115
May 3, 2011

Mr. Jay Correia
State Historic Preservation Officer
California Office of Historic Preservation
1725- 23rd St., Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816



Dear Mr. Correia,

SUBJECT: NORTH BEACH LIBRARY NOMINATION

I urge the State historical Resources Commission to approve the nomination of The North Beach Library for listing on the National Register of Historic Places!

I am a retired San Francisco architect with an interest in historic preservation.

My interest in the library started in the 1960's when I was an architectural student. It was so striking in design, light and airy, and much different from the libraries I had grown up with.

San Francisco's North Beach Library Branch is eligible for listing under National Register Criteria A for its association with broad nationwide library modernization and program reform and under National Register Criteria C because the Appleton & Wolfard designed branch libraries are important and innovative examples of mid century modern design. This library retains its' original fabric and retains a high level of architectural integrity.

Local architects, Appleton and Wolfard designed a series of eight branch libraries during the 1950s & 1960s. They were designed with a non-institutional appearance featuring wood beams, open floor plan with an indoor-outdoor concept of landscaped patios, fireplaces and lots of glass. Although one has been demolished, the rest are eligible to be landmarked as a group.

The North Beach library is a very special place, deserving to be saved and expanded to meet the current needs of the community. Listing in the National Register is critical to saving this building from demolition.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Merle Lynn Easton, AIA
Former President of the Victorian Alliance

Correia, Jay

From: Peter Nasatir <merko@att.net>
Sent: Saturday, May 07, 2011 10:28 AM
To: Correia, Jay
Subject: The North Beach Library

Greetings Mr. Correia,

As the Chief Concierge of a major hotel in San Francisco for the last ten years, I can safely say that what makes this city one of the top destinations in the world is our respect for the history and architectural integrity of the city. The little row houses at Alamo Square are good example of that. It is an iconic image easily recognized around the world, and the North Beach Library is just such a landmark.

The location is also historic. It is in North Beach between Fisherman's Wharf and Chinatown, and is adjacent to a major cable car line. The building which is proposed to replace it and the park in which it resides, will not only block famous views of Alcatraz and Fisherman's Wharf, but will destroy the baseball diamond where Joe DiMaggio learned to play; in the very same park named for him.

Other libraries in the city have been augmented so as to allow improvements in accessibility for the disabled and updated technology without those buildings being razed, so there is no reason why the same cannot be done for the North Beach Library.

The North Beach Library was built at a time in the early 1960s when the architectural styles were in transition, so it represents a unique period in post-war San Francisco and therefore must be recognized.

As a citizen of San Francisco, and a representative of the tourism trade, I strongly urge you to nominate the North Beach Library for the National Register.

Sincerely,

Peter Nasatir

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

P.O. BOX 942896
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001
(916) 653-6624 Fax: (916) 653-9824
calshpo@parks.ca.gov



May 12, 2011

Sent Via E-mail

Mr. Luis Herrera
Director, San Francisco Public Library
City and County of San Francisco
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Herrera,

Thank you for your letter of May 12, 2011, regarding the San Francisco Public Library, North Beach Branch National Register nomination. This process is dictated by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and related Federal regulations. In your letter you ask that I pull the nomination from the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) agenda, or continue the matter to a future meeting. Unfortunately, I am not able to do this under the authority provided by federal law. Federal law allows me to pull an item from an SHRC agenda only if both the local historic preservation commission (HPC) and the chief elected official request that I do so.

As you are aware, the findings of a Certified Local Government (CLG) in relation to eligibility of nominated properties have strong influence when nominations are being reviewed by the SHRC. The San Francisco HPC voted to grant landmark status to the North Beach Branch Library. As a CLG (one of only 58 CLGs in the entire state), the City and County of San Francisco directly participates in the identification, evaluation, registration and preservation of historic resources within your jurisdiction and works to integrate local preservation interests and concerns into local planning and decision-making processes. The findings of your HPC are an example of San Francisco's commitment to the principles of being a CLG, and I applaud these efforts.

If you have any question please feel free to contact me at (916) 445-7000 or mwdonaldson@parks.ca.gov or Jay Correia at (916) 445-7008 or jcorr@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

cc:

To: California Office of Historic Preservation
State Historic Preservation Officer
c/o Jay Correia
1725-23rd St., Suite 100

From: Bernard Choden
85 Cleary Ct., # 11
San Francisco, Ca., 94109

Sirs:

I would like to nominate the San Francisco North Beach Library to the National Register as a significant architectural landmark unique in quality of design and contextual compatibility to its neighborhood and use.

I believe my background and training in architecture and planning, U. of Michigan, gives credence to my nomination. For example, I was responsible for the landmark Baltimore, Md., urban design and development plan of 1968 as well as similar conservation in Pittsburgh, Penna., and London, U.K..

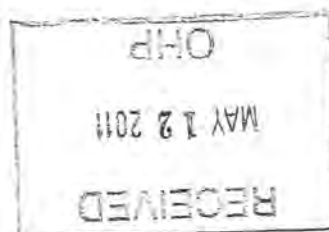
Consider that this excellent, highly functional and valued library is now placed in jeopardy by vague political speculators for replacement by ugliness and des-functionality and you will clearly understand why it is important to recognize the imminent need for its nomination to the National Register.

Sincerely,

Bernard Choden



Cc: Historic Preservation Commission
Attn: HPC Commissioners
1650 Mission St., Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103



James Buckley
9 Redfield Alley
San Francisco, CA 94133

May 14, 2011

California Office of Historic Preservation
State Historic Preservation Officer
c/o Jay Correia
1725 – 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

**RE: National Register Nomination
North Beach Branch Library, San Francisco**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am writing to support the proposed nomination of the North Beach Public Library in San Francisco to the National Register of Historic Places. This is an important historic resource both on its own and as part of the remarkable set of libraries completed by the City of San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s, all designed by a single firm (Appleton & Wolfard).

My comments reflect my experience as a member of the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission from 2009-2011 and as a former member of the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. I have a PhD in architectural history from UC Berkeley and currently teach housing policy and planning history in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. I am also first Vice President of the Vernacular Architecture Forum and speak regularly on architectural history and planning topics at academic conferences, most recently at the Society of Architectural Historians in New Orleans this past month.

The North Beach Branch of the San Francisco Public Library should be listed on the National Register under category C as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type or period. While it is significant on its own, part of the significance of the North Beach branch is its membership in the series of similar modernist library buildings commissioned of Appleton & Wolfard by the City of San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s. The city's consistent patronage of a particular firm and of a specific style of library form highlights its importance as a symbol of the social character of the period. The repeated use of this form indicates that this set of buildings represents a collective statement of values by an elected local government. I have found no other set of library commissions of one architect elsewhere in the country during this period, making this a singular statement of the city's design intentions.

The modernist aesthetic of the North Beach Library represents important elements of national culture dominant at the time of its construction in 1959, including the popular fascination with technology and the emphasis on democratic education in the face of the Cold War and the "space race." Most importantly, like the other Appleton & Wolfard libraries, the North Beach structure reflects the conflict of suburban lifestyles and urban problems of the post-WWII city. The nomination form for the North Beach branch makes clear the connection between Appleton & Wolfard's design and that of suburban homes of the period produced by popular builders such as Joseph Eichler. This relationship is important; the North Beach library, like other branches designed by Appleton & Wolfard, represented a response to the competition San Francisco faced in the post-WWII era for middle-class families who were attracted to single-family homes and new amenities in new suburban neighborhoods on the Peninsula, in the East Bay, and in Marin County. The numerous Appleton & Wolfard libraries were an attempt by the city of San Francisco to imitate the low-density, family-oriented environment of the suburban landscape in order to retain these residents.

In addition to the house-sized scale of the Appleton & Wolfard libraries, the buildings mimicked the domesticity of suburban homes by offering public "living rooms" in which the idealized postwar family could gather and read as a group. The press release for the opening of the North Beach branch, for example, described the upper level of the library as "a browsing room adjacent to an outdoor terrace space for the convenience of mothers and smaller children."¹ A similar theme is found in an undated memo by San Francisco library staff containing a list of attributes to be included in the Parkside Branch.²

3. A browsing room approximately 25 x 25. This room should be of the living room type, preferably located at the front of the building in order to have a glass effect so that patrons can look into the building. Would suggest that possibly this room could be of the sunken living room plan.

Compare this description to a selection from the article "Casual Rooms for Casual Living" from *Architect and Engineer* in 1957, the year the North Beach Library was designed:³

Prospective homebuyers are often heard to remark: 'We want a separate room for the family where the children can play without destroying furniture in the living room, and where the family can sort of relax in slippers and slacks.'

¹ "Press Release," January 30, 1959. In Folder "SFPL. Branches. North Beach," San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Public Library (Main).

² "Description of Details for Parkside Branch Library." Undated list in Parkside library file, San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Public Library (Main).

³ Arthur Priaulx. "Casual Rooms for Casual Living," *Architect & Engineer* (January 1957) pp. 6-12.

California Office of Historic Preservation
May 14, 2011
Page Three

The author continued to describe this family room trend, noting:

... the family has become the hit of this generation of home builders and architects. Nearly every self-respecting home in the contemporary trend has its own special version of the family room.

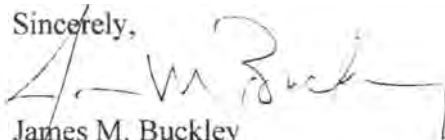
The North Beach Library retains its "family room" in the upper level of the building, warmed by a fireplace and visible through the glass doors from the outdoor play area.

Domestic and public architectural design were clearly in conversation in these buildings. The designers of the North Beach and other branches crafted public areas that mimicked home environments in an effort to encourage the mythic family to curl up in community spaces in San Francisco, rather than move to suburban tracts. As civic buildings, they are an important document of life in post-World War II era San Francisco.

The North Beach branch library is a significant site that will remind future visitors of the collective effort residents made to foster democratic education and literacy in an era when social values and landscapes were rapidly changing. Preservation of such modern-style landmarks is difficult, as many people do not appreciate the stark aesthetic of these buildings. However, the North Beach branch retains the most original integrity of all of the Appleton & Wolfard library branches, especially after the city's unsympathetic renovation of some of these branches and demolition of two others. Reuse of the North Beach building has not yet been thoroughly considered by the City of San Francisco in its plan for a new library branch, so listing of the site in the National Register is critical at this time.

I hope that the State Historical Resources Commission will approve of its listing on the National Register.

Sincerely,



James M. Buckley

President, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

DAVID CHIU

邱信福 • 市參事主席

May 18, 2011

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Mr. Donaldson:

It has come to my attention that the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) will be considering the nomination of the North Beach Library to the National Register at their May 19th hearing in Santa Monica. As President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the elected representative of District 3, which includes this building, I strongly oppose this nomination and respectfully ask that it is either removed from the agenda or voted down.

The City and County of San Francisco has a strong system of checks and balances in place to support preservation of our worthy buildings. Numerous Boards, Commissions, and Agencies have already discussed and reviewed the architectural merits of the North Beach Library and have found that it is not worthy of landmark status. *Although the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission narrowly voted to recommend landmarking the library after a series of inconclusive hearings, the final authority to designate a local landmark resides with the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly voted to reject landmarking the North Beach Library.*

The following is a summary of the votes related to the designation of North Beach Library as a local landmark:

- The San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission debated the potential landmarking of the library at eight public meetings after several inconclusive votes and eventually split on their recommendation (4:3) to designate the branch as a landmark building. This recommendation, made on September 1, 2010, was then forwarded to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.
- On November 1, 2010, the Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject the recommendation of landmark status for the North Beach Library.
- On November 9, 2010, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 10:1 to reject landmark status for the North Beach Library.

After the Board of Supervisors made this decision, the following actions took place:

- On April 21, 2011, the San Francisco Planning Commission voted unanimously to certify the Environmental Impact Report for a new North Beach Library and demolition of the existing branch. This report did consider the existing North Beach library as a historic resource and carefully studied the impacts of its demolition, analyzed several preservation alternatives, and included mitigation measures to honor the existing building.
- On April 25, 2011, the San Francisco Public Library Commission and the Recreation and Park Commission voted unanimously to support the actions of the Planning Commission and approved the plan for a new North Beach library and expansion and renovation of the surrounding Joe DiMaggio Playground in accordance with the North Beach Library/Joe DiMaggio Playground Master Plan.

During this lengthy process, City boards and commissions heard from many architects, historians, and members of the public and found that similar to the divided opinion of our own Historic Preservation Commission, the architectural and preservation community does not agree that this library building merits landmark status.

As a City, we support historic preservation and have recognized many buildings and several libraries, including another by the same architect as the North Beach Library. However, listing projects lacking in merit greatly diminishes the importance of the landmark designation.

Because the Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly voted to reject landmark status of the North Beach Library, I am respectfully requesting the State Historical Resources Commission either remove the National Register nomination from the May 19th agenda or vote it down. A clear local decision was made on this matter after a lengthy substantive conversation concerning the merits.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-554-7450 or David.Chiu@sfgov.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Chiu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Chiu".

David Chiu, President
San Francisco Board of Supervisors

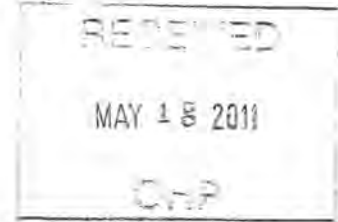
Cc: Luis Herrera, City Librarian, San Francisco Public Library

Brandt-Hawley Law Group

Chauvet House • PO Box 1659
Glen Ellen, California 95442
707.938.3900 • fax 707.938.3200
preservationlawyers.com

May 18, 2011

Chairperson Bryan K. Brandes
and Commissioners
State Historical Resources Commission



Re: San Francisco Public Library, North Beach Branch
National Register Nomination

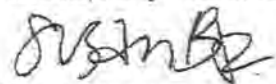
Honorable Chairperson Brandes and Commissioners:

On behalf of the Friends of the Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, I ask the Commission to approve the historic listing of San Francisco's North Beach Library. Since your meeting happens to be in Santa Monica, it is not possible for the many supporters of this nomination to be present.

Just today, the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission is meeting to comment on this nomination. The HPC previously approved the listing of the North Beach Library as a City Landmark – in fact, twice! However, there is a new appointment to the HPC and there is much political pressure to demolish the library despite wonderful alternatives that would allow its rehabilitation to meet all library program needs. So I am not sure at this point what new comments you will receive.

In addition to the support letters already sent to you, there were many others in support of City landmarking. San Francisco Heritage, for example, supported City staff's analysis that the North Beach Library and the other Appleton-Wolfard libraries "meet the requirements for individual National Register eligibility and encompass a thematically-related Multiple Property Listing." Heritage Director Mike Buhler and National Trust Western Office Director Dr. Anthea Hartig supported the historic status and adaptive reuse of the North Beach Library in the attached op-ed that you may not have seen.

As the members of this Commission are well aware, short-sighted plans to demolish a Register-eligible property are irrelevant to its designation based on objective criteria. Thank you very much for your attention to the merits of this important property.


Susan Brandt-Hawley

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23rd Street Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053
calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov



June 20, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: **San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch
National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

Dear Ms. Shull: *Carol*

Enclosed please find the **San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries is the applicant.

On May 19, 2011, at its regular quarterly meeting, the California State Historical Resources Commission (Commission) found the North Beach Branch Library (Library) eligible for the National Register under Criterion C because the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern Ranch style. The Commission also found the Library eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with Post-War II events that led to a change in how libraries serve the public, and events that led to the expansion of San Francisco's public library system.

San Francisco is Certified Local Government. By a 4 to 3 vote the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission voted to grant landmark status to the North Beach Branch Library. On November 1, 2010, the Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject landmark status for the Library. On November 9, 2010, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to reject landmarks status for the Library. The California Office of Historic Preservation received 9 letters of support for the nomination.

If you have questions regarding this nomination, please contact Jay Correia of my staff at 916-445-7008 or jcorr@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures

Letter of Support

ACTION: NATIONAL REGISTER INFORMATION SYSTEM

Id 11000501 DR 06/24/2011 CA San Francisco San Francisco Public Library >
01 More

Name San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch

Address 2000 Mason St.

City San Francisco

Vicinity

Restrict

State CALIFORNIA

County San Francisco

Status

Date 06/24/2011

Day45 08/08/2011 Resource Type

Acreage

Multiple

Contributing bldg

Site

Strc

Obj

Total

Noncontributing bldg

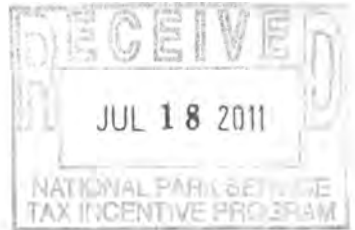
Site

Strc

Obj

Total

Park



San Francisco Public Library

July 14, 2011

Carol Shull, Interim Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

On May 19, 2011, the California State Historic Resources Commission voted to forward the nomination of the North Beach Branch of the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) to the National Register of Historic Places. Despite strong objections by the property owner and the City and County of San Francisco, the nomination was accepted without scrutiny, discussion, or verification of its validity. This letter and the attached documentation is a record of the debate and analysis of the North Beach Branch Library's merits and the conclusion that it is unsuitable for landmark or National Register designation. I ask that you consider all this information in your review of the nomination.

The San Francisco Public Library owns and operates seven branch libraries designed by the firm of Appleton and Wolford. While the nomination submitted by Ms. Johanna Street describes the best qualities of the Appleton and Wolford libraries and claims that the North Beach Branch also possesses these qualities, the nomination glosses over the fact that the North Beach Branch is uniquely atypical of this group of midcentury buildings, to negative effect. The nomination includes descriptions of the North Beach Branch that are misleading. Specifically, the North Beach Branch lacks the character-defining features of the other Appleton and Wolford libraries in three key areas:

1. Open floor plan. The North Beach Branch was built on a sloped site that is constricted by the amenities of an adjacent urban playground to a smaller footprint than was required. As a result, the layout and design are compromised by three sets of stairs, dividing up the floor plan and library functions over four partial levels. In contrast with the description provided by Ms. Street, the floor plan of the North Beach Branch is broken up by multiple levels, making functionality and adaptability a major challenge and never successfully achieving the open floor plan of other branch libraries by the same architects.

2. Fenestration patterns and resultant natural light. Challenged by the location and site, the architects were not able to give the North Beach Branch the characteristic patterns of glazing and abundant natural light. The North Beach Branch faces the street and park with brick walls and window patterns that are much smaller and less impactful than in other branches. Ms. Street's description of "large areas of glazing with a visual connection to open space" could accurately be used to describe the Merced, Parkside, or Marina Branches, but does not represent the North Beach Branch. (Attachment 1; Marina and North Beach branches front entryway)
3. Relationship with the park, landscaping through window patterns. Again, the above statement, from the nomination form - "large areas of glazing with a visual connection to open space" - is not factual. The relationship of the North Beach Branch with the adjacent park is defined by a large brick wall that faces a tennis court. In comparison with the Marina Branch, the North Beach Branch design is an aberration from the group of libraries designed by Appleton and Wolford. (Attachment 2; Marina and North Beach branches facing playground)

These features form the basis of the Appleton and Wolford library design, but in the North Beach Branch they are either lacking or significantly diminished. When I was notified by the State Historic Preservation Office that the nomination had been submitted, I sent a letter that briefly outlined these same concerns (Attachment 3; letter to Milford Wayne Donaldson, dated November 10, 2010), but these issues were never investigated or discussed. If the North Beach Branch is to be considered for listing in the National Register, it should be evaluated on its actual merits, not solely based upon this nomination which provides subjective generalizations of the building, inaccurate statements about its architectural features, and glosses over the realities described above.

