

**PUBLIC POSTING
FOR 60-DAY REVIEW PERIOD**

**Historic District Designation Preliminary Report
PHDD20-0001 - Magnell House – 18405 Melrose Avenue**

Purpose: The purpose of Historic District Designation is to secure and recognize properties that hold a unique place in Southfield history. The Southfield City Code states that the process is intended to: (1) Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving areas in the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political engineering or architectural history or its archaeology; (2) Stabilize and improve property values in each historic district and the surrounding areas;(3) Foster civic beauty and community pride; (4) Strengthen the local economy; (5) Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city, the state and of the United States of America.

Properties with local Historic District Designation that seek to undergo building changes that require a permit or a demolition must first report to the Southfield Historic Commission which reviews the proposed alterations.

Historic District Designation Process: Upon receipt of a Historic District Designation application, the Southfield Planning Department arranges an agenda item at a City Council Study Meeting and begins a preliminary study of the property. At the meeting, the City Planner or his/her designee outlines the Historic District Designation process and the subject property. At Council's consent, the item is then authorized for full study at their next Regular Meeting. The Planning Department completes a preliminary report for the property, which is given to the Historic District Advisory Board (HDAB) for review. This body consists of the City Planner, Building Official, Planning Commission Chair, a member from the Parks & Recreation Board, three (3) regular members, and 2 ad hoc members (usually the property owner(s) from the subject property). Once the preliminary report is approved by the HDAB, it is sent out to several organizations (such as the Planning Commission, the Historic Commission, etc.) and posted for a 60-day review. During this time the Planning Department prepares a draft ordinance for the property's approval. At the end of the 60-day review period, the HDAB holds a public hearing. The HDAB or its designee presents the Final Report to Council, who then grant the new ordinance.

Historic District Advisory Board Members

- Terry Croad, Director of Planning
- Mark Pilot, Building Official
- Jeremy Griffis, Planning Commission Chair
- Rosemerry Allen, Parks & Recreation Board Member
- Dale Gyure, Regular Member
- Corey Moffat, Regular Member
- Darla Van Hoey, Regular Member
- Kenson Siver, Ad Hoc Member
- Sheila Booker, Ad Hoc Member

Site Acreage: 0.151

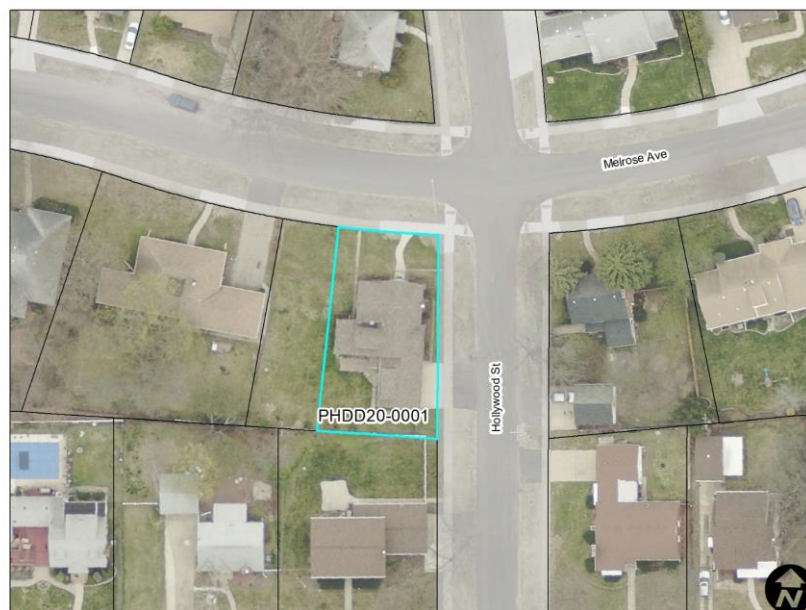
Gross Building Area: 2,929 square feet

Architectural Style: English Tudor

Architect: Roscoe E. Babcock

Constructed: 1930

Boundaries: Sidwell Parcel 2435-433-006, T1N,R10E,SEC 35 83 MAGNOLIA NO. 3 LOT 802 & E 14 FT OF LOT 801, on the southwest corner of Melrose Avenue and Hollywood Street, Section 35, City of Southfield, Oakland County, State of Michigan.



History: This 1930 English Tudor was built during a period of heavy population growth in the Detroit area. The builder, Roscoe W. Babcock, had much experience constructing ‘modern’ style homes in newly-annexed areas of Detroit and its suburbs. Such innovations included electrical outlets, oil burners and garages. He began to develop homes in the Magnolia Subdivision in then-rural Southfield.

Meanwhile, Don C. Loftus of Cleveland applied modern industrial techniques to homebuilding, patenting the “Permanesque” home and founding Homes Permanesque of America in 1929. These homes featured sturdy materials, such as concrete exterior walls with aesthetic veneers, steel joists, concrete floors, and steel-framed windows. Wood, a traditional material, was minimal, and the homes were marketed as fireproof, verminproof and low maintenance. Promotional material stated they were to last 200 years.

Babcock secured a Permanesque franchise and went to work implementing these new homes in the Detroit area. The Magnell Home, named after its longest occupant, Dr. Ralph Carl Magnell

(1904-1994), was constructed in Magnolia Subdivision at the southwest corner of Melrose and Hollywood. It featured significant fanfare in the newspapers, notably the Detroit Free press, due to its unique and revolutionary materials.

Unfortunately, the Permanesque homebuilding method did not blossom. Its expensive upfront costs and its high-quality materials proved too prohibitive during the scarcity of both the Great Depression and World War II.

The Magnell family began inhabiting the home in 1942 and expanded it in the 1950s. The family continued to live there after Dr. Magnell's death in 1994 until its sale in 1998. The home then changed owners two more times, unfortunately with poor upkeep and significant maintenance problems. The Magnell Home was purchased at auction by Kenson Siver and Zaid Ismail in 2011; the two worked to restore the home to its original integrity.

Significance: The home is special for its stately Tudor appearance and for its place in Southfield history as part of its first major population boom—a time of great transformation for the City as it transitioned from farmland to a large city. However, the Magnell Home is historically significant for its unique building method: the Permanesque style. It is the first of its kind in Oakland County, and its provenance tells a story that mirrors the rise of the Detroit automotive industry.

The Magnell House meets the criteria for exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration C, as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a method of construction.

