



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 14, 2014 REPORT NO. HRB-14-053

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of August 28, 2014

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Abraham and Anne Ratner House**

APPLICANT: Joshua Gruenberg represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 541 Silvergate Avenue, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Abraham and Anne Ratner House located at 541 Silvergate Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Abraham and Anne Ratner House located at 541 Silvergate Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1959 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a one-story, long, generally linear footprint set wide to the street; medium pitched hipped roofs; overhanging boxed eaves; a white stone chimney; stucco, board-and-batten and stone exterior; decorative concrete grilles with rounded openings in front of the windows; an angled entry with curved, white stone walls leading to the recessed entry door with side panels and sidelites; and fenestration consisting of single lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash windows and large floor-to-ceiling windows and doors.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The building is located on APN 532-180-01-00, in the small residential subdivision of Lawrence Manor. The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Abraham and Anne Ratner House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the original owners, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C, but not Criteria B and D. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.

Research into the history of the property located at 541 Silvergate Avenue did not reveal an information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Peninsula's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

The applicant's report concludes that the subject property at 541 Silvergate Avenue is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with original owners Abraham and Anne Ratner. The Ratner family moved to San Diego in 1921 and opened the United Cap Company, which would come to produce not only caps, but uniforms for the Navy during World War II. Following the War, the company expanded to menswear and suits, popularizing the leisure suit. By the 1980s, the company had acquired the Hang Ten sportswear clothing brand, and was possibly the largest clothing manufacturer in the United States. Although undoubtedly highly successful, there is insufficient information to demonstrate that the Ratners would be considered historically significant. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion B.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.

The subject property located at 541 Silvergate Avenue was constructed in 1959 in the Custom Ranch style and features a one-story, long, generally linear footprint set wide to the street; medium pitched hipped roofs with composition shingles; overhanging boxed eaves; a white stone chimney; stucco, board-and-batten and stone over wood frame construction; and a concrete foundation. The house is set back on the lot, and accessed via a large driveway and vehicular access area, with new enhanced paving. To the far left-hand side of the house is the original carport, which has been enclosed with a wood slab garage door. The main entry is angled slightly, with curved, white stone walls leading to the recessed entry door with side panels and sidelites. To the left and right of the entry are concrete grilles with rounded openings which

provide light and privacy to the windows behind. Fenestration on the house consists primarily of single lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash windows. Large floor-to-ceiling windows and doors open onto the rear yard. Modifications are minimal, and consist of the addition of a wood slab garage door at the carport. No other significant modifications are noted.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch homes because they were typically custom-designed with a specific client in mind. The Ranch style became the era's most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. Custom Ranch Homes are generally more lavish than their tract counterparts, but like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Primary character defining features include horizontal massing, wide to the street; usually single-story; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan frequently "L" or "U" shaped around a central courtyard; large attached carports or garages; and expensive building materials such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding, brick, stone, and adobe which are usually much more generous in materials and craftsmanship than tract homes.

Significance Statement: The house, which was designed by architect William Stephenson for original owners Abraham and Anne Ratner, continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style by embodying all of the primary and all but one of the secondary character defining features and historic characteristics associated with the style; including a one-story, long, generally linear footprint set wide to the street; medium pitched hipped roofs; overhanging boxed eaves; a white stone chimney; stucco, board-and-batten and stone exterior; decorative concrete grilles with rounded openings in front of the windows; an angled entry with curved, white stone walls leading to the recessed entry door with side panels and sidelites; and fenestration consisting of single lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash windows and large floor-to-ceiling windows and doors. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

The applicant's report concludes that the subject property at 541 Silvergate Avenue is significant under HRB Criterion D as the work of architect William Stephenson and landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. Both have been established as Masters by the City of Beverly Hills, and appear to have been more active in the Los Angeles area. However, the information and analysis provided in the applicant's report does not address their overall body of work, why they would be considered Masters, and how the subject property reflects their significant work, as required by the HRB Criteria Guidelines. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D at this time.

CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.

The property at 541 Silvergate Avenue has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

The property at 541 Silvergate Avenue is not located within a designated historic district, and is therefore not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

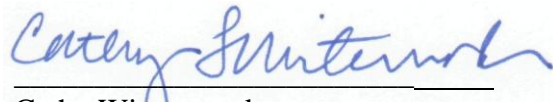
If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Abraham and Anne Ratner House located at 541 Silvergate Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1959 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Custom Ranch architecture and retains integrity. Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives.



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 8/28/2014

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 8/28/2014, to consider the historical designation of the **Abraham and Anne Ratner House** (owned by Joshua Gruenberg, 541 Silvergate Avenue, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **541 Silvergate Avenue, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **532-180-01-00**, further described as LOT 148 (EX STS) W 330 FT OF N H OF S H OF in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Abraham and Anne Ratner House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Custom Ranch architecture and retains integrity to its 1959 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a one-story, long, generally linear footprint set wide to the street; medium pitched hipped roofs; overhanging boxed eaves; a white stone chimney; stucco, board-and-batten and stone exterior; decorative concrete grilles with rounded openings in front of the windows; an angled entry with curved, white stone walls leading to the recessed entry door with side panels and sidelites; and fenestration consisting of single lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash windows and large floor-to-ceiling windows and doors. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: _____
JOHN LEMMO, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney