

Barry E. Hager
2252 Fort Stockton Drive
San Diego, CA 92103

May 21, 2024

Historical Resources Board
City of San Diego
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101
c/o Suzanne Segur, HRB Liaison
Email: ssegur@sandiego.gov

Re: HRB Hearing Date: May 23, 2024
Item #5 – 7960 La Jota Way

Dear Chair Hutter and Board Members:

I urge the Board to reject staff's recommendation and instead designate this property under Criteria C and D. Staff's recommendation to not designate violates the integrity of the Single Discipline Preliminary Review (SDPR) process and has negative ramifications for the entire process.

The document entitled "Historical Resources Board Staff Assistance Procedure for Proposed Building Modifications" (see copy attached) on Development Services webpage provides various options for seeking guidance from HRB staff, including the option to seek a SDPR for historical purposes. The possible conclusions from the process are as follows:

"The SDRP [sic: SDPR] may conclude that your property, although 45 or more years old, is not potentially historic due to loss of material integrity. ... However, ***if the SDRP concludes that your property is potentially historic and your project conforms to the Standards***, to the level of detail that you submitted, you may be able to modify your structure without going through a designation process with the HRB. You also preserve a future opportunity to be considered for historical designation if you wish." [emphasis added]

The above guidance makes clear that a conclusion that a project conforms to the Standards must be coupled with a conclusion that the property is potentially historic. It would make no sense to conclude that the property complies with the Standards if it wasn't potentially historic, since the "Standards" refer to the *Standards for Treatment of Historical Property*.

Development Services' cycle review comments to the SDPR confirm that the applicant requested a determination as to whether the subject property is potentially historically significant and eligible for designation in conjunction with requesting whether the project was consistent with the Standards. Staff's ultimate response that the project is consistent with the Standards necessarily implies that the property was potentially significant and eligible for designation. Otherwise, complying with the Standards would be irrelevant.

It appears that the applicant spent hundreds of thousands of dollars carrying out a project in reliance on staff guidance. For staff to now disavow the meaning of its guidance and take the

position that the property is not eligible for designation is disingenuous at best. Moreover, it throws the value of the SDPR process into question.

Ample evidence has been presented that the property is eligible for designation under two criteria. Please reject staff's recommendation and designate this property as historic.

Sincerely,



Barry E. Hager

Enclosure: Historical Resources Board Staff Assistance Procedure for Proposed Building Modifications

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD STAFF ASSISTANCE PROCEDURE FOR PROPOSED BUILDING MODIFICATIONS

March 2009

You may contact the staff to the Historical Resources Board [HRB] for guidance when you are interested in modifying a designated historic building, including a building within a designated historic district or any building over 45 years of age. The options for seeking guidance from the HRB staff are outlined below.

If your *site has already been designated as a historical site* by the City's HRB and you want to propose additions or modifications to your building, your options are:

1. You may **meet with HRB staff** about your intentions for changes to your property for up to ½ hour at no charge. This will allow you to discuss the general direction of your proposal to change your historic building. You should bring current photos of all elevations and a view from the street front and sketches of your proposal to review with staff. During the meeting, staff will provide you with verbal comments and general guidance about whether your proposal appears to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards) which govern modifications to designated historic sites. This option is intended to provide advice for small homeowner projects when an architect or design professional is not involved. If you are already working with an architect you should follow option 2 or 3 described below.
2. You may seek a **Single Discipline Preliminary Review [SDPR] for historical purposes**. You can submit plans/sketches, photos, and other information required by Development Services Department's Bulletin 513 along with a fee to the Project Submittal section on the 3rd floor of the Development Services Center (1222 First Avenue). The HRB staff will review the information you provide and prepare written comments regarding consistency of your proposal with the Standards, based on the level of detail that you submit. During this process, HRB staff may determine it is appropriate to meet with the HRB Design Assistance Subcommittee to discuss your proposal.

To the degree that future plans submitted for building permits are consistent with the information submitted and evaluated in the SDPR, HRB staff's formal review of your submitted project will be simplified and straightforward. See Information Bulletin 581 for a complete discussion of processing requirements for designated historical resources and properties within historic districts.

