

Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR

March 24, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager  
Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Director, Planning and Development Department  
Subject: Mills Act Contract – 2845 Woolsey Street

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act contract with Michael Pearson and Annette Blum Pearson for the maintenance and restoration of a City Landmark property at 2845 Woolsey Street.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The Mills Act tax relief is calculated by valuing the income producing potential through a review of market rents, and a capitalization rate that is provided annually by the Board of Equalization. The capitalization rate is the same as the established mortgage interest rates through the Federal Reserve, rounded to the nearest quarter percent for calculation purposes. There is variability each year in the tax reduction depending on the interest rate and market rate rents.

The estimated decrease in City property tax revenue in the first year will be \$6,558. Final amounts are determined by the Alameda County Assessor's Office after contract execution. This will be an annual impact to the City's tax revenue, as the contract runs for ten years, in comparable annual amounts.

Council approval will allow property tax reduction for this property to begin in the 2027-2028 fiscal year.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On April 3, 2025, the property 2845 Woolsey Street was designated as a Structure of Merit allowing the property to be eligible for the Mills Act (see Attachment 2).

On September 4, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) reviewed the proposal by the present owners and continued the matter to a date certain of October 6, 2025, pending the resubmittal of a corrected work sheet.

On October 6, 2025, the LPC continued the matter to a date certain of November 6, 2025.

On November 6, 2025, the LPC continued the matter to a date certain of December 4, 2025.

On December 4, 2025, the LPC reviewed the proposal by the present owners, Michael Pearson and Annette Blum Pearson, to enter into a Mills Act contract for 2845 Woolsey, including a proposed scope of work and maintenance schedule, and failed to approve the Mills Act Contract by a 3-1-2-1 vote (Moved/Second: Finacom/Orbuch; Yes: Finacom, Orbuch, Montgomery; No: Schwartz; Abstain: Montilla, Leuschner; Absent: Crandall). After the motion failed, the LPC did not reconsider the motion, nor did LPC make any findings for denial of the contract. Any contract for the Mills Act program is subject to review and approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the City Manager, and City Council. Therefore, the City Council can act to approve or deny the contract. Since there are no findings for denial, staff recommends the City Council act to approve the Mills Act contract.

#### BACKGROUND

The Mills Act allows owners of historic properties to voluntarily enter into individual contracts with the City to obtain limited ad valorem tax relief, at the discretion of the host jurisdiction, in exchange for maintaining and restoring their historic property. These property tax savings are offered as an incentive for owners to maintain their historic properties, designate currently unprotected historic properties, and purchase and rehabilitate dilapidated historic properties. In Berkeley, owners of properties designated by the LPC as a Landmark or a Structure of Merit may apply for a Mills Act contract.

The Mills Act application includes a ten-year work plan to restore and maintain the subject property. The total investment in the work plan is intended to equal or exceed the total amount of the property tax relief over the contract period.

On February 24, 1998, the Berkeley City Council passed Resolution No. 59,355-N.S., which authorizes the local use of the Mills Act of 1972, as amended, which is codified in California Government Code Section 50280-90 and Revenue and Taxation Code Section 439.

In 2011, the Mills Act was amended to include more specific requirements regarding fees, inspections, and cancellation. The amendments clarified that the local legislative body may require fees for providing services pursuant to the Mills Act; shall inspect the property prior to a new agreement and then every five years thereafter; and shall cancel the contract if it determines that the owner has breached the conditions of the contract. As a result of these amendments, Land Use Planning fees for the approval and monitoring of Mills Act contracts were added in July 2012, with fee rates periodically adjusted to keep up with staff costs.

On November 18, 2025, the Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. 72,048-N.S., which paused the City of Berkeley’s Mills Act program including the processing of new contract applications submitted after November 19, 2025. This application was filed prior to the enactment date of November 19, 2025.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In order to qualify for Mills Act consideration, 1) the property must qualify as historic; 2) the contract must adequately meet the requirements for Mills Act contracts; and 3) the type of improvements outlined in the work plan must meet the City standards, which require that tax savings be used according to the rules and regulations outlined in the Act.

The property located at 2845 Woolsey Street is eligible for the Mills Act contract because it was designated as Structure of Merit on April 3, 2025. The contract template has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office for conformance to all relevant City and State regulations. The contract includes a comprehensive work plan that the property owner has agreed to complete within the ten-year contract period (see Attachment 3). The work plan provides for the “preservation of the qualified historical property and, when necessary, restoration and rehabilitation of the property to conform to the rules and regulations of the Office of Historic Preservation of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the United States Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and the State Historical Building Code” (California Government Code Section 50281(b)(1)).

After contracts are recorded, monitoring is required to occur at least every five years to verify progress on the approved work plan. Monitoring includes an examination of the exterior and interior (if necessary based on the work plan) of the property.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE IMPACTS

Approval of the contract would encourage historic resource rehabilitation, materials conservation, and construction and demolition waste diversion.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council may choose to approve the contract or deny the contract approval if it determined that it did not satisfy the requirements of the Mills Act.

CONTACT PERSON

Jordan Klein, Director, Planning and Development Department, 510-981-7534  
Sarah Price, Principal Planner/LPC Interim-Secretary, 510-981-7414

Mills Act Contract – 2845 Woolsey Street

CONSENT CALENDAR  
March 24, 2026

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Notice of Decision, Landmark Designation for 2845 Woolsey Street, effective date June 18, 2025
3. Rehabilitation Plan, dated May 30, 2025
4. LPC Staff Report, September 4, 2025

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A MILLS ACT CONTRACT AND ANY NECESSARY AMENDMENTS WITH MICHAEL PEARSON AND ANNETTE BLUM PEARSON, FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION OF A HISTORIC PROPERTY LOCATED AT 2845 WOOLSEY, IN RETURN FOR THE OWNER TO OBTAIN A PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION

WHEREAS, on February 24, 1998, the Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. 59,355-N.S. which authorized the use of Mills Act contracts; and

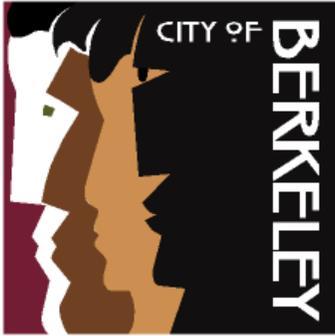
WHEREAS, on April 3, 2025, the property at 2845 Woolsey was designated as a City of Berkeley Structure of Merit, which renders it eligible to take advantage of the Mills Act; and

WHEREAS, on September 4, October 6, and November 6, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the proposed projects listed in the Mills Act Contract Application for 2845 Woolsey, and failed to make a motion recommending that the City Council enter into a Mills Act contract with the property owner; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley Mills Act program requires each contract to receive final approval of the City Council and signed by the City Manager; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, in light of all evidence, finds that the contract is consistent with the purposes of the Mills Act program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is authorized to execute a Mills Act Contract and any necessary amendments with Michael Pearson and Annette Blum Pearson for the maintenance and restoration of the historic property located at 2845 Woolsey and in return offer a property tax reduction for a period of at least ten years, with a recorded copy of such contract and amendments to be on file in the Office of the City Clerk and Alameda County Clerk- Recorder.



L A N D M A R K S  
P R E S E R V A T I O N  
C O M M I S S I O N  

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N O T I C E O F D E C I S I O N

**DATE OF BOARD DECISION: April 3, 2025**  
**DATE NOTICE MAILED: June 2, 2025**  
**APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: June 17, 2025**  
**EFFECTIVE DATE (Barring Appeal or Certification): June 18, 2025<sup>1</sup>**

## **2845 Woolsey Street – Norton Family House**

**Landmark application #LMIN2024-0008 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1908 (APN 052-1563-006-00).**

The Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley, after conducting a public hearing, **APPROVED** the following designation:

- **Structure of Merit designation**
  - **Applicant:** Caitlin Hibma  
Left Coast Architectural History  
P.O. Box 70415  
Richmond, CA 94807
  - **Property Owner:** Michael Pearson  
2169 Folsom Street M301  
San Francisco, CA 94110

**ZONING DISTRICT:** Restricted Two-Family Residential District (R-2)

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:** Categorically exempt from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061.(b)(3) Review for Exemptions.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to BMC Chapter 3.24, the City Council may “certify” any decision of the LPC for review, which has the same effect as an appeal. In most cases, the Council must certify the LPC decision during the 14-day appeal period. However, pursuant to BMC Section 1.04.070, if any portion of the appeal period falls within a Council recess, the deadline for Council certification is suspended until the first Council meeting after the recess, plus the number of days of the appeal period that occurred during the recess, minus one day. If there is no appeal or certification, the Permit becomes effective the day after the certification deadline has passed.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
NOTICE OF DECISION  
#LMIN2025-0001  
2845 Woolsey Street

June 2, 2025

Page 2 of 4

The application materials for this project is available online at:

<https://berkeleyca.gov/construction-development/land-use-development/zoning-projects> or  
<https://permits.cityofberkeley.info/CitizenAccess/Default.aspx>

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**FINDINGS AND CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL AND APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS NOTICE**

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**COMMISSION VOTE:** 7-0-0-1 (*Note: one vacancy*)

**YES:** CRANDALL, ENCHILL, FINACOM, GREENE, MONTGOMERY, ORBUCH, SCHWARTZ

**NO:** NONE

**ABSTAIN:** NONE

**ABSENT:** PLEASE

**TO APPEAL THIS DECISION (see Section 3.24.300 of the Berkeley Municipal Code):**

To appeal a decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to the City Council you must:

1. Submit a letter clearly and concisely setting forth the grounds for the appeal to the City Clerk, located at 2180 Milvia Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Berkeley. The City Clerk's telephone number is (510) 981-6900.
  - a. Pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.300.A, an appeal may be taken to the City Council by the application of the owners of the property or their authorized agents, or by the application of at least fifty residents of the City aggrieved or affected by any determination of the commission made under the provisions of Chapter 3.24.
2. Submit the required fee (checks and money orders must be payable to 'City of Berkeley'):
  - a. The basic fee for persons other than the applicant is \$1,500. This fee may be reduced to \$500 if the appeal is signed by persons who lease or own at least 50 percent of the parcels or dwelling units within 300 feet of the project site, or at least 25 such persons (not including dependent children), whichever is less. Signatures collected per the filing requirement in BMC Section 3.24.300.A may be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee, so long as the signers are qualified. The individual filing the appeal must clearly denote which signatures are to be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee.
  - b. The fee for appeals of affordable housing projects (defined as projects which provide 50 percent or more affordable units for households earning 80% or less of Area Median Income) is \$500, which may not be reduced.
  - c. The fee for all appeals by Applicants is \$6,000.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
NOTICE OF DECISION  
**#LMIN2025-0001**  
**2845 Woolsey Street**

June 2, 2025

Page 3 of 4

3. The appeal must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the "APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION" date shown above (if the close of the appeal period falls on a weekend or holiday, then the appeal period expires the following business day).

If no appeal is received, the landmark permit will be final on the first business day following expiration of the appeal period.

**NOTICE CONCERNING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS:**

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If you object to this decision, the following requirements and restrictions apply:

1. If you challenge this decision in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Landmarks Preservation Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.
2. You must appeal to the City Council within fifteen (15) days after the Notice of Decision of the action of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is mailed. It is your obligation to notify the Land Use Planning Division in writing of your desire to receive a Notice of Decision when it is completed.
3. Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b) and Government Code Section 65009(c)(1), no lawsuit challenging a City Council decision, as defined by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(e), regarding a use permit, variance or other permit may be filed more than ninety (90) days after the date the decision becomes final, as defined in Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b). Any lawsuit not filed within that ninety (90) day period will be barred.
4. Pursuant to Government Code Section 66020(d)(1), notice is hereby given to the applicant that the 90-day protest period for any fees, dedications, reservations, or other exactions included in any permit approval begins upon final action by the City, and that any challenge must be filed within this 90-day period.
5. If you believe that this decision or any condition attached to it denies you any reasonable economic use of the subject property, was not sufficiently related to a legitimate public purpose, was not sufficiently proportional to any impact of the project, or for any other reason constitutes a "taking" of property for public use without just compensation under the California or United States Constitutions, your appeal of this decision must include the following information:
  - A. That this belief is a basis of your appeal.
  - B. Why you believe that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" of property as set forth above.
  - C. All evidence and argument in support of your belief that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" as set forth above.

If you do not do so, you will waive any legal right to claim that your property has been taken, both before the City Council and in court.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
NOTICE OF DECISION  
#LMIN2025-0001  
2845 Woolsey Street  
June 2, 2025  
Page 4 of 4

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

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Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. **Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to a City board, commission or committee, will become part of the public record.** If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the secretary to the relevant board, commission or committee for further information.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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Questions about the project should be directed to the Commission Secretary at (510) 981-7410 or [lpc@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:lpc@berkeleyca.gov). All project application materials may be viewed at the Permit Service Center (Zoning counter), 1947 Center Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl., during regular business hours.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

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1. Findings for Approval
2. Application Materials

**ATTEST:**



Anne Hersch, Secretary  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

cc: City Clerk

Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History, P.O. Box 70415, Richmond, CA 94807  
Michael Pearson, 2169 Folsom Street M301, San Francisco, CA 94110

# ATTACHMENT 1, PART 2

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## FINDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

APRIL 3, 2025

### **2845 Woolsey Street – Norton Family House**

**Landmark application #LMIN2025-0001 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1908 (APN 052-1563-006-00)**

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#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Structure of Merit designation of the property at 2845 Woolsey Street.

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#### CEQA FINDINGS

1. The project is found to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061.b.3 of the CEQA Guidelines (activities that can be seen with certainty to have no significant effect on the environment).

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#### LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

1. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(c) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the property at 2845 Woolsey Street meets the designation criterion for Structure of Merit because it is a good example of architectural design in the First Bay Tradition style. It also exemplifies one of the best surviving examples of the prominent Bay Area architecture firm Newsom & Newsom. The house retains a sufficient degree of architectural features representative of its historical design including: plan, form, exterior materials, detailing, and fenestration pattern that represent distinctive aspects of First Bay Tradition architecture and the work of Newsom & Newsom.

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#### FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

This designation shall apply to the subject property and the following distinguishing features of the property shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

##### Property

- Location at northwest corner of Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue.
- Cast stone (concrete) perimeter retaining wall.

##### Residence

- Large front setback at northeast corner of the lot.
- Two-story height.
- Hip roof with flared, overhanging eaves.

- Second story overhang with sloped profile.
- Wood architectural features expressing structure:
  - Rafter tails;
  - Molded rafter ends;
  - Molded modillions beneath eaves.
- Wood architectural details:
  - Wood trim at second story and cornice line;
  - Exterior wood trim at windows.
- Original window openings on south, east, and elevations.
- Original leaded-glass windows.
- Projecting bays and associated three-part window openings.
- Wood planter boxes at second-story windows fronting Woolsey Street.



Landmarks
Application Form

For: Alteration / Sign Permit
[X] Landmark Designation

Effective April 3, 2013

Intake Planner

Project Address: 2845 Woolsey Street Zone:

Project Description: Application for Landmark designation.

Date Use Permit or Zoning Permit was applied for: n/a

Associated Permit number: n/a

Property Owner Name (Print) Michael Pearson

Owner's Mailing Address: 2169 Folsom St M301

San Francisco, CA. 94110

Daytime Phone # 415.832.9160 E-mail: michael.a.pearson@gmail.com

Applicant Name (Print) [ ] SAME as Above: Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History

Applicant's Mailing Address: PO Box 70415

Richmond, CA. 94807

Daytime Phone # (415) 745-1906 E-mail: caitlin@leftcoastarchitecturalhistory.com

Under penalties of perjury, I certify that the information above and in any attachments hereto, is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant Signature: Caitlin Paige Hibma

Date: 12/16/2024

Owner's Signature: [Signature]

Date: 12/16/2024

Table with 3 columns: Does the project include:, No, Yes, Handout / Application Requirement. Row 1: Demolition of, or exterior modifications to, a designated City of Berkeley landmark... Row 2: Application to designate a landmark, structure of merit or historic district?

City of Berkeley  
Ordinance #4694 N.S.  
**LANDMARK APPLICATION**

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**1. Street Address** 2845 Woolsey Street

**City** Berkeley

**County** Alameda

**Zip** 94705

**2. Assessor's Parcel Number:** 52-1563-15

**Block and Lot:** Block 1563, Lot 15

**Tract:** Parkside Claremont

**Dimensions:** 100' (southwest) x 95' (southeast) x 113' (northeast) x 99.65' (northwest)

**Cross Streets:** Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue

**3. Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory?** No

**Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey?** Yes

**Form #** 11425

**4. Application for Landmark includes:**

**a. Building:** Yes (1)      **Garden:** No      **Other features:** No

**b. Landscape or Open Space:** No

**c. Historic Site:** No

**d. District:** No

**e. Other:** No

**5. Historic Name:** F.B. Norton House

**Commonly Known Name:** None

**6. Date of Construction:** 1908

**a. Factual:** Yes

**Source of Information:** *Daily Pacific Builder*, 18 May 1908

## 7. Architects: Newsom & Newsom (Samuel, Sidney, and Noble Newsom)

Architecture was the Newsom family trade, with two generations of brothers and sons collaborating on some of the Bay Area's, and California's, best know architecture of the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Newsom family came to Oakland from Canada in 1860; a horticultural nurseryman, his wife, and eight children. Eldest son, John, was apprenticed to an architect by 1870<sup>1</sup> and, eventually, four of the five Newsom sons gravitated toward that profession. By 1880, Thomas, Samuel, and Joseph C. Newsom were all listed as architects in census records. None of the Newsom brothers appear to have been formally educated as architects, but gained their training through apprenticeships and from each other.

The four Newsom brothers initially worked together, but in 1878, Samuel and Joseph went out on their own, naming their practice Newsom & Newsom, which became a much better-known and widely-respected firm than that of their brothers'.<sup>2</sup> They began in San Francisco, but by 1884, had moved their practice back to their hometown of Oakland. A few years later, they opened an office in Los Angeles and Joseph C. Newsom relocated to Southern California to lead it.

Newsom & Newsom's work initially focused on Victorian architectural styles, especially Queen Anne, and was known for being elaborately decorative, although it was primarily designed for middle-class clients. They designed around 650 buildings ranging from single-family houses to apartments and hotels. They designed the iconic Carson Mansion in Eureka, California (1884-1886), the original Berkeley City Hall (1884), the T.H. Boyd House in Eureka (1884), the 30-room Pinney House hotel in Sierra Madre (1887), and the Sessions House in Los Angeles (1888).<sup>3</sup> A number of their works are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or otherwise designated as significant historical landmarks.

Maintaining offices at opposite ends of the state ultimately resulted in Samuel and Joseph parting ways professionally in 1888, with Joseph continuing his own solo-practice in Los Angeles. For a time, from 1889 to 1901, Samuel partnered with Frederick Herman Meyer, under the name of Newsom & Meyer. During that time, in 1893, Samuel's son Sidney joined his father's practice, becoming the second generation of Newsoms in architecture. He was 16 years old at the time and the initial arrangement was likely an apprenticeship of sorts, as he also trained with various architecture firms on the East Coast before returning to the Newsom firm full-time.<sup>4</sup> In 1906, after graduating from U.C. Berkeley's school of architecture, Samuel's second son, Noble Newsom, joined the firm, which had returned to being known as Newsom & Newsom.

As father and sons worked together around the turn of the twentieth century, the firm's design aesthetics evolved along with prevailing architectural fashions, away from the Victorian and toward newly popular styles like Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival, French Provincial, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. In 1905, their wildly fanciful and overstated design of Gilroy City Hall seems to illustrate this transition, while also symbolizing a "last hurrah" as they moved away from the decorative exuberance of the Victorian period and toward more quietly understated houses of high quality and

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1 U.S. Federal Census, 1870.

2 Daniella Thompson, "Berkeley's City Hall Was Inspired by a Mairie on the Loire," [http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/city\\_hall.html](http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/city_hall.html).

3 Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD), "Newsom and Newsom, Architects," <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/partners/446/>.

4 David Weinstein, "Quiet Pleasures, Newsom brothers created homes with a timeless appeal," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 February 2005.

highly-livable designs. By then, the Newsom & Newsom name had become prominent and popular. Their clients included the affluent as much as the middle-class.<sup>5</sup>

Samuel Newsom died of a coronary while onboard a ferry from San Francisco to Alameda on the first of September 1908; just three and a half months after the building contract for the house at 2845 Woolsey Street was published.<sup>6</sup> Presumably, he never saw the finished house. Sidney and Noble continued in business without their father and Newsom & Newsom continued to be known for high-quality residential design that followed current architectural tastes, but often playfully mixed styles while using restraint in applying historical details. Later Newsom & Newsom buildings were noted to have relatively symmetrical forms and simple rooflines, lending to the sense of understated luxury that became the firm's signature aesthetic.<sup>7</sup>

In 1911, Newsom & Newsom designed the Berkeley Inn at 2501 Haste Street, a four-story brick Classical Revival building, which was damaged by fires and eventually demolished in 1990. Prior to its destruction it was the only Newsom & Newsom building to be designated as a City of Berkeley Landmark (#118).

Both Newsom brothers served in World War I, applying their building expertise in the Army Corps of Engineers. Like many other architects and builders, they brought back a new appreciation for Old World architecture that inspired further design work in European-influenced revival styles. Post-War, Archie Newsom (no relation) joined the firm as an interior architect and designer. With skyrocketing reputations, the Newsoms were in demand by clients like the Ghirardellis (of chocolate fame) and the Hills (of Hills Coffee), many of whom commissioned houses in wealthy enclaves like Piedmont. Both brothers eventually designed houses for themselves in or near Piedmont.<sup>8</sup>

Sidney was a partner in the firm until the Depression, when business slowed drastically and he retired to Walnut Creek. Noble and Archie Newsom continued the firm, designing some grand houses that belied the economic hardships of the 1930s. In 1933, Noble fractured his skull in a car accident, but survived. When World War II erupted, he joined the war effort as a designer at the Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond. During the war years, Sidney died of a stroke at the age of 65. Noble had hopes of reopening a Newsom & Newsom office in San Francisco after the war, but died only a few short days after the Kaiser Shipyards closed in 1945 and never got back to private practice. He was 58.<sup>9</sup>

The house at 2845 Woolsey Street, built in 1908, was designed during a brief period when the Newsom & Newsom firm consisted of both generations of the Newsom family (from 1893 to 1908); father Samuel, and sons Sidney and Noble. One or all three of the Newsoms may have had input in the house's design.

Other Berkeley residential buildings designed by Newsom & Newsom during that period or later (when Sidney and Noble made up the partnership, 1908 to the 1930s), include:

- 45 El Camino Real; 1907, First Bay Tradition
- 2540 (2538) Ellsworth; 1908, First Bay Tradition
- 2241 Parker Street; 1908, First Bay Tradition
- 2815 Benvenue Ave.; 1908, Craftsman Bungalow

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5 David Weinstein.

6 *Daily Pacific Builder*, 18 May 1908.

7 David Weinstein.

8 David Weinstein.

9 David Weinstein. Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD).

- 3121 Claremont Ave.; 1909, First Bay Tradition
- 20 Hillcrest Road; 1909, First Bay Tradition/Craftsman
- 1749 Allston Way; 1912, Craftsman
- 2610-1612 Parker St.; 1913, altered, possibly First Bay Tradition
- 3201 Claremont Ave.; 1914, Classical Revival
- 1924 Yosemite Road; 1916, Tudor Revival
- 1923 Thousand Oaks Blvd.; 1922, Classical Revival
- 1963 Yosemite Road; 1925, Tudor Revival, altered
- 38 Somerset Place; 1925, Spanish Colonial Revival
- 1430 Le Roy Ave.; 1928, Spanish Colonial/Monterey Colonial Revival
- 686 San Fernando Ave.; 1930, Tudor Revival
- 702 San Luis Road; 1931, style unknown<sup>10</sup>

Three of these houses were built the same year as the house at 2845 Woolsey Street and in the First Bay Tradition style, but with markedly different character. The following year and in 1914, Newsom & Newsom designed three houses within the same neighborhood as the subject house; two in a First Bay Tradition aesthetic, the latter in the Classical Revival style. This suggests that the house at 2845 Woolsey Street could have influenced some nearby neighbors to commission Newsom & Newsom for their Parkside Claremont or Uplands neighborhood homes. From 1913 onward, Newsom & Newsom's designs began a marked move away from the First Bay Tradition and Craftsman aesthetics, toward Revival styles of later popularity.

## 8. Builder: Henry Newton

In addition to identifying the house's architects, the *Daily Pacific Builder* building contract notice for the property identifies the builder; Henry Newton. The notice and a 1909 Oakland city directory indicate that Newton was based in downtown Oakland, with an office in the Bacon Building. A city directory from 1908 specifies that he was employed as the manager of the Newton-Sanford Construction Company. No census records or other vital information were found to provide a biographical account of Newton.

Around the time that he was building the house at 2845 Woolsey Street, the *Daily Pacific Builder* notes a few other projects that the Newton-Sanford Construction Company completed, including two four- and five-room bungalows in Berkeley (10 January 1907); a 24 bungalow tract in Fruitvale (11 April 1908); and a two-story mixed use building containing three shops and 15-room flats on San Pablo Avenue in Oakland (1 June 1908). In February 1908, they built a house at 81 Hillcrest Road, nearby the subject house.

## 9. Style: First Bay Tradition

Stylistically, the house at 2845 Woolsey Street can be classified as First Bay Tradition. The

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<sup>10</sup> This list represents a sampling of properties designed by Newsom & Newsom, as identified on Berkeley Architectural Heritage's "41 Walking Tours" (2009) index; [https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41\\_Walking\\_Tours.index.pdf](https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41_Walking_Tours.index.pdf)  
Other Newsom & Newsom designs likely exist in Berkeley beyond what is listed here.

Bay Tradition was an ongoing regional architectural trend spanning from around 1880 through the 1960s, and was the only dominant regional style of architecture to emerge in the San Francisco Bay Area. Buildings of the Bay Tradition can be classified within three different periods, but the designs of each period tended to perpetuate the common characteristics of modest, straightforward, distinctive design that responded to the Bay Area's climate, geography, and relatively informal cultural attitudes. The First Bay Tradition style was a derivation of the East Coast's Shingle style, while the Second Bay Tradition style was inspired by the International and Ranch styles, and the Third Bay Tradition style was a synthesis of the earlier two that combined rustic materials with strikingly modern forms. The stylistic trend as a whole was noted and perpetuated by publications of the day, such as *Architect and Engineer*, *Sunset* magazine, *California's Arts & Architecture*, *Magazine of Art*, and *Pencil Points*.<sup>11</sup>

The First Bay Tradition style was popular around the turn of the twentieth century, between about 1880 and 1917. "The houses of the Eastern Shingle Style with their large living areas and wide openings between rooms, when mixed with the Craftsmen [sic], Swiss Chalet, some Queen Anne and Art Nouveau Styles with a Japanese influence in detailing, formed the basis of the work of early practitioners in the San Francisco Bay region."<sup>12</sup> Bay Area architects such as Ernest Coxhead, Willis Polk, John Galen Howard, Bernard Maybeck, and Julia Morgan were known for honing the style. The aesthetic is in great evidence and beloved in Berkeley, where it is commonly referred to using the "brown shingle" moniker, which simply referenced the often unpainted wood shingle cladding, although painted shingle can also qualify for the First Bay Tradition classification. Houses of the First Bay Tradition style are characterized by:

- Tall narrow profiles of 2-3 stories
- Asymmetrical plans and facade organization that includes projecting and recessed bays and porches
- Prominent porches
- Steeply pitched roofs with gable and gambrel forms, often with cross-gables and dormers
- Wood windows with small divided lights and double-hung or casement sashes
- Wood shingle cladding, sometimes incorporating wavy patterns or diamonds
- Wall planes that flare and/or overhang at the bottom, especially between stories; or that bulge or bow above windows
- Tall, prominent brick chimneys and other brick elements; brick is often of the clinker variety
- Ornamentation that tends toward the Classical or Gothic, applied in an eclectic way that referenced no style directly but created an overarching historical sense

At 2845 Woolsey Street, the house's mixture of shingled aesthetics dating to 1908, places it within the appropriate time period and stylistic genres to be considered First Bay Tradition. As is said of Bay Tradition buildings of all sub-types, "although they have certain common characteristics... every good Bay Region house is unique in design. This is because each one, unlike most U.S. homes, represents a tailor-made solution to the particular living problems of the owner."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a wide range of aesthetic influences are typically present in Bay Tradition buildings and can account for the subject house's mixture of Shingle, Craftsman, Tudor, Classical Revival, American Four Square, even

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11 San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design, 1935-1970, Context Statement* (2010)

12 Lester Walker, *American Shelter* (New York: Overlook Press, 1996) 192.

13 "San Francisco Houses: They embody a new U.S. Regional architecture," *Life Magazine*, 5 September 1949.

Prairie styles, all of which amount to an eclectic and unique First Bay Tradition design that Newsom & Newsom likely crafted with strong input of the Norton family who would live in it.

The form of the house differs somewhat from the identified tall narrow profile, but does not detract substantially from the overall aesthetic. It is two stories high and has a regular, rectangular plan that results in a less asymmetrical plan and less articulated facades. The more boxy massing can be attributed to Classical and American Four Square influences, however. Projecting bays, bay windows, the (original but currently not-extant) recessed second story balcony/porch at the northeast corner, and the main entry porch all lend to subtle articulations that are typical to the First Bay Tradition style. The entry porch's prominent and obvious visual indication of a formal entrance to the house is also characteristically First Bay Tradition.

The hip roof, though relatively shallowly pitched, has distinctly flared eaves that make strong reference to the Japanese influences described, and the prominent, decoratively shaped, exposed rafter tails at the eaves are either – or both – distinctly Craftsman and referential to Classical modillions, as are the projecting shaped beam ends between stories.

Most of the current windows are not original, but maintain a double-hung configuration typical of the style. Original windows are known to have been multi-lite-over-one double hung sashes with vertical muntins, extremely appropriate to the First Bay Tradition style. Also extremely appropriate to the aesthetic is the three-part, diamond pattern, leaded glass feature window on the rear (west) facade that relates to the interior stair.

Of course, the house's wood shingle siding is a strong indicator its First Bay Tradition identity, and includes the characteristic flared shingle-work at the base of the second story walls. Other typical ornamental elements include traditional wood moldings; pronounced trim around openings, especially with prominent hoods and projecting sills; decorative flower boxes, which were an often-borrowed signature of Maybeck's work; and original but no longer extant Classical balustrades and diamond pattern railings at the porch. A clinker brick chimney is also present, tall and slender, and although placed less prominently on the rear facade, is quite visible from the street.

**10. Original Owners:** F.B. Norton

**Original Use:** Single-family residence

**11. Present Owners:** Michael A. Pearson & Annette Blum

**12. Present Use:** Single-family residence

**Current Zoning:** R-2

**Adjacent Property Zoning:** C-N (to northeast), and R-2 (to northwest, west, and southwest), RH-1 (across Claremont Ave. to east)

**13. Present Condition of Property:****Exterior:** Good**Interior:** Good**Grounds:** Good**Has the property's exterior been altered? Yes**

Building permit records indicate the following exterior alterations:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Permit #</b>	<b>Description of Work/Notes</b>
10/10/1945	57983	Reroof entire house with composition shingles.
12/31/1958	85721	Replace front steps (4) with brick steps on 8" slab. [Altered again at a later date; steps now concrete and located on east side of porch.]
1/22/1969	113371	Add new stairway and exit door, close front porch. [Stairway and exit may refer to western portion of northern addition.]
5/30/1973	ID# 053073839	Deck addition for exiting door, 6 x 14. [Located at second story, east side of north facade; associated with the two-story addition already located on west side of north facade. All since removed.]
12/30/1980	0130807340/ UP# 9109	Close in porch.
7/20/1987	720874645	Repair rear stairway.
11/30/2000	00-00005015	Reroof with composition shingle.
7/14/2021	B2021-03100	Removal of dry-rot shingles, installation of vapor barrier, and installation of new cedar shingles.
12/1/2021	B2021-04972	Dry rot repair. Roofing repair, shingles, and chimney removal. [Main chimney remains, may have referred to a secondary kitchen chimney.]
1/04/2022	B2022-00014	Replace windows in like kind (26). [Current vinyl sash]

Other substantial alterations that have been observed, but which are not reflected or fully elaborated upon by above records, include:

- The house originally had an integral open balcony at the northeast corner of second story. At some point, a large opening related to the balcony, at the right side of the second story of the primary facade, was fitted with an aluminum sliding sash window. Openings on the left side of north facade were also altered by an addition to the north facade. In 2021-2022, the opening on the primary facade was infilled entirely.
- A shallow, shed-roofed, two-story addition with a substantial exterior stair, was made to the north facade, possibly in 1969. In 1973, an additional deck was added to the east side of the addition, which itself was, or became, enclosed. The entire addition was

removed in 2021-2022, but all fenestration on the north facade remains altered and non-original.

- The front porch was originally open with brick entry steps oriented toward Woolsey Street to the south. There were three thick square porch posts along the east side and the railings in between were Classical balustrades. A diamond-patterned railing surrounded the roof deck. The porch was later enclosed, in 1969 and/or 1980, new brick steps and an exterior door were installed on the south side, while the rest was enclosed with glazing. The roof deck railing remained. In 2021-2022, the porch was reopened, but oriented to the east. Three original porch posts were replaced with four of somewhat smaller dimension, while concrete steps, non-original railings, interior finishing, and a new entry door were added (original leaded glass sidelights appear to remain). The roof deck railing was removed and the integral hip roof over the projecting bay to the right of the porch appears to have been extended across the width of the porch. Structural beams may have been altered, as the porch roof now exhibits a distinct slope to one side.

#### 14. Description:

The parcel and house are oriented on a diagonal axis, with Woolsey Street to the southwest and Claremont Avenue to the southeast. For the purposes of this report, the primary facade, which faces Claremont Avenue will be referred to as facing east, the rear facade facing west, etc.

##### *Site*

The property is located in a densely developed residential setting of large-scale houses, with a row of commercial buildings located to the immediate north, along Claremont Avenue. It is set in close proximity to neighboring buildings on an almost square lot, measuring 100 feet along Woolsey Street and 95 feet along Claremont Avenue. The lot is flat and elevated slightly above street level, with a cast stone site wall bordering it on the south and east. The house is set back from Claremont Avenue with a large front yard, and sits very close to the western lot line, resulting in no rear yard. Narrow margins exist between the house and the north and south lot lines. The lot is landscaped with hardscaping and small plantings. Four mature trees stand at the eastern edge of the lot, while others surround the house but are not located on the property, itself.

##### *House*

The house has a rectangular plan, sits on a concrete foundation, is two stories high, and topped by a hip roof. The roof is clad with composition shingle and features broad flared eaves with closely-spaced, decoratively shaped rafter tails on all sides. Exterior wall cladding is wood shingle that flares out at the base of the second story wall, creating a small overhang that is ornamented with a horizontal wood molding and/or block modillions in most locations. Current fenestration consists of vinyl-sash, double-hung windows with vertical faux muntins in the upper sashes. Most windows and other openings have wide flat wood trim, projecting sills, and simply molded hoods.

The primary facade faces east toward Claremont Avenue and represents the long side of the house's rectangular plan. It features an entry porch to the left of center and a projecting bay to its immediate right. Both are topped by an intermediate hip roof with slightly flaring eaves, while a flat roof projects to cover the balance of the porch. The porch is accessed from the east by concrete steps. It has a shingled base, metal railings with solid shingled

railings at the sides, and thick square wood posts that support the flat roof that extends from the intermediate hip roof. The flat porch roof features decorative rafter tails with shaped ends, supported in turn by cross beams with shaped ends. Within the porch, the ceiling, back wall, and interior of the solid side railings are clad with simple wood paneling and battens. The entry door is paneled and has a leaded glass oval window at its center. It is flanked by partial height, diamond-pattern, leaded glass sidelights. The projecting bay to the right of the porch features a three-part window, with a narrow middle sash flanked by wider sashes, all separated by wood mullions. Standard windows are located at the far left and right sides of the facade and at the second story level, where a three-part window (wide sash flanked by narrower sashes) is flanked by single windows. These three openings are regularly spaced from one another, but set off-center to the left, leaving a blank wall plane at the far right side of the second story.

The south facade, facing Woolsey Street, represents the short side of the rectangular plan. It features a shallow projecting square bay fenestrated with a pair of standard windows at the far left side, while a shallow angled bay window with three standard sashes is located on the right side. Two symmetrically placed standard windows at the second story have decorative paneled wood flower boxes beneath that are supported by projecting beams and short cross beams.

The north facade also represents the short side of the rectangular plan and faces a small side yard and neighboring property. It features two fully-glazed wood doors spaced widely at the first story. At the second story there is one large window on the right side that has a single-lite, fixed sash.