The nomination asserts that the North Beach Branch qualifies for the National Register under Criterion A and Criterion C:

"Criterion A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history."

In the nomination form (Section 8, pages 1-2), the author describes the significance of the Appleton and Wolford libraries, as they related to new Post-War national library standards and mid-century design philosophy. As stated in summary by the author, "The ALA called for creating a repeatable "standard" library type that was accessible, functional, adaptable, and modern....The North Beach Branch Library was based on that prototype...." (Section 8, page 8) Unlike the other branches designed by Appleton and Wolford, the North Beach Branch is not a successful version of that prototype. Due to its small footprint, constricted site, grade changes, and construction on four levels with three sets of stairs, the North Beach Branch is not accessible, functional, or adaptable to meet the needs of a modern public library. In general, the author's descriptions of the interior of the Branch show a lack of accuracy, as well as a misunderstanding of library organization and use.

“Criterion C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant or distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.”

While other Appleton and Wofford libraries in the SFPL system truly exemplify the standard of the mid-century modern libraries, the North Beach Branch does not. The nomination's author uses descriptions of the Appleton and Wofford library prototype and then concludes that the North Beach Branch is therefore qualified for designation, though it is clearly atypic of the group in important ways: the multiple small levels divided by staircases prohibit an open floor plan, yield a lack of functionality, and challenge the ability to adapt its use to accommodate the changing needs of library services. It lacks connection to landscaping or the park space it is situated on, as well as the abundant window patterns and natural light that can be found in our other libraries designed by the same architects. The author's assessment here is subjective and does not accurately describe the North Beach Branch library building.

Locally, this issue has been discussed and analyzed repeatedly. The San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission (SFHPC) originally voted 4-3 to recommend landmark status for the building, but when the SFHPC discussed their response to this nomination, they were unable to agree upon any action. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors determined that, unlike the Marina Branch (also designed by Appleton and Wofford), the North Beach Branch does not qualify for local landmark status, for the same reasons I convey in this letter. The Board ultimately rejected the SFHPC's recommendation to assign landmark designation. The long discussions over the historic merits of the branch have delayed plans to build a new library, making North Beach the last branch library in the SFPL capital building program. The community has been vocal in its opposition to the attempts to historically designate this facility. I attach the full text of several articles, illustrating the growing voice of those who dispute the building's merit, listed below:

San Francisco Chronicle. “Battle over preserving North Beach Branch Library,” John King. June 26, 2011.

San Francisco Chronicle. “Re-evaluating SF historic preservation framework,” John King. May 2, 2011.

San Francisco Chronicle. “North Beach library's fate to be decided today,” John King. November 9, 2010.

San Francisco Chronicle. “Tough to defend old North Beach Library,” C. W. Nevius. September 9, 2010.

San Francisco Chronicle. “SF North Beach library a landmark?” John King. August 31, 2010.

San Francisco Examiner. “Preservation gone awry,” by Ken Garcia. July 2, 2010.

Beyond Chron. “Disability Perspective: Uber-Ardent Historic Preservationists,” Bob Planthold. September 28, 2009.

San Francisco Examiner. “North Beach Library demolition debated,” John Upton. September 16, 2009.

San Francisco Chronicle. “Preservation Spat over North Beach Library,” John King. September 12, 2009. (Attachments 4-12)

In addition, please find copies of letters received by the California State Historic Preservation Officer, Milford Wayne Donaldson, from San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee (May 18, 2011), San Francisco Board of Supervisors President David Chiu (May 18, 2011), and me (May 11, 2011). (Attachments 13-15)

As you review the full record on this subject, I believe you will recognize that the nomination form description represents only one opinion, not a factual report. As stated by longtime historic preservation supporter and architectural critic, John King, "The North Beach Branch Library is a textbook example of how a good movement can go astray."

I thank you in advance for your careful consideration of this issue and urge you to reject the recommendation to place the North Beach Branch Library building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Luis Herrera", with a stylized, flowing script.

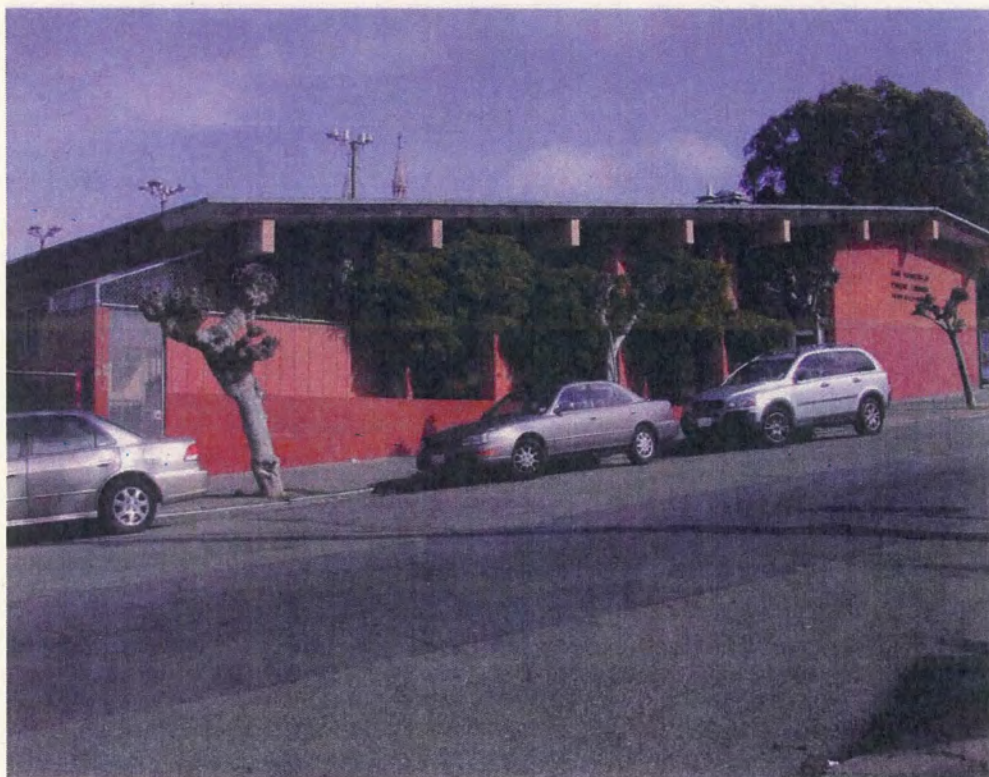
Luis Herrera
City Librarian

cc: Paul Lusignan, Reviewer
National Park Service

Attachment 1



Marina Branch Library front entryway



North Beach Branch Library front entryway

Attachment 2



Marina Branch Library facing Moscone Playground



North Beach Branch Library facing DiMaggio Playground



San Francisco Public Library

November 10, 2010

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

The San Francisco Public Library ("Library") was notified on October 10, 2010, of the nomination of the North Beach Branch of the Library for the National Historic Register. As a department of the City and County of San Francisco, the Library has jurisdictional authority over this property, a 5,500 square foot building that is located on city land that is managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. Please accept this letter as notification that the Library strongly opposes this nomination.

The San Francisco Public Library currently operates 7 branch libraries designed by the firm of Appleton & Wolford between 1951 and 1966. Of them, the North Beach branch is the least representative of and most lacking the architectural characteristics of the Appleton & Wolford style:

- It lacks the single-level ranch styling, light and openness, and connection to landscaping that exists in the other branches designed by the same firm.
- The North Beach branch is compromised by a constrained location between park amenities, on a steep grade that requires a four-level, fragmented floor-plan.
- The design does not embrace the park site nor offer a civic presence, but instead features large blank walls facing the street and park.

The existing North Beach Branch Library has been noted by the architectural community as "the least successful among our collection of historic libraries," "the least welcoming to the public and has the least civic character of all the libraries," and the "least impressive design among [the architects'] several." As an aberration from the city's branch libraries designed by Appleton & Wolford, the North Beach Branch does not provide a good representation of the modern public library movement, nor can it successfully be used for its original purpose – providing public library service.

The question of the architectural and historic merit of the North Beach Branch Library has been the topic of discussion before the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) over the past 15 months. Although the recommendation to designate North Beach Branch Library as a landmark building was forwarded to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on September 1, 2010, the HPC had debated this issue several times and was eventually split on the recommendation (4:3). On November 1, 2010, the Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject the recommendation of landmark status for the North Beach Library. On November 9, 2010, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors finally voted to reject landmark status for the North Beach Branch Library.

The San Francisco Public Library supports historic preservation when merited. The Library has renovated and preserved 18 public libraries and has been recognized for preservation excellence with the following awards:

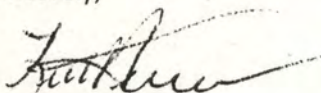
- AIA Special Achievement Award (3/5/09)
- Governor's Historic Preservation Award for the Noe Valley Branch Library restoration (11/21/08)
- California Preservation Foundation Design Award for the Noe Valley Branch Library restoration (9/19/09)
- Historic Restoration Award from the American Public Works Association for the restoration of the Richmond Branch Library (2/25/10)
- 2010 DPW Employee Recognition Award for the Bernal Heights Branch Library renovation (5/21/10)

In addition, six branch libraries designed by the firm of Appleton & Wolford are being updated and preserved for future generations.

The Library understands that this nomination will be considered by the California State Office of Historic Preservation and may subsequently be calendared for discussion before the State Historical Resources Commission. If the North Beach Branch Library nomination is calendared before this commission, the Library will expect to be contacted in advance so that we may attend and provide information regarding our objection to this nomination.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Luis Herrera
City Librarian

Cc: Jay Correia, Registration Supervisor, SHPO
Jill Bourne, Deputy City Librarian, SFPL

San Francisco Chronicle

Battle over preserving North Beach Branch Library

John King, Chronicle Urban Design Critic

Sunday, June 26, 2011

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/06/26/INCR1K0CJF.DTL>



The North Beach Branch Library at the corner of Mason and Greenwich streets is the fifth of eight branch libraries designed by Appleton & Wolfard.

