



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 9, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-069

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of November 18, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – 6210 Avenida Cresta**

APPLICANT: Michael and Trina Wahle represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 6210 Avenida Cresta, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 6210 Avenida Cresta as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 6210 Avenida Cresta under any adopted HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity.

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 house is a one and two story single family home located in the residential subdivision of La Jolla Hermosa.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C and D. Staff disagrees, and finds that the building is not eligible for designation 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 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.

The applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of La Jolla's historical and architectural development, being one of the first homes constructed in the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision during the early 1920s. The report states that the subject property was one of the first 15 homes built within the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision and notes that it was constructed for the tract manager, Frank Turnbull. Aside from the connection with Turnbull as tract manager, the applicant has not demonstrated how the subject property is unique among the other 14 original homes built within the subdivision. No comparative analysis with the other 14 original homes has been completed to demonstrate how the subject property would exemplify or reflect a special element of La Jolla Hermosa's development to any greater extent than the other properties. Furthermore, the association with Turnbull as tract manager is not sufficient to distinguish this house from the others as a special element, especially in light of the significant modifications which have occurred to the house since the original construction and establishment of the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision. These modifications are discussed in greater detail in the Criterion C analysis. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion A.

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

The applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion B for an association with Frank Turnbull, who served as tract manager of the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision, developed by the Balfour Company, of which Turnbull was president. Other than his work on the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision, no other information or documentation was provided to demonstrate that Turnbull made significant contributions to San Diego's history. As a developer he helped to establish a large subdivision within the La Jolla community; however, this is not sufficient to establish Turnbull as a historically significant individual. 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 6210 Avenida Cresta is a one and two story Spanish Eclectic style home constructed in 1925, and features cross gable single barrel clay tile roofs; clipped eaves; quatrefoil vents in the gable end; a raised stucco cornice; slightly textured stucco walls over wood frame construction; a stucco coated masonry chimney; and a concrete foundation. As originally designed, the house featured a wide two story massing under a cross gable roof. The front-facing gable at the second story originally featured a quatrefoil attic vent over two stucco grilles with square cut-out detailing. Based on the shadowing in the historic photograph, it appears that these grilles likely had windows behind them. At the north end of the two story massing, a one story front gable projecting bay houses the two car garage. Fenestration originally consisted primarily of paired 4-lite casement windows.

Modifications to the site are extensive and include additions in 1931 and 1936 of an unknown nature and location identified on the Residential Building Record; addition of a 156 square feet detached garden house in 1953 at the west side of the parcel; addition of 708 square feet in 1958 on the southwest (rear) elevation; addition of 352 square feet on the southeast (front) elevation,

addition of a service porch along the north (side) elevation, and the apparent addition of 71-142 square feet on the north (side) elevation, all in 1961; and 282 square feet of additions in 1966 at the northwest corner of the house consisting of a dressing room addition and enclosure of a service porch. At an unknown date, the stucco grille detailing at the second story on the front façade was removed, and the window openings appear to have been enlarged. Decorative wrought iron grilles that appear to be consistent with other grilles present on the house historically were added to these enlarged openings.

In 2006, a remodeling project was submitted to the City for approval. Prior HRB staff reviewed historical information for the property and determined that because the property represented a “relatively intact example of Master Architect Edgar Ullrich’s work,” it would be treated as potentially historic and the project was reviewed for consistency with the Standards. A report was not forwarded to the HRB for review at that time. The project consisted of a number of modifications and alterations, including extensive remodeling of prior additions. The roof of the 1961 addition on the front elevation was changed from a shed roof to a front gable roof, and additions at the back and sides were removed or altered. New construction was added, primarily at the rear. The roofing tiles were inspected and it was determined that approximately 50 percent of the original Mission tile roofing was salvageable. It was removed and reinstalled along the historic portions of the front façade. Additional historic tiles were laced in with new tiles on the remainder of the house. These alterations were approved as consistent with the Standards, primarily because the alterations impacted prior additions and were located at the back of the house.

Following permit issuance, the applicant found that the original portions of the house had several layers of stucco, and that the existing top layer did not reflect the original texture. According to the applicant, the project team worked with HRB staff to determine an appropriate stucco texture and the entire house received a new stucco finish.

The project also resulted in the replacement of all windows on the house. According to a letter from project architect Mark Lyon (Attachment 2) the existing windows were steel frame and determined to be not original. The letter states that all windows were replaced with single-lite aluminum clad wood windows. Based on the historic photos in the report, including a photo from c.1925 and photos taken just prior to the 2006 alterations, it appears that the windows at the second floor on the front façade were 4-lite casement windows, and likely wood frame and sash, based on the profile. The photos at the side and rear do appear to be steel frame and may have been retrofitted to the openings. In a phone conversation with Mr. Lyon, he stated that he could not recall whether or not the front windows at the second floor were wood or steel. He also stated that the determination that the steel windows were replacement windows was based on other homes in the area which were constructed in the 1950s with similar steel windows. Mr. Lyon’s letter goes on to state that the replacement of the windows was approved by HRB staff. The project plans in the report do not include notes regarding the replacement of the existing windows. In addition, if HRB staff were to have approved replacement windows, staff would certainly have required in-kind replacement. The windows installed are aluminum clad wood and are single lite, single casement windows, whereas the historic windows were wood, 4-lite paired casement windows. The replacements were clearly not done in-kind.

Upon review of the historic report, completion of a site visit, and review of staff comments related to the 2006 remodel project, staff finds that the building does not retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling to be eligible for designation. This determination is based in large part to significant alterations that occurred prior to 2006, specifically the 1961 addition at the front and the removal of the stucco grille detailing and likely alteration of the window openings at the second floor of the front façade at an unknown date prior to 2006. The 1961 addition substantially altered the original proportions and spatial relationships of the original design, and obscured a large portion of the original front façade. It changed the shape of the house as perceived from the street from an “L” shape to a “U” shape and significantly detracted from the simple massing and articulation. Regardless of how the addition was altered in 2006, it is staff’s position that the addition significantly impaired the integrity of the resource when it was constructed in 1961, and continues to impair it today.

In addition, staff finds that the removal of the original stucco grilles seen in the c.1925 historic photograph and the apparent enlargement of these window openings also significantly impaired the integrity of the building. The alteration of this character defining decorative feature detracts from the resource, and the addition of decorative wrought iron grilles that match the original grilles creates a false sense of history. Although the building was treated as potentially historic by staff during review of the project, the building was not considered for designation by the Board, and the decision to treat a property as potentially historic for the purpose of project review cannot predispose future staff or the Board to a future action. Lastly, the wholesale replacement of all windows with historically inappropriate windows that do not match the material, style, configuration or appearance of the original windows further degrades the integrity of the house. For these reasons, staff is unable to recommend designation under HRB Criterion C due to a lack of integrity.

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

Born in Colorado Springs in 1893, Edgar Ullrich attended Colorado College and, by 1923, was a practicing architect. He relocated to San Diego in 1924 to take a commission by Isabel Hopkins to design the Casa de Manana resort hotel (HRB Site #213). Between 1924 and his death in 1958, he designed many homes in La Jolla and throughout San Diego. Although he is known to have designed in the Tudor Revival and French Norman styles, he primarily worked in the Spanish Eclectic or “Mediterranean” style.

Ullrich was the tract architect for the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision, designing fifteen homes there and reviewing all new home designs for conformance with the design guidelines and building restrictions. During the course of his career, Ullrich designed more than twenty-five major buildings in La Jolla including churches and academic buildings, some of which are designated locally and one of which is listed on the National Register. Other examples include the Muir House or the “Versailles of La Jolla” and the Baille House both located in the Muirlands section of La Jolla. In his own residence, Ullrich used the pseudo-Tudor type of architecture. Examples of his classical Renaissance buildings are the Immaculate Heart Seminary and the More Hall School of Law and the University of San Diego.

As originally designed, the subject house reflected Ullrich's work in the Spanish Eclectic style. However, the additions and alterations described in detail in the discussion of Criterion C completed by other architects and contractors have significantly detracted from the original Ullrich design, altering the spatial relationships and massing along the primary elevation and obscuring a portion of the original façade. As a result, the subject property no longer retains the design and feeling aspects of integrity, both of which are especially important in regard to an association with a Master Builder. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation of the subject property 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 6210 Avenida Cresta 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. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
2. Letter from Architect Mark Lyon under separate cover