The east facade represents the long side of the rectangular plan and faces a narrow passage between the house and the neighboring property. There are three irregularly placed windows on the first story, one of which has a sliding aluminum sash. The second story features a shallow, flat topped, projecting rectangular bay that is located to the right of center. The bay is supported by decoratively shaped projecting beam ends and is fenestrated with a large three-part window that has diamond-pattern leaded glass. Elsewhere on the second story are three standard windows. A narrow clinker brick chimney rises up the right side of the facade and projects through the eaves to rise above the roofline.

## 15. History:

The first owners and residents of the house at 2845 Woolsey Street were the Frank Butler Norton family. Frank Norton was born in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, in 1849, the son of a New Bedford whaling ship captain. In 1870, he went west to San Francisco at the age of 21, where he found work as a bookkeeper in the offices of a provisions wholesaler. By 1884, he had started his own provisions wholesale business and had a number of partners over the years, until the the firm finally became known as Norton, Teller & Company. The company sold wholesale produce, meat, and dairy products and acted as a commission merchant, selling goods for other purveyors. Its offices were in San Francisco.<sup>14</sup>

In July 1877, Frank married Eliza J. Mayhew in Santa Barbara.<sup>15</sup> They had three children: Mayhew, Frances Amelia, and Charles Worth. Eliza died in 1886 at the age of 31, and the

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14 "F.B. Norton, Pioneer, Dies," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 December 1931. San Francisco city directories.

15 Ancestry.com; California, U.S., County Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, 1849-1980.

following year Frank remarried. His second wife was Cora B. Wightman of Sonoma.<sup>16</sup> Cora was born in Plainfield, Illinois in 1862 and grew up in Sebastapol, where her father was a bank president. The couple had three children of their own: May Elizabeth, Frank B. Jr., and William Wightman (often known as Wightman). Frank's three oldest children were grown and living on their own by the time that Frank and Cora built and moved into the house on Woolsey Street. Prior to living at 2845 Woolsey Street, the family had lived only a few blocks from the subject property, at 6441 Benvenue Avenue and had addresses in Oakland and San Francisco prior to that.<sup>17</sup>

In 1908, the Nortons commissioned the architecture firm of Newsom & Newsom to design a handsome residence for them at 2845 Woolsey Street. Living nearby on Benvenue Avenue likely led to their purchase of the large empty parcel at the corner of Claremont Avenue and Woolsey Street. There appears to be no documentation of how or why the Nortons came to select the Newsoms' firm or any of the client-architect interactions that likely went into the design of the house. An article and illustration (see attached) ran in the 19 April 1908 edition of the *Oakland Tribune*, however; which reported on F.B. Norton "putting up a pretty house." The article noted that the "home will be roomy and have all the latest improvements." It went on to say:

F.B. Norton, of Norton & Teller Co., San Francisco, is building a two-story residence... It is to be located on the north side of Woolsey Street, sixty feet west of Claremont avenue, Berkeley. Newsom & Newsom, 526 Larkin Street, San Francisco, are the architects. The house will cost about \$6,000, complete.

The feature of the exterior will be heavy beam work on the front porch and cornice. The house is to be shingled. The living-room and library will face the south and are to be paneled with burnt board and batten. A large open fireplace is in the library. The vestibule and dining-room are to have heavily beamed ceilings. A large kitchen, pass pantry, laundry and servant's room are in the rear.

On the second story are five large sunny bedrooms, all having large closets. There are also linen closets and cases which are always needed. Facing the north is a balcony, commanding and excellent view of the Berkeley hills.

Two years after the house was built, the 1910 federal census recorded the Nortons at 2827 Woolsey Street, as the property was originally addressed. Frank was 61 and employed as a commission merchant. Cora was 48, and their three children – Wightman, May, and Frank Jr. – lived at home. Their ages ranged from 12 to 22. Wightman was old enough to work and was employed as a commission merchant, likely by his father's firm. The family employed Mary Anderson, a 40 year old household servant from Sweden, although in late 1911, numerous want ads for a new "girl for general housework," ran in the newspaper.<sup>18</sup>

Ten years later, in 1920, the occupancy of 2845 Woolsey Street (then still 2827) was much the same. Wightman had married and moved away from home, but May and Frank Jr. remained. Both in their early 20s, May worked as a school teacher, while Frank was not

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16 Ancestry.com; U.S. Select Marriages, 1850-1945.

17 Oakland city directory, 1908.

18 *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, October 1911.

employed. The Norton's household servant was Nellie Haupt, a 40 year old woman from California.

In 1930, the address of the house remained 2827 Woolsey Street on census records, and the property was valued at \$20,000 (about \$380,000 today). Frank Norton, at age 81, was retired. Cora was 63. The Norton's three children still lived at home or had returned. Wightman, age 41, had divorced and moved back home. He worked as a distributing agent for a furnace manufacturer. May, 31, remained unmarried and continued to work as a public school teacher. Frank Jr., 30, was also unmarried and was a dentist in general practice. The family employed Marie Moen, a 19 year old servant from Norway.

Frank Norton died in 1931. His obituary noted that he had retired several years before his death, but at one time had served as president of the San Francisco Dairy Exchange. In his personal time, he was active in the Alameda County Sportsmen's Club, the oldest duck hunting club in the West, and was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

In the late 1930s, address renumbering occurred in the neighborhood and 2845 Woolsey Street was finally assigned its current address. In 1940, the house was occupied by Cora, then a 77 year old widow. Daughter May, who never married, lived with her. She was 40 and employed as a kindergarten teacher. The census also shows that Wightman Norton had remarried and lived next door with his wife, Violet, and daughter, Nancy. The Wightman Norton house (presumably built 1937<sup>20</sup>) was located to the rear (northwest) of 2845 Woolsey Street and had been assigned the subject house's old address, 2827 Woolsey Street. The Nortons also appear to have owned the house at 2823-2825 Woolsey Street (now 2823 Woolsey Street), which was a duplex that they rented out.<sup>21</sup>

In August 1944 a one-alarm fire was reported at 2845 Woolsey Street. It was caused by an electric heater and caused \$100 in damages.<sup>22</sup>

Cora Norton died in February 1950 at age 90. Later the same year, the census indicates that May Norton was living at the subject house by herself, still working as a public school kindergarten teacher. Her brother and sister-in-law continued to live next door and eventually had three children.

Around 1951, May Norton moved to 2844 Woolsey Street, directly across Woolsey Street from the subject property. The details of her move are unclear, but Planning Department records indicate that she petitioned to have the zoning of the subject house changed a couple of times without success. As early as November 1950, Rhoda Nichols, a playground director for Berkeley city schools, and very likely a professional acquaintance of May's, was associated with the rezoning attempts and change of use converting property to a nursery school. It may be that May Norton's professional interests as a kindergarten teacher led her to devote her family home to become a nursery school, with her associate Rhoda Nichols heading the establishment. May Norton died shortly thereafter, in 1953. She was 59 years old and succumbed to a month-long illness in an Oakland hospital.<sup>23</sup> Ownership of the house presumably passed to Luther and Rhoda

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19 "F.B. Norton, Pioneer, Dies," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 December 1931.

20 Alameda County Assessor.

21 "Houses for Rent," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 2 May 1936.

22 "Heater fire causes \$100 damage here," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 2 August 1944.

23 "May E. Norton" (obituary), *Berkeley Gazette*, 24 August 1953.

Nichols around this time.

In 1952, use permit records indicate that Rhoda Nichols was granted the change-of-use for the property and permission to create a playground area in the front yard. Later records indicate that part of the house was retained as the Nichols' residence; occupied by Rhoda, her husband Luther, and at some point her elderly father. Rhoda Nichols grew up in Petaluma and attended U.C. Berkeley. Luther had grown up in Berkeley and also attended U.C. Berkeley, then went to work as a newspaper reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The couple were married in 1950.<sup>24</sup>

On 16 December 1952, an announcement ran in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* that the Rhoda Reed Nichols Nursery School, located on Prince Street, had moved around the corner to 3090 Claremont Avenue (an alternate address for 2845 Woolsey Street) and would be known as the Claremont Day Nursery. It was noted that “the lovely garden is much larger and the play area inside and out, is more spacious.” It has “pleasant surroundings and thoroughly trained and experienced supervision.” By 1958, Rhoda Nichols had opened another branch of the Claremont Day Nursery at 5830 College Avenue, and in 1962, she opened yet another at 912 Ensenada Avenue.

Rhoda Nichols owned the property and ran the nursery school until 1976, when both the property and the nursery school business were sold to Tom and Frances Morabito. Tom Morabito was a teacher, who worked in private and public schools prior to taking over the Claremont Day Nurseries.<sup>25</sup> Around 2021, due to failing health, the Morabitos decided to close the nursery school. At that time, they remodeled the house prior to selling it, which resulted in a number of the recent changes noted under item 17, above. In June 2022, the property was sold to the current owners, Michael A. and Annette Pearson, who will return it to single-family residential use and wish to reverse a number of the earlier incompatible alterations.

#### Chain of Title

Dates	Owners	Occupants
1908 – 1950	Frank B. & Cora Norton	Norton family
1950 – ca.1952	Mary Elizabeth Norton	Mary Elizabeth Norton
ca.1952 – 1976	Luther & Rhoda Nichols	Nichols family Claremont Day Nursery
1976 – 2022	Tom & Frances Morabito	Claremont Day Nursery
2022 - present	Michael A. & Annette Pearson	Michael A. & Annette Pearson

<sup>24</sup> “Marriage of Rhoda Reed to Berkeley man is announced,” *Petaluma Argus Courier*, 13 February 1950.