Last year, as San Francisco's Historic Preservation Commission called for the North Beach Branch Library to be declared a city landmark, I argued in print that the structure was nondescript at best.

The objection was futile, as I expected it would be. Here's what I *didn't* expect: Half a dozen respected local preservationists thanked me privately afterward for the piece. They, too, felt the library fell far short of landmark status, but hadn't wanted to say so publicly.

I've thought about this reticence, and I suspect it's partly why the preservation movement - a key element in the protection of our cities these past 40 years - has become the punching bag of detractors who say it's out of control: Members too rarely call their brethren to task. They defer to the feelings of their most self-righteous - or cynical - allies, and they don't realize that the image of extremism at some point could undermine the cause itself.

Not every proposed change spurs a fight, as you can see by the construction site where Timothy Pflueger's Transbay Terminal stood from 1939 until last year. But contention is often the norm in

such cities as San Francisco or Berkeley. A fervent voice declares this or that building to be of sacred value for this or that reason. More established preservationists either line up in support to show they aren't a bunch of Victorian-hugging elitists, or keep a polite silence.

North Beach Branch Library is a textbook example of how a good movement can go astray.

The bunker-like structure at the corner of Mason and Greenwich streets is the fifth of eight branch libraries designed by Appleton & Wolfard, a local firm largely forgotten until the recent spat. It opened in 1959 with a design that - to quote the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places - "incorporated the popular, regional, suburban residential qualities typical of Mid-Century Modern Design in Northern California."

You may think this definition is pabulum, but the key word is "modern." There's a subset of preservationism that - rightly - feels modern architecture doesn't get the respect it deserves. No matter that North Beach isn't particularly *good* modernism, even by Appleton & Wolfard standards. By rallying around it, the larger community could feel it was striking a blow for all those gems that are under siege elsewhere in the country.

The nomination also touches on historic worth, which the register declares to be "significant" if a structure is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." In this case, the hook is that North Beach - I quote the nomination again - "was a reflection of principles of the modern public library promoted by the American Library Association after World War II."

Language like this opens the door to the abuse of preservation, whether by a true believer, a clever obstructionist or a planner who views an older building only through the prism of impeccable restoration.

In the well-meaning effort not to be exclusive, the guidelines are so broad as to downplay architectural quality (who is to judge "quality" anyway, right?) and to exult all "patterns or trends in history" as equal. If someone is devoted or duplicitous enough to make a case for a particular structure, success is more likely than not; indeed, the State Historic Resources Commission moved the library's nomination to the register to Washington with a 4-1 vote of support.

Even if boosters win a particular battle - and the library can be demolished as planned even if it *does* make it onto the register - the long-term effect is corrosive. Too many dubious "landmarks," and at some point the common person will come to see the preservation movement as just another single-issue special interest group.

We need the historic preservation movement, because it defends our shared culture. And the more that its leaders accept the notion that not all old buildings are created equal, the stronger it will be.

E-mail John King at jking@sfchronicle.com. Submit your comment to The Chronicle at www.sfgate.com/chronicle/submissions/#1.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/06/26/INCR1K0CJF.DTL>

This article appeared on page E - 5 of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle

Re-evaluating S.F. historic preservation framework

John King, Chronicle Urban Design Critic

Monday, May 2, 2011

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/05/02/MNVJ1J9C89.DTL>



City Lights Bookstore is an architectural landmark, but for cultural reasons

If any western city shows the value of historic preservation, it's San Francisco. And if any city shows how broadly this value can be defined - not always for the best - it's San Francisco as well.

But when a Board of Supervisors committee meets today to explore whether the cause of preservation has been carried to extremes, here's something else to keep in mind: The balancing act here between old and new works more often than not.

The hearing was called by Supervisor Scott Wiener, who insists his goal is nothing more than to "look at how historic preservation fits into an entire range of city issues." The language of the hearing request goes further, asking bureaucrats to report on "the impact of historic preservation policies on other major public policy goals" and "whether legislation is warranted to ensure that all of these policy goals are met."

The fuss might puzzle a layperson who thinks of preservation as something reserved for the likes of the Ferry Building. But critics say that too often the net is cast too broadly, turning anything built more than 45 years ago into a "historic resource" that triggers time-consuming reviews if changes are contemplated. There's also criticism that development foes seek landmark status for anything they want protected, regardless of its historic value.

All evidence indicates that the critics have Wiener's ear, and that preservation advocates will turn out in force for today's hearing. The result could be another San Francisco-styled showdown with more acrimony than insight.

A range of landmarks

The sad thing is that the future of historic preservation *should* be discussed in this and other cities - but with a level head.

One starting point in San Francisco would be to look at the list of 34 structures that have been declared landmarks since 2001.



The S.F. Old Mint building has been preserved for historic and architectural reasons. Critics are concerned preservation has expanded to include anything built more than 45 years ago

There's City Lights Bookstore and the Old Mint. Four cottages on timelessly picturesque Filbert Street and one of the kitschy dog's heads from the defunct Doggie Diner chain. The building that housed the AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Music Concourse at Golden Gate Park.

In other words, they range from unquestioned architectural or cultural landmarks to objects of local lore. You and I can quibble with specific entries, but on the whole they're a selective representation of how today's San Francisco views the past.

The list also shows that preservation needn't be anti-development. At least three landmarks are after-the-fact blessings of construction projects that paired old with new, such as the loving transformation of 1906's Lick Baths into the offices of Gelfand Partners Architects.

By contrast, the Historic Preservation Commission has resisted calls to pursue landmark protection for Parkmerced, a 155-acre apartment complex marketed in the 1940s as suburbia in the city - and, not coincidentally, now the focus of a large development proposal.

This doesn't jibe with the apocalypse predicted by early opponents of the commission, which voters approved in 2008. Its one real goof, voting 4-3 to make the nondescript, 1959 North Beach branch library a city landmark, was rejected by the Board of Supervisors on a 10-1 vote.

That's the thing to remember. Checks and balances do exist.



Preservationists advocated saving one of the dog's heads from the defunct Doggie Diner chain as part of local lore in 2005.

Going too far

The dilemma with preservation today is that in an ever-more-subjective world, true believers - or politically adroit cynics - can make the case for almost anything.

Defenders of the North Beach library include fans of modern architecture who feel that the style doesn't get the respect it deserves. But others use preservation arguments to draw out the process and derail efforts to build a new library on the same block.

Tactics like this are nothing more than spite - as in a similar Berkeley dispute right now that involves some of the same "concerned library users" as the ones who are battling change in North Beach.

The subjectivity also applies to city officials who get so picky over details of restoration projects or new buildings in historic districts that they slow down projects and drive up costs. But the problem isn't overzealous history buffs; it's a civic culture where everyone feels entitled to leave his or her mark on the final product. Preservation becomes another way to meddle.

If there's a benefit to today's hearing, it's that preservation should indeed be looked at as one civic value among many, rather than one before which all others must bow.

Fight the big battles. Take small changes in stride.

Nobody makes this point better than Richard Moe, who retired last year after 17 years as president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"Preservationists don't always do themselves a favor when they take absolute positions on these things," Moe said. "It's what turns people off."

But even as Moe sets himself apart "from the school that says every old building should be saved," he gets to the heart of why we should never become cavalier about what stays and what goes.

"San Francisco is one of the world's great cities, and one of the things that makes it great is its architecture," Moe said. "Neighborhoods are distinct. They each have their own character."

That's what we need to save.

To get involved

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors Land Use and Economic Development Committee meets today at 1 p.m. in room 250 of City Hall to discuss historic preservation policies.

E-mail John King at jking@sfchronicle.com.

San Francisco Chronicle

North Beach library's fate to be decided today

John King

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/11/09/DDPO1G5APG.DTL>



The Parkside branch library's update preserves the modernism from the 1950s. The Board of Supervisors will decide the fate of the North Beach branch today.

Today might prove grim for one modern-era library in San Francisco, but another has a new lease on life.

The revived gem is the Parkside branch library that reopened Saturday, nestled into a corner of McCoppin Square at Taraval Street and 22nd Avenue. It's a deceptively simple presence from 1951, framed in brick and topped by a roof that angles up above the shelves and seating areas to allow for generous windows that let in light while deflecting the direct sun.

The architect was Appleton & Wolfard, the firm that also designed the North Beach branch library - the one nominated for landmark status this summer by the city's Historic Preservation Commission. But a Board of Supervisors' committee last week gave a unanimous thumbs-down to the proposed protection, recommending that the full board scrap it during today's meeting.

If the board agrees with the committee, no loss.

Parkside embodies the best virtues of mainstream modernism from the 1950s: self-assured and inviting, setting a civic tone while also crafting stylish space that feels at home. The renovation by THA Architecture and Karin Payson A+D preserves that essence - even the copper face of the fireplace has been given a fresh shine - while adding a wood-clad extension for restrooms and staff space.

This was the first of eight branch libraries by Appleton & Wolfard. It's also the best.

By contrast, the North Beach branch from 1959 is awkward and formulaic at best, shoved over neighborhood objections into a tight corner of what now is Joe DiMaggio Playground. Users of the adjacent tennis and bocce courts are confronted by solid brick; portions of the interior are off-limits to people in wheelchairs.

Plans call for the existing branch to be replaced with a airy update to the west along Columbus Avenue - and for the playground to be remade as a more spacious, flowing space that includes a short block of what now is Mason Street.

Parkside is a testament to the virtues of architectural recycling. North Beach is a reminder that not all old buildings deserve to be called landmarks. Life will go on.