3. You may **submit your building permit plans directly to the Project Submittal section** on the 3rd floor of the Development Services Center (1222 First Avenue). Your plans will be routed to HRB staff for evaluation of your project's compliance with the Standards. All proposed modifications and additions to designated historic properties will be evaluated. HRB staff may forward your project to the Design Assistance Subcommittee for evaluation if determined necessary. If your proposal cannot be judged to be in compliance with the Standards, you may then be directed into a discretionary process with the Development Services Department.

If your *site has NOT been designated as a historical site* by the City's HRB but you are interested in preserving the potential historical integrity of your building, and you want to propose additions or modifications to it, your options are:

1. You may **meet with HRB staff** about your intentions for changes to your property for up to ½ hour at no charge. This will allow you to discuss the appropriateness of your proposal if you are interested in preserving a future possible determination of historicity. You should bring current photos of all elevations and a view from the street front and any sketches of your proposal to review with staff. Staff will discuss historical issues with you but will not make a determination during this meeting about whether the site should be considered for historical designation. During the meeting, staff will provide you with verbal comments about whether proposed additions or modifications appear to comply with the Standards which govern modifications to designated

historical sites. Staff may also be able to indicate to you whether your building appears, from photographs provided, to retain architectural integrity. Staff may also advise you to apply for historical designation, and explain the benefits of doing so. This option is intended to provide advice for small homeowner projects when an architect or design professional is not involved. If you are already working with an architect you should follow option 2 or 3 described below.

2. You may seek a **Single Discipline Preliminary Review [SDPR]** for historical purposes. You can submit plans/sketches, photos, and other information required by Development Services Department's Bulletin 513 along with a fee to the Project Submittal section on the 3rd floor of the Development Services Center (1222 First Avenue). The HRB staff will review the information you provide, and prepare written comments regarding the potential historical significance of your property and consistency of your proposal with the Standards, based on the level of detail that you submitted, even though your property is not historically designated.

The SDRP may conclude that your property, although 45 or more years old, is not historically significant due to loss of material integrity. If this is the case, you may submit a project without regard to compliance with the Standards. However, if the SDRP concludes that your property is potentially historic and your project conforms to the Standards, to the level of detail that you submitted, you may be able to modify your structure without going through a designation process with the HRB. You also preserve a future opportunity to be considered for historical designation if you wish.

You may use this SDPR analysis to demonstrate compliance with the Standards when you submit for your building permits. This may simplify your ministerial plan review process. However, if your property is potentially historic and your proposal does not conform to the Standards, when you do submit your plans to Project Intake in the Development Services Department, staff will request that you prepare a Site Specific Historical Survey based on an evaluation of required information about your property, including past owners and occupants, and the building architect. The results of this more detailed analysis will be used to refer your property to the HRB for formal designation or to determine that the property is not historically significant. See Information Bulletin 580 for a complete discussion of processing requirements for potential historical resources.

3. You may **submit your building permit plans directly to the Project Submittal section** on the 3rd floor of the Development Services Center. Based on information you have submitted, you may be "cleared" of any further requirement for historical analysis, and you may be allowed to proceed directly with your building plans. Alternatively, you may be asked to prepare a Site Specific Historical Survey which would be reviewed by HRB staff to determine the historical significance of your property. At that point, you may be directed to seek a historical resources designation determination. See Information Bulletin 580 for a complete discussion of processing requirements for historical determinations for buildings 45 or more years old.

If you have any questions about the information presented here or to schedule a meeting with HRB staff, you may send an email inquiry to HistoricalResources@saniego.gov.

To obtain Information Bulletins, go to the City of San Diego's website at www.sandiego.gov/development-services, headings of "Information Bulletins" or "Submittal Information." This procedural advice is not applicable to your property or your project if your proposal is subject to *discretionary review* as determined by the Development Services Department.

From: [Elizabeth Courtier](#)
To: [Garcia, Caroline](#); [Lin, Alvin](#); [Segur, Suzanne](#); [Stanco, Kelley](#)
Cc: [Daniel Aisen](#); [Scott Moomjian](#); [Ione Stiegler](#); [Carrie Aisen](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Historical Resources Board Meeting Of May 23, 2024; Item-5; 7960 La Jota Way, La Jolla
Date: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 9:31:09 PM

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Dear Mr. Hutter et al:

Mr. Tim Hutter, Chair & City of San Diego Historical Resource Board Members
1222 First Avenue, Fifth Floor
San Diego, CA 92101
** Via US Mail + Email**

It has just come to my attention that the potential Designation of my clients, Daniel and Carrie Aisen's, home at 7960 La Jota Way in La Jolla will be coming before the HRB tomorrow May 23rd.