<sup>25</sup> “Owner to close beloved day care schools because of failing health,” *Berkeleyside*, 28 June 2021; <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/06/28/tom-morabito-owner-child-care-claremont-day-nurseries-to-close>

## 16. Significance:

**Historic Value:** City and neighborhood

**Architectural Value:** City and neighborhood

The property at 2845 Woolsey Street is eligible for designation as a Berkeley Landmark; meeting Landmark criteria 1B and 1C in relation to its architectural merit.<sup>26</sup> The following provides an evaluation of the significance of 2845 Woolsey Street.

In accordance with Landmark criterion 1B, 2845 Woolsey Street is an outstanding example of early-twentieth century residential architecture in the First Bay Tradition style and is a notable example of design by the renowned Bay Area architecture firm of Newsom & Newsom.

The house presents a unique and complexly crafted example of the First Bay Tradition style. The style has certain typical traits (especially wood shingle exterior cladding), but is intrinsically varied in individual design and stylistic influence, often responding to customization for the specific homeowner-client and resulting an eclectic presentation of form and ornament. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street is most strongly identified as First Bay Tradition by its wood shingle cladding and Classical Revival ornamentation; however ornamentation and other features also hint at Craftsman, Tudor Revival, American Four Square, and Prairie aesthetics, and even some Japanese influence. The mixture of popular styles of the day and their amalgam into a completely unique iteration of the locally significant First Bay Tradition style makes 2845 Woolsey Street a significant example of the style. The deft adaptation of the style by architects Newsom & Newsom, presumably with the input of the Norton family who commissioned the house, makes it a prime example not only of the style but the way the style was made unique to every project.

The firm of Newsom & Newsom consisted of two generations of the Newsom family and, as it was built in 1908, 2845 Woolsey Street falls within the brief period when both Samuel Newsom and his two sons were designing together. A transitional period in the firm's history, this was also a time when the firm's design aesthetics shifted with prevailing architectural fashions, away from the exuberant Victorian and toward newly popular styles that included the increasingly popular First Bay Tradition style and its many eclectic aesthetic influences. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street showcases the evolution that the Newsoms' work took toward more quietly understated houses of high quality and highly-livable designs during this period. While the Newsoms worked throughout the Bay Area, their most recognized work is primarily found in San Francisco and Piedmont. They were active in Berkeley, however; and a selection of their residential designs illustrate both the progression of their stylistic aesthetics and their work in particular areas of the city as they became known and presumably referred among clients. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street represents a time during the first decade of the twentieth century when the Newsoms adhered strongly to the First Bay Tradition style, while making each house unique. It stands out from their earlier houses of the style in having more Classical overtones and influences from a wide variety of other styles, perhaps indicating the shift the Newsoms would make toward later Revival styles. It was also the first of three Newsom & Newsom projects in the Parkside Claremont and Uplands neighborhood, suggesting that the firm may have been introduced to the area with their work at 2845 Woolsey Street and then

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<sup>26</sup> City of Berkeley Municipal Code, Chapter 3.24.110, Landmarks, historic districts and structures of merit – Designation – Criteria for consideration.

were eagerly hired by nearby neighbors.

In accordance with Landmark criteria 1C, the house at 2845 Woolsey Street is worth recognizing and preserving for its exceptional contribution to the historic and aesthetic fabric of the Parkside Claremont neighborhood. The house is sited on a prominent corner, at the intersection of Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue; surrounded by other architecturally interesting houses, adjacent to a bustling neighborhood commercial row, and opposite the entrance to the Uplands neighborhood which is enhanced by historic stone pillars and transit shelters, creating a rich surrounding built-environment. The house is a highly visible and noteworthy element of a residential neighborhood that has many good and varied examples of early-twentieth century architecture, including similar, but always unique, examples of what is colloquially and fondly referred to as Berkeley's "brown shingle" architecture (i.e. the First Bay Tradition style identified by its ubiquitous siding material). The house represents the First Bay Tradition style, designed by renowned architects, that contributes strongly to both the visual and historical context of the area.

#### 17. Is the property endangered?

No. On the contrary, Landmark designation will make the property eligible for Mills Act benefits that will facilitate rehabilitation and restoration of the house, including the reversal of a number of previous inappropriate alterations.

#### 18. Photographs:

**Date:** 7 November 2024

**Repository:** Left Coast Architectural History

**Photographer:** Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History

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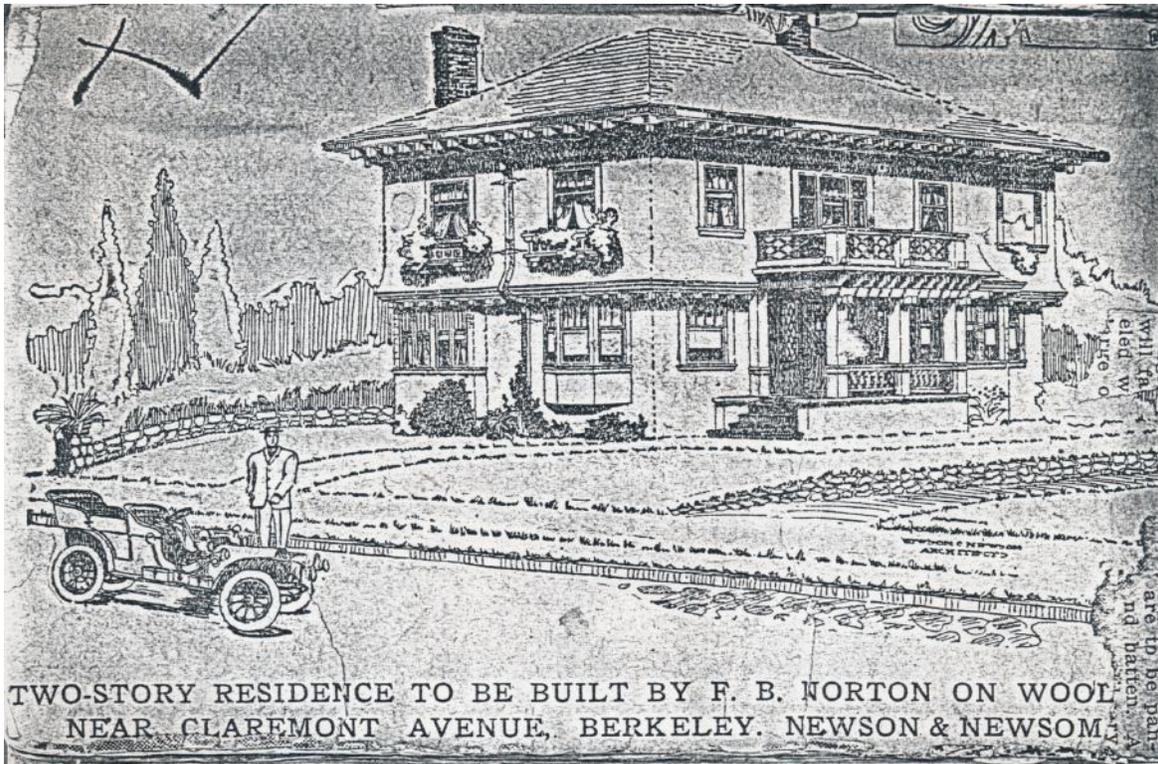
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**20. Recorder:** Caitlin Hibma

**Date:** 12 December 2024

**Organization:** Left Coast Architectural History

Historical Images



TWO-STORY RESIDENCE TO BE BUILT BY F. B. NORTON ON WOOLSEY STREET NEAR CLAREMONT AVENUE, BERKELEY. NEWSON & NEWSOM, ARCHT. S. F. CALIF.

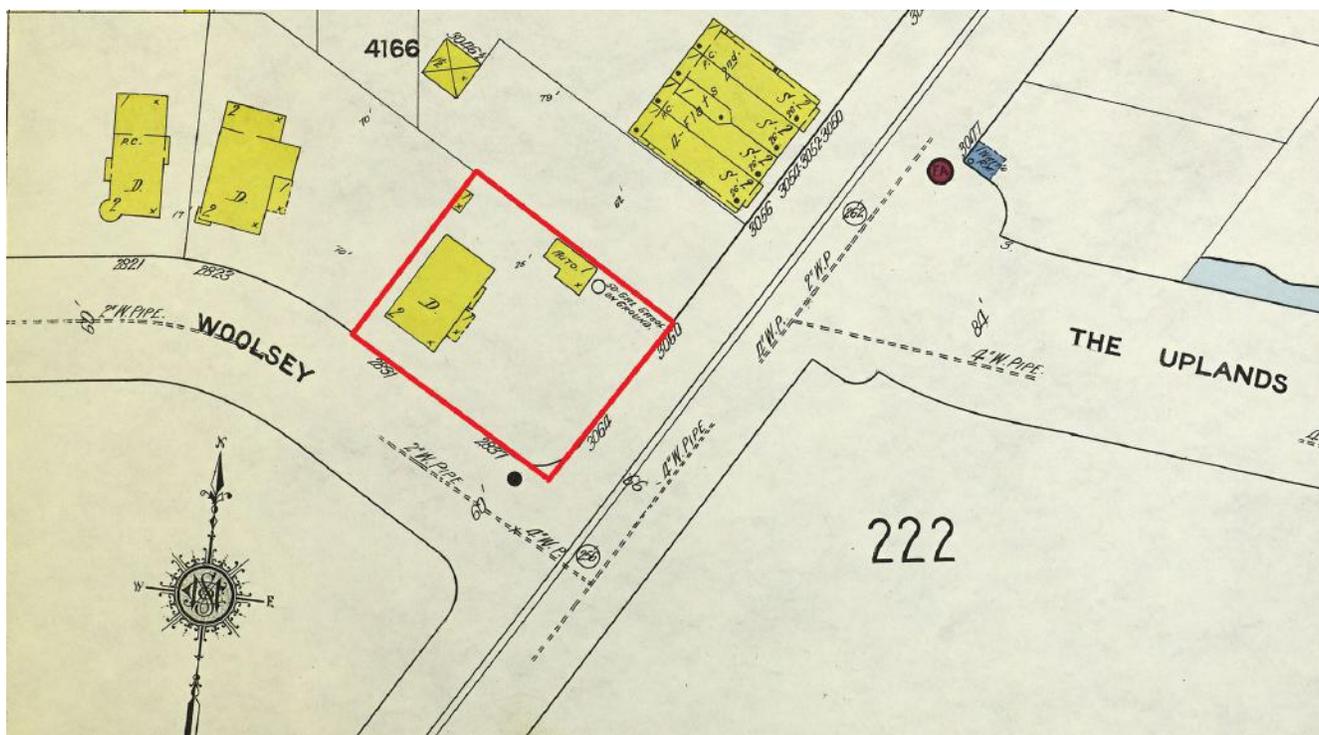
Illustration of F.B. Norton House, 1908. (*Oakland Tribune*, 19 April 1908.)