San Francisco Chronicle

Tough to defend saving old North Beach library

C.W. Nevius

Thursday, September 9, 2010

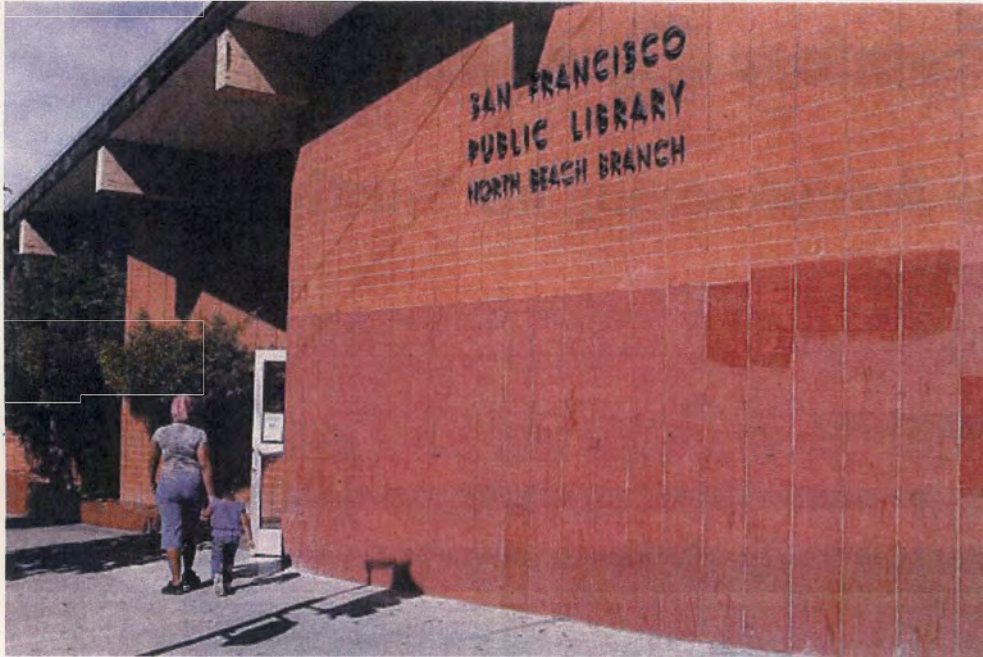
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/09/09/BAAD1FAOG7.DTL>



The North Beach branch of the San Francisco Public Library in San Francisco.

There's something sour and mean-spirited about the attempt to kill a new, state-of-the-art library in North Beach. Opponents say it is about historic significance and architectural legacy, but honestly, it sounds like the preservationists think they know best and the more than 2,000 kids in the neighborhood and 4,000 families will just have to pipe down and like it.

It is nearly impossible to make a logical case for the opposition. The old library building is not only butt-ugly, it is seismically suspect. It can't host children's readings upstairs because it has no wheelchair access. Every other district has gotten a new facility. The money is there for this one. And yet the opponents fight on.



People walk past the North Beach Branch San Francisco Library in San Francisco. The library is slated for demolition, but some folks want it to become a landmark instead.

After all, this could just be the beginning. The next thing you know, someone will want to take the plywood off the Pagoda Theater, or revamp a storefront, or start a business. It could ruin the whole sad, tired theme park that North Beach is becoming.

"It raises the question," said Julie Christensen, a fervent library supporter, "of can North Beach continue if it is nothing but a vestige of what it was and a place that you avoid after dark?"

Preservationists want the building remodeled. But the city and many residents prefer demolishing the building and replacing it with a bigger library. As this process has dragged out - the environmental impact report was supposed to take nine months and it is now in its second year - a pattern of misdirection has emerged.

"It's closing the street. It's the traffic. It's the noise. It's the landmark. No one will say they are against the library," said Theresa Dal Santo, a mother of two who supports the new plans. "It's been an eye-opening experience. We're just families raising our kids. It's not our hobby to be active in political work."



The proposed new North Beach Branch library would fill an empty block along Columbus Avenue with a tall airy structure designed by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects. The project also envisions the closing of one block of Mason Street for parkland, and demolition of the existing branch

Unfortunately, they ran into the politically savvy North Beach neighborhood groups. Supporters hint that Aaron Peskin, former president of the Board of Supervisors and the "mayor of North Beach," is behind the preservation campaign. Peskin did not return a request for comment. But the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, of which he and his wife, Nancy Shanahan, are active members, is fighting the library.



In addition, Peskin was instrumental in refining the powers for the Historic Preservation Commission, which was approved by voters in 2008. Previously, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board made recommendations, but had no real power.

"Before they had no teeth," said Charles Higuera, an architect and former member of the city's Public Library Commission. "Now they have teeth and they want something to chew on."

Cynics think the commission is aiming to set a standard that would preserve virtually any building of that age, regardless of its architectural attributes.

"They want to look after the historic fabric of the city - I get it," Higuera said. "But if you are going to save one building, it sure as hell wouldn't be this one."

Looking back at it, Dal Santo says, the families realize "we were such novices, so naive." But now they're ready to fight back. They expect to have 1,000 signatures on a petition by the time the Board of Supervisors considers the issue in a few weeks, and she says they outnumber opponents 3 to 1 at hearings.

Board of Supervisors president David Chiu is listening. Although he was elected in 2008 with the support of Peskin, he's breaking with him on this.

"I'm a strong proponent of appropriate historic preservation, and I'm open to arguments at the board. But I'm not inclined to support landmarking this building," he said. "I believe the families in this neighborhood deserve a library that is useful, attractive and accessible to all."



The North Beach public library branch is seen in San Francisco. Preservationists are seeking landmark status on the building, which was built in 1958, and is scheduled for demolition to make way for a new library branch.

New library opponents may want to listen to former library commissioner Higuera.

"One thing I learned was: Don't cross the library users," he said. "They will come at you with a vengeance."

C.W. Nevius' column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. E-mail him at cwnevius@sfgate.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/09/09/BAAD1FAOG7.DTL>

This article appeared on page C - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle

S.F. North Beach library a landmark?

John King, Chronicle Urban Design Writer

Tuesday, August 31, 2010

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/08/31/MNBD1F4H40.DTL>



San Francisco's North Beach branch library is a case study in where the preservation movement is going - and how, in some cases, it's in danger of going too far.

The 1959 structure resembles an oversize ranch house, albeit one with thick brick walls and too few windows. It can't expand without disrupting the playground that hems it in on three sides. And far from being unique, it is one of eight branches designed by the firm Appleton & Wolfard between 1951 and 1965.

Despite all this, there is a good chance that the city's Historic Preservation Commission will recommend that the library be declared a landmark at its meeting Wednesday.



Such a vote won't strike a blow for the often-overlooked virtues of modern architecture, as some victors might claim. It will be a bad call by the commission and a hint of battles to come, because in a cultural climate where the definition of "landmark" becomes ever-more subjective, you can make a case for anything with four walls and a past.

For readers who haven't seen the imperiled branch at Columbus Avenue and Mason Street, it's a low-slung box of red bricks with a sloping roof above two levels of space. This is in keeping with a time when suburbia was in favor, as was the vision that libraries should be informal, almost residential in feel.

North Beach also reflects the era's embrace of mass production. The thick roof beams are manufactured from thin strips of wood glued together. The bricks were baked to a uniform hue. The ceiling features grids of fluorescent lighting.

While it's not a bad building, better ones of the same vintage are easily found in such 1960s boomtowns as San Rafael, Walnut Creek and Menlo Park. Or visit other libraries in the city - such as Appleton & Wolfard's Eureka Valley branch from 1962 on 16th Street, with ample windows beneath a crisp roofline and a handsome fireplace seating area across from the circulation desk.

The latter branch has been restored, as have five others by the firm. In North Beach, however, city officials argue that the library is cramped and that there's no genuinely workable way to expand within the playground setting. Their solution: build a new library on a small triangular block across the street, a move that has strong support from parent groups in North Beach and Chinatown.

Tight quarters

Shoehorned into what now is Joe DiMaggio Playground, the North Beach branch library cannot expand without costing the playground even more space.



Sources: LMS Architects; Chronicle research

Todd Trumbull / The Chronicle

Awkward at best

Enter the modern architecture buffs who say the branch merits preservation because, in the words of the motion being considered on Wednesday, "it embodies all the principles of mid-20th-century American public library design and displays a signature style developed by Appleton & Wolfard."

Part 1 of the phrase is true for all seven of the firm's surviving branches, not just this one. As for the supposed display of "signature style," that's a stretch in any qualitative sense.

Where a branch like Eureka Valley spreads out with inviting ease, North Beach feels like what it is: an intruder shoehorned into what now is Joe DiMaggio Playground by order of then-Mayor George Christopher.

The layout violates today's accessibility laws because the bathrooms and upper level are off-limits to anyone who uses a wheelchair. And anyone stepping onto the upper level's small patio encounters an iron fence - a security measure because of the toddler play area on the other side.

Could a restored branch be enlarged, as defenders claim? Yes, but only by making things around it worse. The playground would lose even more space. The unaltered integrity of today's building

would be marred by a new wing to the north (shrinking windows that let in light) or to the south (so much for the upper level's domestic scale).

And you would still be left with a building of more interest as an artifact than as architecture, with a design that walls off the street in a way that no planner (or neighborhood group) today would allow.

Modernism has merit

This doesn't mean modern buildings should be discarded as a matter of course.

Just as the handful of surviving earthquake shacks let us see how people endured after the 1906 disaster, the 1950s branch libraries hint at a city trying to stay relevant to families tempted by the suburbs. This preservation of the recent past is crucial if cities are serious about retaining a sense of how they came to be.

"You want to think of the architectural narrative across all eras, and what buildings illustrate the narrative," says Christine French, director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's initiative Modernism and the Recent Past. "They may not be the biggest or best, but they're part of the story."

But that doesn't mean all 5,610 of the refugee shacks should have been locked in place as sacrosanct shrines. Nor does it mean that every midcentury building should be saved because someone can be found to say it deserves respect.

