



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 12, 2010 REPORT NO. HRB-10-040

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of August 26, 2010

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – 6604 Muirlands Drive**

APPLICANT: Coffman Family Trust represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 6604 Muirlands Drive, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 6604 Muirlands Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 6604 Muirlands Drive under any adopted HRB Criteria.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The building is a one story single family residence located on a larger corner lot in a low-density single-family residential zone in the Muirlands Subdivision. The subject property is set back far from the street with a wide expanse of landscaping and is surrounded by residential uses.



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This item was previously heard by the Board at the July 22, 2010 hearing and continued at the request of members of the public in support of designation. At that time, the staff analysis and recommendation, as detailed in report number HRB-10-031 (Attachment 1), was to designate the subject property (then identified as the Esker and Lullah Cole House) under HRB Criterion C as a historical resource which exhibits the character defining features of the Custom Ranch style and retains integrity to its 1946 date of construction. Since the hearing, the applicant's consultants have conducted additional research and forensic analysis that reveals previously unknown modifications and demonstrates that the building has been significantly altered since its construction in 1946. These modifications, as discussed in detail below, have adversely impacted the building's integrity to such a degree that staff can no longer recommend designation.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource technical report dated "Revised May 2010" was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the building is not significant under any HRB Criteria. This report has been supplemented with a letter and attachments dated August 9, 2010 that provides additional information and analysis related to previously unknown modifications which supports the original report's conclusion that the building is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Based on review of the August 9th material, staff concurs that the site is not significant under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows:

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 house located at 6604 Muirlands Drive is a one story single family home constructed in 1946 in the Custom Ranch style. The information provided in the August 9th material identifies a number of modifications to the building which occurred after its construction in 1946. These modifications include changes to the building itself, as well as modifications to accessory structures and site improvements consisting of the following:

Site Improvements:

- Removal of some landscape elements.
- Installation of a swimming pool in 1975 and removal of the pool c.2000. (This modification was previously known.)
- Addition of retaining walls faced with brick on the west side of the pool in 1978.
- Addition of a new patio slab at the southeast end of the house.
- Removal and reconstruction of the brick wall to the east of the pool. (It is not known whether this wall was ever original or was reconstructed to match.)
- Sale and development of the lot to the west, which was originally part of the subject property when the house was built.
- Modification of the original, linear driveway to create a circular driveway sometime after 1970.

Accessory Structures:

- Addition of wood shutters on the garage and guest house at an unknown date.
- Replacement of the original wood shingle roofing at the garage and guest house with a new wood shingle roof in the 1980's.
- Addition of brick tile veneer on the garage and guest house at an unknown date.

Main Residence:

- Interior modifications. (Not relevant to the designation as original interior elements are not considered.)
- Possible addition of brick cladding under the bay window on the main elevation.
- Replacement of the original wood shingle roofing at the main house with a new wood shingle roof in the 1980's.
- Addition of a skylight above the master bedroom along the main elevation. (This modification was previously known.)
- Replacement of the original brick cladding with new brick cladding at the rear elevation below the kitchen window.
- Modification of the master bathroom window along the main elevation. (Previously staff had understood that the window was replaced within the original opening. Recent investigation into the framing reveals that the window opening has been modified several times. While the existing opening is similar in size to the original opening, it is not the original opening.)
- Enclosure of the large, southern recessed patio with windows, doors and walls. (The flooring in this area is scored concrete that matches the open recessed patio at the north end of the building. In addition, the slant of the floor, the construction, the presence of exterior siding on the north wall of the room, and the presence of a barbeque all substantiate the fact that this previously open patio space was enclosed and converted to habitable space after construction, possibly in 1956.)

Some of these modifications, including the site improvements and accessory structure modifications, as well as a few of the modifications to the main house, are relatively minor and would not singularly or in limited combination adversely impact integrity to the extent that the building would no longer convey significance. However, taken cumulatively, these seemingly minor modifications do have a significant impact. Furthermore, the modification of the master bathroom window opening along the main elevation, and most significantly the enclosure of the southern patio, have a significant impact on the building's integrity in-and-of themselves. The northern and southern recessed patios are key character defining features of this building's design and expression of the Custom Ranch style. The enclosure of the southern patio, the larger and more prominent of the two which provided larger gathering space and the large outdoor barbeque, is a highly significant modification that changes the physical design of the building and the indoor-outdoor connection and functionality so common to Modern era design.

Therefore, due to the significant modifications identified and documented in the applicant's August 9th materials, staff is no longer able to recommend designation of the property under HRB Criterion C, due to a lack of integrity related to design, materials, workmanship and feeling.

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

In the prior staff report (HRB-10-031), staff recommended against designation under Criterion D because there was not sufficient information or analysis provided to demonstrate that the subject property reflected a notable or significant transition in the development and evolution of Kesling's overall body of work. Staff reaffirms this recommendation; and would add that in light of the modifications identified, the subject building does not retain sufficient integrity of design or association to be significant as a notable example of Kesling's work, were he to be established as a Master. Therefore, staff continues to recommend against designation under HRB Criterion D.

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 property located at 6604 Muirlands Drive not be designated under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of 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
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

- Attachment(s): 1. Staff Report No. HRB-10-031, dated July 16, 2010
2. Applicant's letter and attachments dated August 9, 2010 under separate cover



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 16, 2010 REPORT NO. HRB-10-031

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of July 22, 2010

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Esker and Lullah Cole House**

APPLICANT: Coffman Family Trust represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 6604 Muirlands Drive, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Esker and Lullah Cole House located at 6604 Muirlands Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Esker and Lullah Cole House located at 6604 Muirlands Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1946 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 the Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-to-moderately pitched hipped roof with wood shingles; deep overhanging eaves with long, thin, slightly spaced wood slats at the soffit; vertical wood tongue-and-groove and brick siding over wood frame construction; and large expanses of single pane wood frame and sash windows.



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BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The building is a one story single family residence located on a larger corner lot in a low-density single-family residential zone in the Muirlands Subdivision. The subject property is set back far from the street with a wide expanse of landscaping and is surrounded by residential uses.

The historic name of the resource, the Esker and Lullah Cole House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of Esker and Lullah Cole, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource technical report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees with that conclusion, and recommends that the site be designated as a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C. 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.

There is no information that indicates that the property located at 6604 Muirlands Drive exemplifies or reflects a special element of any aspect of development outlined in Criterion A. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under this criterion.

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

The property located at 6604 Muirlands Drive was owned by a number of individuals following the ownership of the original owner/residents, Esker and Lullah Cole, as follows: Esker and Lullah Cole (1945-1963), Esker Cole (1963-1964), Esker and Grace Cole (1964-1965), James and Ann Pike (1965-1970), Lyle and Bonnie Upton (1970-1972), and others thereafter. There is no information that indicates that any of these individuals are significant in local, state or national history. 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 house located at 6604 Muirlands Drive is a one story single family home constructed in 1946 in the Custom Ranch style. The house features a rectangular shape configuration with a low-to-moderately pitched hipped roof clad in wood shingles. Two decorative dove-cotes with horizontal slats are located on the roof. The construction is vertical wood tongue-and-groove and brick siding over a wood frame on a reinforced concrete foundation. Deep eaves project beyond the building wall and the soffit is finished with long, thin, slightly spaced wood slats. At the main,

east elevation the entry is roughly centered and recessed several feet into the building plane. The entry door is wooden with four square glass panes set vertically along the left side of the door face. To the right of the recessed entry and progressing north along the façade is a projecting bay with a brick base below and single pane wood frame and sash windows; short black aluminum sliding windows set high on the wall in the original opening; a wood and glass door; and single pane wood frame and sash windows at and continuing around the corner. To the left of the recessed entry and progressing south along the façade is a wide brick chimney set perpendicularly to and through the building wall and tied into a large brick element immediately adjacent to the entry; a wide projecting bay with a brick base and three single pane wood frame windows; and large single pane floor-to-ceiling wood frame windows.

At the north end of the building, a low brick wall wraps round the building on three sides, even with the line of the eave above on the east and north sides, and defines a small patio area that is partially recessed under the northwest corner of the building. At the south elevation, a wide brick barbeque is set perpendicularly to and through the building wall flanked by pairs of large single lite French doors to the right and a small window opening and Ranch style wood door with diamond pattern lites. The west elevation at the rear of the house looks out over views to the ocean and contains a series of wood frame and sash windows over a brick base and a rounded projecting bay at the south end.

A detached garage with guest house is located at the south end of the property and exhibits the same character defining features as the main house, including the low-to-moderately pitched hipped roof with wood shingles; deep overhanging eaves with long, thin, slightly spaced wood slats at the soffit; vertical wood tongue-and-groove and brick siding over wood frame construction; and single pane wood frame and sash windows. The garage door is solid wood door with a concentric rectangle pattern and appears to be original.