Interior of 2845 Woolsey Street, 1908; library looking (north) into dining room. (Berkeley Architectural History Assoc.)



Interior of 2845 Woolsey Street, 1908; library looking northwest into stair hall.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc.)



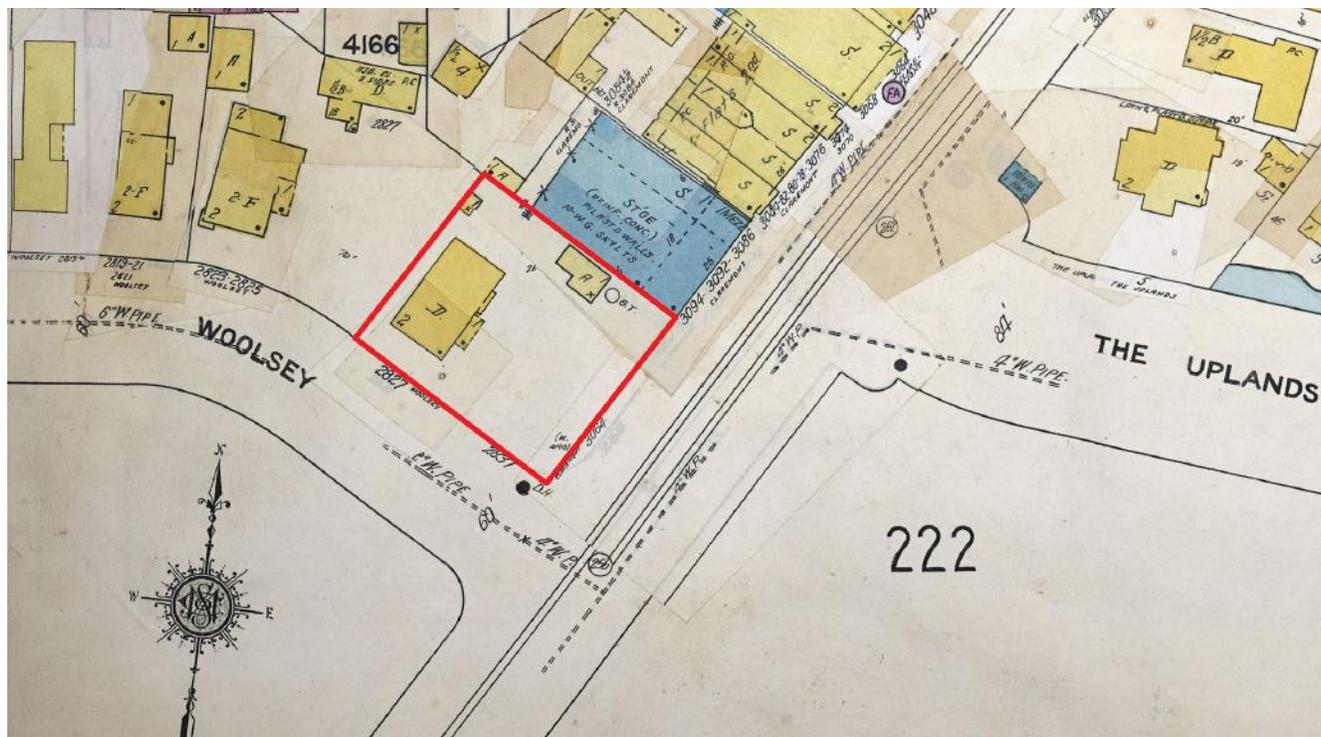
Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1911. Subject property outlined in red.  
(Historical Information Gatherers)



Aerial photograph, 1931. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



Aerial photograph, 1946. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1950. Subject property outlined in red.  
(Historical Information Gatherers)



View of Woolsey Street (south) facade; 1950s.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc., Donough Collection)



Aerial photograph, 1965. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



View of Woolsey Street (south) facade; recent nursery school era, 2000s.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc.)



2845 Woolsey St. south and east facades, looking northwest from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.  
Note original windows and enclosed porch with upper railing intact.  
(Google Streetview)



2845 Woolsey St. south facade, looking north from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.

Note original windows and enclosed porch with upper railing intact.  
(Google Streetview)



2845 Woolsey St. south and east facades, looking northwest from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.  
Note original balcony opening (glazed) and later northern addition at right side of second story.  
(Google Streetview)

**Current Images**



View of primary (east) facade from Claremont Avenue, looking west.



View of south and primary (east) facades from Woolsey Street, looking northwest.



View of rear (west) and south facades from Woolsey Street, looking northeast.



View of primary (east) facade from front of property, looking west.



Detail of entry porch, primary (east) facade, looking west.



View of south facade from Woolsey Street, looking north.



View of primary (east) and north facade from yard, looking southwest.



View of north side of rear (west) facade, looking north.



View along rear facade from southwest corner of house, looking north.



Detail of upper south facade, showing flower boxes, looking northwest.



Detail of eaves, southeast corner of house.



Detail of cast stone site wall along south and east sides of property; near corner, looking northwest.

**REHABILITATION WORK PLAN**

Work Item	Feature	Character Defining?	Condition	Recommended Treatment	Schedule	Budget (From bids)
1	Wood shingle siding	No (But contributes to historic architectural character)	Poor (deteriorated)	Replace existing wood shingle siding with new fire-resistant wood shingles, installed over new weather resistant barrier and drainage mat.  Removes deteriorated fabric and installs a safer but visually similar alternative.	2026 (Replace); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$87,048.50
2	Window sashes	Yes (Openings are character defining; sashes would be if intact.)	Poor (original feature not intact)	Replace existing non-original vinyl window sashes on south, east, and west facades with wood sash windows in original configurations. Original character defining openings will be maintained.  Removes inappropriate modern fabric and restores historically appropriate fabric.	2026 (Replace); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$121,686.58
3	Integral balcony at second story, northeast corner	No (Would be, if intact)	Poor (original feature not intact)	Restore original openings of integral balcony at northeast corner of second story and infill with historically appropriate windows.  Restores a noteworthy original feature of the house, while making	2026 (Restore); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	Included in window estimate above

				the space useful for modern habitation.		
4	Entry porch	No (Would be, if intact)	Poor (original feature not intact)	Deconstruct existing non-original porch and restore original porch configuration with south-facing entry stairs (salvage existing beams and rafters for reuse).  Removes inappropriate modern fabric and design and restores the porch to historically appropriate configuration and appearance.	2026 (Restore); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$37,772.50
5	Entry porch balcony	No (Would be, if intact)	Poor (original feature not intact)	Restore original balcony above entry porch including installation of a new code compliant guardrail.  Restores a noteworthy original feature of the house.	2026 (Restore); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$20,440.00
6	Door and sidelights at entry porch balcony	No (Would be, if intact)	Poor (original feature not intact)	Restore original door and sidelights at second story, east facade, to access restored balcony above entry porch.  Restores a noteworthy original feature of the house.	2026 (Restore); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	Included in window estimate above
7	Roof	No	Poor	Remove existing composition shingles, install new plywood sheathing, underlayment, and new visually similar shingles.  Removes deteriorated fabric and installs a functional and visually	2026 (Replace); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$59,011.50

				compatible alternative.		
8	Gutters and downspouts	No	Poor	<p>Replace existing painted aluminum gutters with new gutters, downspouts, and leader boxes. Repair related dry rot at eaves and rafter tails.</p> <p>Replaces a deteriorated and non-functional system with compatible new components that will ensure proper shedding of water away from the structure.</p>	2026 (Replace); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	Included in roof estimate above
9	Chimney	No (but contributes to historic architectural character)	Fair	<p>Repair and re-seal original clinker brick chimney on west facade.</p> <p>Repairs an original feature and increases its resilience against further deterioration.</p>	2030 (Repair); 2031-2036 (Maintain)	\$4,500.00
10	Wood architectural features expressing structure and ornamental motifs	Yes	Fair	<p>Repair and replace missing and damaged corbels at the second story cornice line and modillions at the eaves. Includes repairing dry rot at eaves related to gutters (see work item 8) and replacing existing window and door trim in kind.</p> <p>Removes and reinstates deteriorated and missing fabric in-kind to preserve the characteristic appearance of the house.</p>	2026 (Repair/Replace); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$15,540.00