Preservation is an important urban value. It's also one value among many. Sometimes we need to move on - and let a new generation add to the narrative.

If you go

The Historic Preservation Commission meeting begins at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall, Room 400. If the commission votes to landmark the North Beach library, its decision will then go to the Board of Supervisors for a final vote.

E-mail John King at jking@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/08/31/MNBD1F4H40.DTL>

This article appeared on page A - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle

Preservation gone awry

When you create a panel to preserve things, preserve things it will, as was proved by the recent decision to declare a little brick box called the North Beach Library a historic landmark.

For years, The City has been planning to replace the archaic library with a new building that would greatly expand the facility but would require the closure of a section of a neighboring street. A small group of activists oppose that plan, saying it will compromise the ball fields at Joe DiMaggio Playground — and what better way to invoke preservation than by invoking the Yankee Clipper?

San Francisco's Historic Preservation Commission recently designated the library a landmark, which would require any new building to be subjected to more planning reviews.

The library situation is a prime example of why The City doesn't need a preservation commission to do the work of city planners — exactly the reason laid out by those opposed to creating the panel.

I have a strong record of leading preservation fights for worthy campaigns, but this one isn't worth the pole the Doggie Diner head stands on. By singling out a building posing as historic, the commission has lowered standards for preservation and progress.



Leave the work to planners: When the Historic Preservation Commission deemed the North Beach Library building a landmark, it proved why such a committee is bad for The City.



Disability Perspective: Uber-Ardent Historic Preservationists

by Bob Planthold, Sep. 28, 2009

<http://www.beyondchron.org/news/index.php?itemid=7388>

Civil Rights? We don't need to deal with Civil Rights!



When Dante wrote "The Inferno" hundreds of years ago, he didn't dream a new Hell was still to be created -- by and for the uber-ardent preservationists. They religiously avoid dealing with accessibility. For people with disabilities, these thing-focussed advocates can be as much a blight on the political landscape as the right-wing radicals that still infest Sacramento and Washington. Recent examples of preservationists' advocacy make it seem they'd rather hug an old wood beam and pile of bricks than a person with a disability.

The best example is the North Beach branch library. The avid preservationists claim they don't need to deal with accessibility issues --that THOSE considerations get dealt with later, after any building is declared historic. There's LOTS of reality gaps in that approach.

The North Beach branch is one of EIGHT SF branch libraries designed by one SF architectural firm; somehow, the preservationists' report claims it is necessary to designate all EIGHT as "an example" of mid-century library architecture.

EIGHT is "an example"? That they're mixing singular and plurals is a linguistic indication their analysis and thinking may not be as logical and as responsive to all applicable laws as should be the case.

Regarding the North Beach branch library, it's best to describe access problems inside the building, since the preservationists report deals essentially with the EXTERIOR.

The building has multiple levels, none of which have any internal accessible connection, i.e., no lift nor elevator.

*That means that some people with disabilities are ARCHITECTURALLY prevented from working or volunteering there.

A possible job-bias litigation issue, Mr. City Attorney?

* The bathrooms are NOT accessible. Period. So, people with disabilities can't work there AND can't pee there.

Great sense of civil-rights history and inclusiveness shown by the preservationists. Could designating this building as historic then preserve an architectural bias that preserves the inequities and discrimination of the past?

The preservationists then say: Accessibility is not THEIR problem. Let's examine that. What about the possibility of retrofitting into the interior some form of lifts or elevator? Remember, this building was designed and built in the mid-20th century. Asbestos was a common feature in some building materials during that timeframe. Asbestos abatement, if needed, has to be done carefully -- meaning a slower pace, and at greater expense.

After that, any inclusion of an elevator or lift within the preserved facade of the building requires a determination as to whether the current structural support members are adequate, or need extra bracing. Again, more cost and more time. AND a reduction in usable interior space. This could result in any retrofit project that is too expensive for the time and budget allocated.

Yet, the preservationists would have gotten their way. A building could stay preserved but inaccessible for years, while appeals and funding drag on.

There's another aspect of this battle that deserves mention: the demographics of the preservationists. Many of those who oppose preservation are active parents who want the land taken from Rec. & Park in the '60s for this library restored back to Rec. & Park -- to provide more open space and recreation room for the area's children. Whereas many of the uber-ardent preservationists do not have children. They're not exactly kid-friendly.

Their dismissive responses about accessibility and coldness to the needs of children can be summed up as: as long as they have something THEY can enjoy, what does it matter the inconvenience and costs for EVERYBODY else? There are other examples of how some politically-aggressive people ignore access, though not always related to historic preservation. But, that's grist for another column.

North Beach Branch Library demolition debated

By: John Upton
Examiner Staff Writer
September 16, 2009

<http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/North-Beach-Branch-Library-demolition-debated-59424242.html>



Historical significance: The North Beach Branch Library is one of eight in The City that was designed by the now-defunct Appleton & Wolfard architecture firm. (Examiner file photo)

SAN FRANCISCO — The North Beach Branch Library has enough historical significance to be spared from pending demolition, but it should be torn down anyway, city planning officials said.

The building was designed by the now-defunct Appleton & Wolfard architecture firm and built on a city park in the late 1950s. The San Francisco Public Library plans to demolish it and build a larger branch by 2012 on a nearby triangular parking lot.

But today, the recently formed San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission is scheduled to consider whether eight branches designed by the firm, including the North Beach building, should be up for historical designation.

The commission advises the Board of Supervisors, which has final say about designations.

All eight branches are being renovated or demolished under a \$106 million voter-approved bond program to modernize and expand the library system.

Historic landmark designation of the Appleton & Wolfard buildings would ordinarily provide the properties with protection from demolition and major structural changes. But, the City Attorney's Office advised commissioners that planned demolition and renovation work would not be affected if library planners have already applied for the necessary city permits.

The library has applied for permits to begin work on all branches designed by the firm, except the North Beach building, City Librarian Luis Herrera told commissioners.

The library will forge ahead with plans to build a new North Beach branch regardless of whether the old building is preserved, he told The Examiner.

Herrera said initiating landmark procedures before renovations are complete could cause project delays if additional permits are needed.

The Planning Department recently concluded that the Parkside, Marina, Merced, North Beach and Eureka Valley branches could be listed as historical landmarks. Work has started or is finished on all those branches, except North Beach.

That branch has undergone almost no alterations, which helps justify listing it as historical, but it should not be landmarked, the department concluded.

"The opportunity to return the site to open-space use and improve the quality of the open space within Joe DiMaggio Playground will be more beneficial to the North Beach neighborhood than the retention of the existing library," city planning staff wrote in a memo.

The Ortega, Western Addition and Excelsior branches don't meet requirements for historical designation, the department said.

Commissioners will also consider whether the century-old Park Branch, which is about to be renovated, should be landmarked.

jupton@sfoxaminer.com

Branch Library Improvement Program

Construction or renovation completed

- Excelsior*
- Glen Park
- Ingleside
- Marina*

- Mission Bay (new branch)
- Noe Valley
- Portola
- Richmond
- Sunset
- West Portal
- Western Addition*

Renovation or construction under way

- Anza
- Bernal Heights
- Eureka Valley*
- Merced*
- Ortega*
- Parkside*
- Potrero
- Visitacion Valley

Renovations planned

- Golden Gate Valley
- Park
- Presidio

Demolition and new building planned

- Bayview
- North Beach*

* Branch designed by Appleton & Wolfard

Source: San Francisco Public Library

San Francisco Chronicle

Preservation spat over North Beach library

John King, Chronicle Urban Design Writer

Saturday, September 12, 2009

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/12/BAVK19KTD5.DTL>



The current North Beach Branch Library

San Francisco's newest branch library is modest by any measure: The tallest section is 24 feet, and the creamy tiles on the outer walls are the fanciest material you'll see.

But with its egg-shaped children's room, mahogany-framed study nooks and a roof that hovers 8 feet above the entrance, the Ingleside library sends an ambitious message that public buildings can strive to be civic landmarks, sources of neighborhood pride as well as books and DVDs.

The 6,100-square-foot Ocean Avenue structure that opens today is the fourth new library completed under San Francisco's most extensive overhaul of branch libraries in 40 years. Seven renovations have also been completed. A further 13 new or renovated libraries are in

the works, including the demolition and rebuilding of the North Beach branch, a plan opposed by devotees of modern design.

Preservation is a worthy rule of thumb in urban settings. But sometimes the substitution of new for old makes sense - a reality that shouldn't be ignored by watchdogs who view libraries as architectural works above all else.

That's the debate looming at the city's Historic Preservation Commission, which is scheduled to vote Wednesday to determine whether as many as eight branch libraries built between 1953 and 1966 and designed by Appleton & Wolfard should be studied as potential landmarks.

The trigger for the landmark push is the North Beach branch, which opened in 1959 on land carved from what now is Joe DiMaggio Playground at Mason and Greenwich streets.

Like other libraries by the defunct firm, the branch has red brick walls, wooden beams, a gabled roof and generous north-facing windows. The aim: "a friendly place which reveals the resources within and invites one to share its hospitality," in the words of a 1952 Architectural Record piece on national trends.

But if the branch has the residential tone that distinguishes Appleton & Wolfard's library work, it also shows why the public tired of the dogmatic modernism that typified so much change after World War II.

Except for the wood, materials feel sterile. Nor does the hospitality extend to passers-by; a blank wall faces the playground where the library was inserted despite neighborhood protests. The view from the street is drab. The boxy floor plan rules out distinctive spaces for children and teens.

The initial idea was to renovate the structure, but plans now call for a new building on a triangular lot along Columbus Avenue.

The design is by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, whose work has received awards from the California Preservation Foundation. It envisions an airy structure with tile walls, the windows aligned to such landmarks as Coit Tower. There'd be tall ceilings above the stacks and a mezzanine for community events.

More ambitious yet, this one block of Mason Street would be closed to expand the playground by 12,000 square feet - restoring the space lost in 1959 and then some. By

contrast, any addition to the existing structure would be difficult at best: There are bocce courts on the north, a tot lot to the south and a tennis court on the east.

The project is opposed by a cadre of critics who second-guess almost everything the library system does, as well as neighbors who want Mason Street left open. Now - thwarted by approvals from the library and park commissions - opponents want the new historic commission to declare the 1959 building a landmark.

The Planning Department recommends that North Beach be left out of any Appleton & Wolfard district because of the public benefits of enlarging the park. However, several commissioners have made it clear they want a full review. One is Andrew Wolfram, who values the branch because "it gives you the sense of what these architects were trying to achieve."

True, but so do the others. Even a consultant's report calling the branch a historic resource can muster no heartier praise than it "illustrates a particular aspect in the firm's career."

The benefits of a fresh start can be seen in the Ingleside branch.

The building by Fougeron Architecture with Group 4 Architecture stands out by way of a few bold strokes such as the tall, curvy "egg" that contains the children's room and is a dynamic presence on the street. There's also the canopy-like metal roof that slices above the tile-clad main wing.

"This isn't a large building, but we wanted to give it a civic presence," said Anne Fougeron, whose warm modernism is admired by peers.

The library isn't immaculate, and too many details are prosaic rather than precise, a testament to public budgets. The wall of shelves facing the entrance is a clumsy introduction to the sky-lit main hall (at least you can see the artwork on the room's rear wall, a long swirl of metal tubing by Bay Area sculptor Eric Powell).

Still, this small library offers a vote of confidence to a weary commercial district. The well-ordered nooks respond to the complex demands on branches such as this one, which includes collections in Chinese, Spanish and Tagalog as well as English.

When possible, we should reuse the buildings we inherit, as San Francisco's library system has done far more often than not. But we also need to know when to let go - and make the next set of buildings and public spaces the best that we possibly can.

Library improvements

-- San Francisco's Branch Library Improvement Program has a \$187 million budget and is funded largely by voter-approved bonds.

-- New libraries have opened in Glen Park, Mission Bay, Portola and, as of today, at 1298 Ocean Ave. in the Ingleside neighborhood.

-- Excelsior, Marina, Noe Valley, Richmond, Sunset, West Portal and Western Addition district libraries have been renovated.

-- Construction or planning continues at 13 branches.

E-mail John King at jking@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/12/BAVK19KTD5.DTL>

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
SAN FRANCISCO



EDWIN M. LEE
MAYOR

May 18, 2011

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Dear Mr. Donaldson:

It has come to my attention that the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) will be considering the nomination of the North Beach Branch Library to the National Register at their May 19th hearing in Santa Monica. San Francisco opposes this nomination and I respectfully ask the Commission to reject this proposal.

The City and County of San Francisco has a strong system in place to support the preservation of our worthy buildings. Numerous Boards, Commissions, and Agencies have already discussed and reviewed the architectural merits of the North Beach Branch Library and have found that it is not worthy of landmark status.

- After lengthy debate, the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission split on their recommendation (4:3) to designate the branch as a landmark building.
- Subsequently, in November 2010, the Board of Supervisors rejected landmark status for the North Beach Library.
- Consistent with the actions of the Board, in April of this year, the San Francisco Planning Commission voted unanimously to certify the Environmental Impact Report for a new North Beach Library and demolition of the existing branch.
- These actions were also reviewed by the San Francisco Public Library Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission which voted unanimously to support the actions of the Planning Commission and approved the plan for a new North Beach library.

The result of this lengthy process is a clear City position on this matter: San Francisco has rejected landmark designation for the North Beach Library. As a result, I request that the Commission reject this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Edwin M. Lee".

Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

Cc: Luis Herrera, City Librarian, San Francisco Public Library
David Chiu, President, San Francisco Board of Supervisors

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 200
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681
TELEPHONE: (415) 554-6141

President, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

DAVID CHIU

邱信福。市參事主席

May 18, 2011

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Mr. Donaldson:

It has come to my attention that the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) will be considering the nomination of the North Beach Library to the National Register at their May 19th hearing in Santa Monica. As President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the elected representative of District 3, which includes this building, I strongly oppose this nomination and respectfully ask that it is either removed from the agenda or voted down.

The City and County of San Francisco has a strong system of checks and balances in place to support preservation of our worthy buildings. Numerous Boards, Commissions, and Agencies have already discussed and reviewed the architectural merits of the North Beach Library and have found that it is not worthy of landmark status. *Although the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission narrowly voted to recommend landmarking the library after a series of inconclusive hearings, the final authority to designate a local landmark resides with the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly voted to reject landmarking the North Beach Library.*

The following is a summary of the votes related to the designation of North Beach Library as a local landmark:

- The San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission debated the potential landmarking of the library at eight public meetings after several inconclusive votes and eventually split on their recommendation (4:3) to designate the branch as a landmark building. This recommendation, made on September 1, 2010, was then forwarded to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.
- On November 1, 2010, the Land Use and Economic Development Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject the recommendation of landmark status for the North Beach Library.
- On November 9, 2010, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 10:1 to reject landmark status for the North Beach Library.

After the Board of Supervisors made this decision, the following actions took place:

- On April 21, 2011, the San Francisco Planning Commission voted unanimously to certify the Environmental Impact Report for a new North Beach Library and demolition of the existing branch. This report did consider the existing North Beach library as a historic resource and carefully studied the impacts of its demolition, analyzed several preservation alternatives, and included mitigation measures to honor the existing building.
- On April 25, 2011, the San Francisco Public Library Commission and the Recreation and Park Commission voted unanimously to support the actions of the Planning Commission and approved the plan for a new North Beach library and expansion and renovation of the surrounding Joe DiMaggio Playground in accordance with the North Beach Library/Joe DiMaggio Playground Master Plan.

During this lengthy process, City boards and commissions heard from many architects, historians, and members of the public and found that similar to the divided opinion of our own Historic Preservation Commission, the architectural and preservation community does not agree that this library building merits landmark status.

As a City, we support historic preservation and have recognized many buildings and several libraries, including another by the same architect as the North Beach Library. However, listing projects lacking in merit greatly diminishes the importance of the landmark designation.

Because the Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly voted to reject landmark status of the North Beach Library, I am respectfully requesting the State Historical Resources Commission either remove the National Register nomination from the May 19th agenda or vote it down. A clear local decision was made on this matter after a lengthy substantive conversation concerning the merits.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-554-7450 or David.Chiu@sfgov.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Chiu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Chiu, President
San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Cc: Luis Herrera, City Librarian, San Francisco Public Library



San Francisco Public Library

May 11, 2011

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, California 95816

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

As described in my letter to you on November 10, 2010, the San Francisco Public Library opposes the nomination of the North Beach Branch for the National Historic Register. The Library, as a department of the City and County of San Francisco, has jurisdictional authority over this property. We were concerned to learn that, without any further discussion with the owning agency, the approval of the nomination was placed on the State Historic Resources Commission consent calendar for its meeting on May 19, 2011.

The North Beach Branch Library project has been the subject of intense local discussion over the past several years. The branch is located on a local urban park and its expansion was the subject of a neighborhood master planning process in 2008, culminating in the recommendation to remove the existing building, build a new library on a vacant, adjacent parking lot, close one block of street and expand the park by 12,000 sq. ft., creating a vibrant unified community hub. The project has been reviewed at numerous public meetings between 2008 and 2011, supported by actions of the San Francisco Public Library Commission, San Francisco Recreation and Parks Commission, San Francisco Planning Commission, San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the community at large, who have turned out in large numbers to testify in support of the project. A full Environmental Impact Report studied the potential impacts of this master plan project in all areas addressed by CEQA, including the historic resource, and was certified by the San Francisco Planning Commission in April 2011. Efforts by opponents of the project have been waging an unsuccessful campaign to landmark the library building which led to considerable public debate on the issue. I am including several recent articles in San Francisco news media that illustrate the situation.

Due to the location of the hearing, the Library is not able to send a representative to convey our opposition regarding this possible action. As the project sponsors and property owners, we respectfully ask that you pull the item from the agenda or, at the least, continue the matter to a future meeting to allow a city representative to attend and offer testimony. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Luis Herrera
City Librarian

Cc: Jay Correia, Registration Supervisor, SHPO
Jill Bourne, Deputy City Librarian, SFPL

Attachments: Letter dated November 10, 2010
Media articles



Edson Beall/WASO/NPS
07/26/2011 11:07 AM

To: Paul Lusignan/WASO/NPS@NPS
cc:
bcc:
Subject: Fw: SUPPORT PENDING NOMINATION: NORTH BEACH LIBRARY

Hi Paul,

You should be getting the nomination this week. I printed a copy of the e-mail below on archival paper and placed it in the file.

Thanks, Edson

----- Forwarded by Edson Beall/WASO/NPS on 07/26/2011 11:03 AM -----



WongAIA@aol.com
07/24/2011 06:49 AM

To: Edson_Beall@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: SUPPORT PENDING NOMINATION: NORTH BEACH LIBRARY



Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries
July 25, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

TO: National Register of Historic Places
RE: North Beach Public Library, San Francisco
SUBJECT: STRONG SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL REGISTER LISTING

Dear Keeper and Colleagues of the National Register of Historic Places:

The growing appreciation of mid-century modernist architecture has entailed much education for the general public and public officials---bolstered by the National Register listing process, Nominating Report, State Commission/ SHPO recommendations for listing, technical reports and findings by architectural historians and preservation professionals. The Appleton-Wolfard North Beach Library is the best mid-century modernist structure in San Francisco's North Beach. In 1959, this "hi-tech" library was highly touted---instantly becoming one of San Francisco's most heavily utilized "community centers".



The North Beach Library illustrates the social democratization of the American library movement. Representative of 1959's national culture, its modernist aesthetics incorporated the popular fascination with technology and democratic education in the midst of the Cold War and the "space race". Serving as a neighborhood center that mixed a burgeoning diverse population, the residential-scaled building mimicked the domesticity of suburban homes with public "living rooms" and fireplaces, in which the idealized postwar family could gather and socialize. Red brick textures, exposed wood beams, outdoor terraces, diffused natural lighting, acoustical balance and an open spatial quality reinforced the suburban theme—reflective of the aspirations of the post-WWII middle-class family.

The Library Department's technical reports, independent historians, the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Department concur that the North Beach Library has high architectural, historical and cultural significance. The North Beach Library has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources, as well as a thematically-related Multiple Property Listing. Possessing the highest architectural integrity of the Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, its rehabilitation would be the showcase library—a symbol of social-democratization and contributions as a community living room and cultural melting pot.



The North Beach Library is eligible for listing under National Register Criteria A, associated with nationwide library modernizations and reforms; and National Register Criteria C, as innovative mid-twentieth century modern design in Northern California. The listing is an important step in energizing recognition for the largely ignored legacy of modernism and cultural movements of the post-WWII era.

The North Beach Library has the highest architectural integrity of the remaining Appleton-Wolfard Libraries. Its rehabilitation and expansion would be San Francisco's showcase mid-century modernist library. The Marina Library has already been designated a City Landmark, and the Library Department has scheduled others for landmark status. These mid-century modernist structures are San Francisco's first recognized historic resources of their genre and generation, honoring the variety, maturation and historicism of San Francisco's legacy from every period of time—whether it be in art, culture, music, literature, philosophy, design or architecture.

A PERSONAL NOTE: As a child in 1959, when I first entered the North Beach Library, it was a special and memorable moment. Its state-of-the-art modernism was a striking contrast to prototypical immigrant homes, with ice boxes, gas stoves, exposed flues, cast iron bathtubs, noisy plumbing, VAT tile floors, dim incandescent lights.... The North Beach Library was a fresh view of a new society—spatial quality, big wooden beams, wood-grained furniture/ shelving, bright diffused lighting, views to Bocce Courts/ Coit Tower, reference books/ magazines, a fireplace and a living room quality. As a native of North Beach, the North Beach Library's historical and cultural merit, described in the Historic Structures Technical Report, are particularly resonating. Over time, day and night, the Library did assume the role of a community living room, subtly fostering social democratization and community-building—a melting pot of all ethnicities, incomes and age groups. Looking back, this Appleton-Wolfard Library greatly influenced my path to becoming an architect.



Rehabilitation and expansion of the North Beach Library would be the most cost effective and sustainable design, adding several thousand square feet more than new construction, creating more space for the next generation of technology, maximizing recreational square footage, preserving the large multi-purpose play field and preserving Joe DiMaggio's Softball Fields. Moreover, the Appleton-Wolfard Library's low-profiled siting preserves simultaneous public vistas to Telegraph Hill, Coit Tower, SS Peter & Paul Church, Transamerica Pyramid, hills, Bay and cable cars.

Geographic beauty, great civic spaces and historic resources blend over time to shape unique urban compositions—often taken for granted.



DiMaggio Park Plan with Preservation of North Beach Library

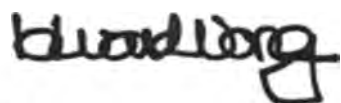
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

National Trust for Historic Preservation, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, DCOMOMO, San Francisco Preservation Consortium, Architectural historians and Preservation professionals, Telegraph Hill Dwellers, North Beach Neighbors, Library Citizens Advisory Committee of the Board of Supervisors, Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods, San Francisco Tomorrow, Parkmerced Residents Organization, Sunset Parkside Education & Action Committee, Coalition for a Better North Beach Library & Playground, Save Mason Street, Friends of North Beach Library, Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, and many residents.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WRITER OF THIS LETTER:

As a founding member of Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries, I am an architect whose work ranges from historic preservation to new structures and a variety of building types. I am a past Board Member of San Francisco Architectural Heritage and was inducted as a Fellow to its Lillienthal Society. I am active in the San Francisco Preservation Consortium and other preservation organizations and committees. Representative Projects: Spreckels Temple of Music (*National Endowment for the Arts Award*, *California Preservation Award* ...), Conservatory of Flowers Master Plan & Schematic Design (*National AIA Honor Award*), Sharon Building (*DPW Team Award*), Coit Tower Accessibility/ Pioneer Park (*SF Beautiful Beautification Award*), Third Street Bridge (*DPW Team Award*), projects within San Francisco City Hall, Opera House and Veterans Building.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Howard Wong', with a stylized, cursive script.

Howard Wong, AIA
128 Varennes St.
San Francisco, CA 94133
Phone: (415)-982-5055
Email: wongaia@aol.com



Mark Schatz
<ms@fieldpaoli.com>
07/29/2011 02:18 PM

To "Paul_lusignan@nps.gov" <Paul_lusignan@nps.gov>
cc
bcc
Subject FW: San Francisco North Beach Library

From: Mark Schatz
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2011 11:18 AM
To: 'Paul_loether@nps.gov'; 'Carol_shull@nps.gov'; 'Paul_lusignan@nps.gov'
Cc: 'Linetzky, Mindy'
Subject: San Francisco North Beach Library

Dear Representatives of the National Park Service,

I am writing this letter in regards to the potential inclusion of the North Beach Library in San Francisco on the National Register of Historic Places. I lived in the North Beach neighborhood for 8 years, and was a frequent visitor to the library and the adjacent playground and park. I am also an architect who has designed more than 25 library projects, a member of the American Library Association, and a fellow of the American Institute of Architects. I was the lead architect for the renovation/expansion of the Marina Branch Library in San Francisco, originally designed by the same firm, Appleton and Wolford.

While the Marina Branch was a beautiful, functional building that was in good shape and worthy of saving, I do not feel the same way about the North Beach Branch. It is decidedly a lesser work of the Appleton/Wolford firm, and one that feels more like a victim of its circumstances than an intentional design. The library program was wedged into an uncomfortably shaped building, and it had to be on multiple levels due to the grading of the corner site. It does not function well as a library, is not accessible for mobility impaired users, and it constrains the growth and configuration of the adjacent playground area. While using similar materials and forms of architectural expression, it is not nearly as successful a building as the Marina Branch.

The proposed replacement will benefit both library users and other members of the neighborhood, by providing a bigger, accessible library facility, as well as a new, much larger children's playground. I think the new building will be a much better piece of architecture that will itself be worthy of recognition when it reaches historic status 50 years from now.

A small group of local citizens have been doing everything in their power to stop this new project from moving forward, and I firmly believe that their intentions are misguided. I fully support national recognition and registration of worthy historic structures, but not every old building is deserving of this status, and I would certainly say that the North Beach Branch Library is one of those that is not. This neighborhood deserves a better, more accessible library, and this process is keeping them from getting it. I encourage you to deny this application so that the already locally approved demolition of the existing building and construction of the new library and park can begin.

Sincerely,
Mark Schatz

Mark Schatz
Principal | FAIA | LEED AP



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Jill Bourne
<jbourne@sfpl.org>
08/01/2011 06:43 PM

To: Paul Lusignan <paul_lusignan@nps.gov>
cc: Carol Shull <carol_shull@nps.gov>
bcc:
Subject: FW: North Beach Branch Public Library

Hi Paul – here's another letter.

Jill

Jill Bourne
Deputy City Librarian

The San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin, SF; 94102
(415) 557-4243 office
(415) 902-6881 mobile
jbourne@sfpl.org

From: Karin Payson [mailto:karinp@kpad.com]
Sent: Monday, August 01, 2011 12:41 PM
To: Paul_loether@nps.gov; Carol_shull@nps.gov; Paul_lusignan@nps.gov
Cc: Linetzky, Mindy
Subject: North Beach Branch Public Library

Please see the attached letter regarding listing on the National Register.

Karin Payson, AIA, LEED AP
www.kpad.com

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National Register of Historic Places North Beach.pdf



1 August 2011

To: The National Register of Historic Places
Attention: Paul Loether, National Register Chief
Carol Shull, Interim Keeper
Paul Lusignan, Reviewer for California
Re: North Beach Branch Public Library, San Francisco, CA

Dear Messrs. Loether and Lusignan and Ms. Shull,

I have been dismayed to follow the march toward landmark designation for the North Beach Branch Public Library. As the Associate Architect and Interior Designer for the recently remodeled Parkside Branch—another Appleton and Wolfard library—I can say that I know these buildings. Parkside is lovely and well designed, so we were able to apply a light touch to its updating and expansion. I consider North Beach to be one of the firm's weaker buildings; it is far removed from the canon of notable mid-20th century architecture.

The existing library is a squat little fortress. It is poorly sited; its fractured plan lacks coherence with respect to circulation and its own outdoor space, and it even fails to make the best use of available natural light. By contrast Parkside possesses the best characteristics of the Appleton and Wolfard libraries. It connects with its surrounding park and street front with ample windows that properly catch natural light and offer views from inside of trees, sky, and life on the street; the building sits naturally on its site. North Beach lacks all of these qualities. Perhaps Parkside is the one you should consider for inclusion on the Register.

It is well known that opponents of a new library for North Beach seek to stop the project through landmark designation of the original. North Beach simply does not rise to the level of inclusion on the National Register and should not be preserved to satisfy a political agenda to the detriment of community services and open space.

I urge you not to list the North Beach Branch Public Library on the National Register of Historic Places.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Payson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Karin Payson, AIA, LEED AP

cc: Mindy Linetzky



"Karin Payson"
<karinp@kpad.com>

08/01/2011 03:40 PM

To <Paul_loether@nps.gov>, <Carol_shull@nps.gov>,
<Paul_lusignan@nps.gov>

cc "'Linetzky, Mindy'" <Mindy.Linetzky@sfdpw.org>

bcc

Subject North Beach Branch Public Library

Please see the attached letter regarding listing on the National Register.

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