It has further been brought to my attention that despite hiring quite literally one of the absolute most respected Experts in Historic Preservation Architecture in San Diego, Ione Stiegler/IS Architecture, who I understand diligently consulted and accommodated Staff's feedback numerous times City Staff has now elected not to support the property for Designation.

As a Broker with over 28 years of experience proudly representing Historic and Architectural properties throughout San Diego the Aisen's engaged me to find them the perfect Historic home for them here in La Jolla...a home that had roots and a sense of history in the community where they would be soon raising their young family. If we have not already met, should you have any questions regarding my qualifications and/or the caliber of homes that I have been fortunate enough to represent please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at (619) 813-6686 or peruse my website [ArchitectureInSanDiego.com](#).

After months of searching, we found the perfect home at 7960 La Jota Way. The sense of History, including it being an early work of Master Architects, Mosher + Drew, coupled with the fantastic location and significance of the Seller being a Nobel Prize winner were all factors in their desire to buy and restore this... until now... unknown gem for future generations to enjoy. As I was an Agent in the firm handling the Listing side of the transaction, I was able to negotiate the terms of a contract that was a win-win for all parties involved before it could ever even hit the Open Market. The location/lot as you know is incredibly special in terms of its privacy and views and I am beyond confident that 9.9 out of 10 Buyers would have simply razed the existing house to build a "bigger and better" rendition. Not the Aisen's.

Their steadfast commitment to retaining the best of the best to shepherd them through this process demonstrates the level of sincerity and integrity that the Aisen's possess. To do basically a "bait and switch" at the last minute seems unfair at best. They in good conscience followed Staff's direction and guidance each and every step of the way...only to now be rebuked. How can Homeowners have faith in the daunting, time-consuming, and profoundly expensive process when it is so capricious?

So many questions....

- If...in your opinion...the home was not eligible for Designation then why was that not ever clearly communicated to their representatives given the multiple design consultations with Staff? The Aisen's could have scraped the existing structure/built a new one and made a fortune however, that was not their intent, and they relied on the expertise and professionalism of City Staff to provide that seasoned guidance.

- If...in your opinion...the home was not eligible for Designation then why did you encourage my clients ...at a significant/considerable expense... to restore a property that was very clearly in neglected/ill-maintained condition?

- How Staff does not recognize the identifying elements as outlined in their own San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement for a (Custom) Mid-Century Ranch is perplexing. It might not be your own personal "favorite style" which is fine however, that is moot.

- The Architectural integrity has been maintained....even more so than in 2020 when Staff supported Designation. To completely ignore the significant Market fundamentals of severely restrained Insurance requirements is nonsensical at best.

I sincerely hope that upon reflection City Staff recognizes the Aisen's sincere intent and considerable expense... at Staff's guidance... and recommends Designation of this beautiful property. Any other outcome would be egregious. Please be so kind as to confirm receipt and I do hope that this additional context is useful in making an educated and informed decision.

Thank you for your time,
Elizabeth



Elizabeth Courtiér

Historic & Architectural Specialist

619.813.6686

Elizabeth@ArchitectureInSanDiego.com

DRE# 01198840

1111 Prospect Street, La Jolla, CA 92037

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Save Our Heritage Organisation

Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

May 20, 2024

Kelley Stanco
Deputy Director
City Planning Department
202 C Street, M.S. 413
San Diego, CA 92101
planning@sandiego.gov

Re: 7960 La Jota Way, La Jolla, CA

Dear Kelley,

I have read the staff report, nomination package, viewed the property, plan's and reviewed the before and after photos, etc. for 7960 La Jota Way. SOHO believes that the property qualifies for the local register under criterions C and D. The additions do not substantially detract from the original design and the character defining features of this significant Custom Ranch House by Master Architects Roy Drew and Robert Mosher remain preserved. The current owners went to great lengths to further minimize any potential impacts and differentiate the new additions from the original design. The original design is instantly discernable to even an untrained eye. The change in the material of the shake shingle siding is also an appropriate and acceptable solution and is in keeping with the original design intent and is painted in the original color. This material change is allowed under the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation.