Modifications to the property are limited and include the replacement of the original, small wood frame and sash window to the far right of the entry with a black aluminum frame and sash window in the original opening; the removal of a small window to the left of the barbeque on the south elevation (which was boarded over but not framed in); the addition of a swimming pool in 1974 (which was later filled-in), the addition of retaining walls in 1977 and the addition and apparent removal of a “canopy cover” in 1956. In all, the building retains a high degree of integrity.

According to the San Diego Modernism Historic Context, the Custom Ranch style “*was relatively popular in residential design and construction throughout San Diego... Custom Ranch homes are generally much more lavish than their tract counterparts; they frequently included a large landscaped property, with a deep street setback creating a generous front yard. These homes may also feature larger garages, motor courts, servant’s quarters, expanded kitchens, and generous living spaces... Many of these structures were associated with a recognized architect and most were designed for a specific client with individual programmatic needs and preferences. Therefore, this sub-style exhibits a high degree of individualization. Properties eligible for individual designation should retain character defining features historically present on the resource.*”

The custom-designed house at 6604 Muirlands Drive exhibits the primary and secondary character defining features of the Custom Ranch style as follows:

Primary Character Defining Features:

- Long rectangular floor plan set horizontally to Muirlands Drive.
- Single story configuration.
- Custom details consisting of long expanses of wood frame windows, some set floor-to-ceiling; shutters the guest house; and large, wide brick chimney and barbeque.
- Prominent, long, low-to-moderately pitched hipped roof with very deep overhangs and detailed soffits.

Secondary Character Defining Features:

- Sprawling floor plan (100 feet long) in a rectangular (not “L” or “U” shaped) configuration with patio areas at the north and south ends.
- Large detached garage.
- Extensive use of wood shingle roofing, vertical tongue and groove siding and brick throughout the house.

In addition to these primary and secondary character defining features, the house exhibits other features that the Modernism Context Statement note are indicative of Custom Ranch homes, including a deep setback and generous landscaped front yard; a motor court (circular drive leading to the garage); a guest house or servant’s quarters; and at 2,565 square feet, generous living spaces.

The house at 6604 Muirlands Drive exhibits the character defining features of the Custom Ranch style as identified in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement and retains a high degree of integrity from its 1946 date of construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 subject property was designed by noted modernist designer William Kesling (also Kessling) for original owners and residents Esker and Lullah Cole. Kesling was a prolific designer/builder who began his career in the 1920’s in construction and drafting. Information on Kesling’s career and work has been provided both in the Moomjian report and in a packet of information prepared and submitted by Angeles Leira (Attachment 3). The Moomjian report characterizes Kesling largely as a designer of pre-fabricated and spec homes utilizing a modernist aesthetic that were generally common and in some cases designed for economy. The report concludes that Kesling has not and should not be regarded as a Master. The information provided by Leira includes a thorough review of Kesling’s work and how that body of work has come to be viewed by other modernist architects, scholars and enthusiasts. Leira concludes that Kesling should be regarded as a Master, and that the subject property should be designated as an example of his work.

It appears based on the information provided that Kesling was a prolific and talented designer of modernist buildings who has come to be respected by practicing modernist architects and enthusiasts of modernist architecture. While Kesling may be eligible for establishment as a Master Designer/Builder, there is insufficient evidence provided in the record to demonstrate that the subject property is a notable example of Kesling's work. The information provided by Leira suggests that the house may be notable in her discussion on page 6:

“This house, more than others, is very important to the evolution of William Kesling as a California Modernist, in that it shows clearly the transition from the simple and modest California Modern of the Dowling Drive Houses to the grander custom designs of the later 1940's and 1950's and his work in Borrego Springs. It is still modest looking, but no longer the simple flat or low pitched gable roof of this earlier La Jolla homes (Dowling Drive).”

However, there is little information or analysis to substantiate this statement. A photographic survey and analysis would be required to demonstrate this transition in design development and the significant or notable role that this house played in that development. Therefore, staff is unable to 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 located at 6604 Muirlands Drive has not been listed on or determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing by the State Historic Preservation Office for listing on the State Register or Historic Resource and is therefore 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 located at 6604 Muirlands Drive 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 Esker and Lullah Cole House located at 6604 Muirlands Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1946 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the character defining features of the Custom Ranch style and retains integrity to its date of construction. 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.



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Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
3. Analysis of William Kesling provided by Angeles Leira