11	Planter boxes, second story south facade	Yes	Fair	<p>Repair or replace deteriorated wood planter boxes, including waterproofing.</p> <p>Repairs or replaces this feature in-kind to preserve the characteristic appearance of the house.</p>	2030 (Repair); 2031-2036 (Maintain)	\$5,500.00
12	Cast stone (concrete) perimeter retaining wall	Yes	Fair	<p>Repair cracks in existing site wall at south and east perimeter of property.</p> <p>Repairs and strengthens a feature that interfaces with the public realm and lends to the characteristic appearance of the property.</p>	2030 (Repair); 2031-2036 (Maintain)	\$12,300.00
13	Exterior Paint and Stain	No	Fair	<p>Apply stain over new wood shingle siding (see work item 1) and paint architectural woodwork and trim.</p> <p>Preserves the longevity of the building envelope.</p>	2026 (Complete); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$15,372.00
14	Scaffolding	–	–	<p>Install temporary scaffolding to complete exterior work noted above.</p> <p>Required to execute work plan.</p>	2026	\$3,800.00
15	Electrical Systems	No	Poor	<p>Upgrade outdated knob-and-tube wiring to modern wiring.</p> <p>Replaces a deteriorated and unsafe</p>	2026 (Upgrade); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$27,440.00

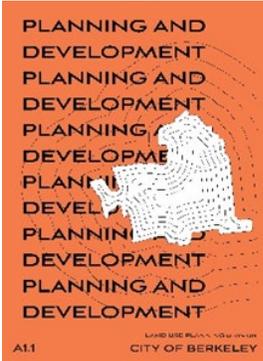
				system with compatible new components that will eliminate fire danger.		
16	Plumbing Systems	No	Poor	Upgrade existing plumbing piping to modern copper piping.  Replaces unsafe piping and ensures safe and healthy water distribution.	2026 (Upgrade); 2027-2036 (Maintain)	\$42,568.00
Subtotal:						<b>\$452,979.08</b>
Contractor's General Conditions (18%):						<b>\$81,536.23</b>
<b>Total Estimated Budget:</b>						<b>\$534,515.31</b>

# Landmarks Preservation Commission Staff Report

App #LMMA2025-0003

September 4, 2025

Mills Act Contract Application at 2845 Woolsey Street  
Norton Family House



Quick Facts	Project Description:
<p><b>Applicant:</b> Caitlin Hibma</p> <p><b>Property Owner:</b> Michael Pearson and Annette Blum Pearson</p>	<p>The applicant is seeking a Mills Act contract for a Structure of Merit residential property.</p>
<p><b>Project Address:</b> 2845 Woolsey Street</p> <p><b>GP Land Use:</b> Low Medium Density Residential (LMDR)</p>	<p><b>Permits Requested:</b></p> <p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Zoning:</b> Restricted Two-Family Residential (R-2)</p>	<p><b>Staff Recommendation:</b></p>
<p><b>Historic District:</b> No</p> <p><b>CEQA:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Submittal Date:</b> June 3, 2025</p> <p><b>Date Deemed Complete:</b> July 3, 2025</p> <p><b>Project Planner:</b> Allison Riemer</p>	<p>Approve the proposed rehabilitation schedule and recommend favorable action to City Council.</p>

**VICINITY MAP SHOWING NEARBY CITY LANDMARKS & DISTRICTS**



**Figure 1:** Vicinity and Zoning Districts Map

**AERIAL**



**Figure 2:** Aerial Image (Source: GoogleEarth 2025)

**ELEVATION**



**Figure 3:** East elevation (Source: Mills Act application)

## **BACKGROUND**

The building at 2845 Woolsey Street was built in 1908, and features elements of the First Bay Tradition style, including wood shingle exterior cladding, and Classical Revival ornamentation. The building was designed by the renowned architecture firm Newsom & Newsom. The primary façade faces Claremont Avenue. It is two stories and features broad flared eaves with rafter tails on all sides. Several original features are now missing due to previous alterations. The wood shingle siding and clinker brick chimney are original to the house but were not included in the Features to Preserved when the property was designated. Additional architectural details can be found in Attachment 1.

The subject property was designated a City Structure of Merit on April 3, 2025; see Attachment 4. On June 3, 2025, the applicant, on behalf of the property owner, submitted a Mills Act Contract Application for the property.

## **ANALYSIS**

The applicant's historic resource consultant prepared the Mills Act submittal in line with the City's program requirements. The Mills Act application includes the following components:

- 1) Historic Architectural Summary for the subject property (Attachment 1), which includes a list of the character-defining features.
- 2) A Rehabilitation Plan (Attachment 2), which outlines the projects identified for restoration, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the property over the ten-year contract period; and
- 3) A financial analysis spreadsheet for estimating the potential Mills Act tax savings for this request, based on property-specific figures calculated using standard formulas.

The purpose of this review is to confirm the eligibility of the property to participate in the program and verify the validity of the identified work plan items. Should the City enter into a Mills Act Contract with the property owner, the Alameda County Assessor's Office will be responsible for verifying the figures provided by the applicant, conducting calculations, and applying actual property tax reductions on future tax bills beginning in 2026.

All improvements included in the Rehabilitation Plan (Attachment 2) relate to restoring the historic, character-defining features of the building and site, or extending the Structure of Merit's useful life. Some of the proposed work involves restoring previously removed exterior features, which would require a Structural Alteration Permit (SAP), pursuant to the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (Berkeley Municipal Code Section 3.24.260), because exterior changes to the current building would be proposed. Some of the proposed work items can be considered "ordinary maintenance and repair" since they do not include a

change to the character of any of the exterior features, and therefore, would be exempt from the SAP requirements.

The work plan items appear to be justifiable in that they constitute restoration, repair, rehabilitation, and continued maintenance of the subject property. Further, the work plan would provide for the property’s “use, maintenance and restoration as to retain its characteristics as property of historical significance,” as provided for in the Mills Act, Government Code Sections 50280 et. Seq., as authorized by the Berkeley City Council per Resolution No. 59,355 – N.S. For these reasons, staff concludes that the proposed rehabilitation plan items represent improvements that are consistent with the requirements of the Mills Act.

**MILLS ACT CONTRACT PROPOSAL**

The intent of the Mills Act is to provide property tax relief so that the property owners entering into Mills Act Contracts with the City will reinvest a significant portion of the property tax savings resulting from the Contract into preserving and/or restoring their property. The applicant’s proposed 10-year plan of improvements is provided in Attachment 2, and summarized in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Summary of Rehabilitation Schedule & Recommended Treatments

Feature	Treatment  (as recommended by historic resource consultant)	Estimated  Year of  completion
Wood shingle siding	Replace with fire-resistant wood shingles installed over new weather resistant barrier and drainage mat.	2026
Window sashes	Replace vinyl window sashes on south, east, and west facades with wood sash windows in original configurations.	2026
Integral balcony at second story, northeast corner	Restore original openings of balcony and infill with historically appropriate windows.	2026
Entry porch	Deconstruct existing non-original porch and restore original porch with south-facing entry stairs (salvage existing beams and rafters for reuse).	2026

Entry porch balcony	Restore original balcony above entry porch, including new code-compliant guardrail.	2026
Door and sidelights at entry porch balcony	Restore original door and sidelights at second story, east façade.	2026
Roof	Remove composition shingles, install new plywood sheathing, and new visually similar shingles.	2026
Gutters and downspouts	Replace painted aluminum gutters with new gutters, downspouts, and leader boxes. Repair related dry rot at eaves and rafter tails.	2026
Chimney	Repair and re-sel original clinker brick chimney on west façade.	2030
Wood architectural features	Repair and replace missing and damaged corbels at the second story cornice line and modillions at the eaves. Repair dry rot at eaves related to gutters, and replace existing window and door trim in kind.	2026
Planter boxes, second story south façade	Repair or replace deteriorated wood planter boxes, including waterproofing.	2030
Cast stone (concrete) perimeter retaining wall	Repair cracks in existing site wall at south and east perimeter of property.	2030
Exterior paint and stain	Apply stain over new wood shingle siding and paint architectural woodwork and trim.	2026
Scaffolding	Install temporary scaffolding to complete exterior work.	2026
Electrical systems	Upgrade outdated knob-and-tube wiring to modern wiring.	2026
Plumbing systems	Upgrade existing plumbing piping to modern copper piping.	2026

Per the applicant’s calculations in Attachments 2 and 3, the owner’s work plan would be \$27,979 less than the tax savings received (i.e. spending \$534,515 on the 10-year work plan,

while saving \$562,494 in property tax reduction over the 10-year period).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff has determined that all work proposed in the Mills Act Contract work plan provides for the property's "use, maintenance and restoration as to retain its characteristics as property of historical significance," and advises the Commission to recommend that City Council approve the Mills Act Contract request for the subject property.

## **Environmental Review**

The review of the Mills Act contract is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) "Review for Exemptions."

## **Attachments**

1. Historic Architectural Summary, dated May 30, 2025
2. Rehabilitation Plan, dated May 30, 2025
3. Financial Analysis Spreadsheet, dated August 26, 2025
4. Notice of Decision – Structure of Merit Designation, April 3, 2025
5. Project Estimates, received June 30 ,2025