We concur with the following Statements of Significance from the designation application:

“The period of significance for 7960 La Jota Way is 1952 for Criterion C, the year in which it was constructed. The house is significant under HRB Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Custom Ranch substyle of Modern architecture. The home is also significant under Criterion D with a period of significance of 1952 (year of construction) for being the work of Master Architects Roy Drew and Robert Mosher.

7960 La Jota Way was designed in 1952 by architecture firm Architects Mosher Drew and was constructed by builder Selby Scott. The residence was constructed as a single-story with a walk-out basement. The single-family residence was created with standard construction on a concrete foundation, with a detached garage. The residence was constructed with a wood shingle and brick exterior, along with casement windows. The roofline is listed as a combination gable and hipped roof with wood shakes.”

Criterion C: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

The house is significant under Criterion C as expressing the distinctive and significant characteristics of the ranch style of architecture, as an architect designed Custom Ranch. 7960 La Jota Way was designed by architects Robert Mosher and Roy Drew for Nina Bowden. 7960 La Jota Way matches most of the identifying characteristics of a ranch-style home identified in Virginia McAlester's "A Field Guide to American Houses", including its general one-story shape, low-pitched roof without dormers, off-centered entrance, and asymmetrical facade. From its massing to

its detailing, the home is an excellent example of a mid-20th century ranch home.

The house has a simple horizontal facade, while the U-shaped rear focused plan and interior opens up to the expansive rear patio blending indoor and outdoor spaces. The asymmetrical facade, horizontal design and massing contain wide eaves. The low-pitched cross-hipped roof and U-shaped form are classic details of a ranch home.

McAlester discusses that a “cross-hipped roof” such as the one on 7960 La Jota Way is one of the four principal subtypes of ranch homes and is seen in up to 40% of these homes. A second hipped front extension is also present on the west (main) elevation, a feature that is also common on ranch homes.

The home is custom designed to fit on its lot and features a rear lawn, along with a patio and deck. Some of the other significant architecturally defining elements of this Mid-Century Custom Ranch house are the custom-designed details such as the singles and wooden windows. The asymmetrical facade and open floor plan with large windows, along with rather traditional elements, show the mixture of modern and traditional elements that are indicative of the development of the ranch style.

San Diego Modernism Context Statement

According to San Diego’s Modernism Context Statement, the custom-ranch style homes were custom-designed with a specific client in mind and became the era’s most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. The home matches numerous the primary, secondary, and general characteristics noted in the Modernism Context Statement.

General Characteristics Defined by the San Diego Modernism Context Statement

- “Designers of these custom homes include such noted San Diego designers as Cliff May, Richard Wheeler, CJ Paderewski, and Weir Brothers construction. “The residence was designed by architects Mosher Drew and built by contractor Shelby Scott. Architects Mosher Drew are listed in the Modern Context Statement as a “Contributing Designer of Modern San Diego”, and designed numerous homes in the mid-century ranch style, especially in La Jolla. Their architectural influence on La Jolla is substantial as they designed buildings and homes (including the Coronado Bridge) throughout their lengthy and prolific career. Therefore, the home meets the criteria of being designed by a noted San Diego designer.
- “Custom Ranch Homes are generally much more lavish than their tract counterparts; they frequently included a large, landscaped property”. 7960 La Jota Way features a large rear courtyard open space which is landscaped.
- “Materials and detailing are generally traditional. Typical exterior materials include wood siding, stone, concrete block, brick, and even adobe. Detailing may include paneled wood doors, divided lite windows, wood shutters, and prominent chimneys.”

The residence includes an exterior with a compatible synthetic wood shingle. A brick chimney located along the roofline was restored in 2022. 7960 La Jota Way, therefore, possesses these elements indicative of Custom Ranch construction.

Primary-Character Defining Features Defined by the San Diego Modernism Context Statement

There are four identified “Primary” Character-Defining features of Custom Ranch construction. Under the Modernism Context Statement, 7960 La Jota Way possesses the majority of these features.

The following are primary character-defining features noted in the Modernism Context Statement

- Horizontal massing, wide to the street
- Usually single-story
- Custom details (large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys)
- Prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs

Modernism Context Statement-Secondary Character-Defining Features

According to the Modernism Context Statement, there are three (3) “Primary” Character-Defining features of Custom Ranch construction. Under the Modernism Context Statement, the residence also has the majority of Secondary character-defining features associated with the Custom Ranch style.

- Sprawling floor plan frequently “L” or “U”
- Large, attached carports or garages
- Expensive building materials

Criterion D: Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist, or craftsman.

7960 La Jota Way is significant under Criterion D, for being a good, representative example of the work of Master Architects Robert Mosher and Roy Drew during their partnership. The period of significance for Criterion D is 1952.

Analysis

This residence is undoubtedly work done by Architects Mosher Drew with reference to the attached E.4 Criterion D Documentation. These original sheets were provided directly from Architects Mosher Drew (AMD) office’s archives. They include an original hand-drawn plan and elevations of the home. Although they are not dated nor have city-approved stamping, it is clear that they represent Mrs. Nina Bowden’s residence in La Jolla on the title block.

Attachment E.5 Criterion D Documentation further supports the claim that this residence was done by AMD as Roy Drew himself signed as a witness for the ROW permit portion. These attachments show a clear timeline involving the Mosher Drew firm from the initial drawings provided to the witness signing by Roy nearing project completion.

7960 La Jota Way showcases numerous techniques that Mosher and Drew used, and still carries a strong Mid-Century and Custom Ranch association with it. The strong wooden shingle motifs, along with the bold horizontal design that centers around a courtyard with interior/exterior connections is a unique example of their work that offers depth into their design. Overall, the home is eligible for designation as a notable and representative example of Architects Mosher Drew’s early work at the start of their collaboration.

Having established their firm in 1948, Architects Mosher-Drew began working on commercial and residential projects throughout San Diego. When referring to early works of Architects Mosher-Drew, below are examples of residences comparable to the Nina Bowden House with building footprints, exterior design materials, and site-specific design features.

Starting in 1948, both the Wick House located at 1433 Savoy Circle and the Rosco Hazard House at 555 Gage Lane are early examples of a U-Shaped building footprint. The Wick House’s U-Shape footprint creates a similar private courtyard for the homeowners. These houses also share exterior design materials and features with the use of wood siding, wood roofing, and brick chimneys.

Then in 1949, located less than half a mile down the road at 1874 Spindrift Drive, the Koehler House was built. With similar building footprints and orientation on their respective sites, these homes both capture private external views of La Jolla Shores and provide an internal courtyard. It is clear when the opportunity came to design a house up the street only 3 years later, Mosher-Drew took inspiration from the Koehler House and applied it to the new grade conditions and access points and developed the Nina Bowden House.

In 1951, the Herbert Kunzel House at 3250 McCall Street was constructed as another example of a U-Shaped residence that creates an internal courtyard for the homeowners. Wood siding, roofing, and brick chimneys are materials that continued to be utilized by Architects Mosher-Drew during these early years of design. The

Kunzel house is credited and designated both in part due to its importance to the City of San Diego as well as recognizing the work of Mosher-Drew's designs at this time.

Later in the year 1952, either during or after the construction of the Nina Bowden House, the Tuttle House located at 1835 Spindrift Dr was built. The Tuttle House's shape creates yet another private internal courtyard for the homeowners and continues with the theme of designing with a U-shaped footprint. While having primarily a stucco facade, the house also compares with the Nina Bowden House with touches of a brick facade, a brick chimney, and wood roofing.

7960 La Jota Way is a notable example of AMD's early residential design at this point. It showcases a combination of a U-Shaped building footprint, capturing private external views through site orientation, and a typical blend of exterior materials the firm used at the time prior to Mosher's sabbatical in 1955.

Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a pattern or configuration or form a historic property.

The house does retain sufficient integrity of materials to convey its significance. The vast majority of the fabric appears original throughout the house or has alterations that meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The alterations to materials that were made complement the original structure with compatible but fire-resistive materials. The need for fire resistive construction was driven both by local building codes and the multiple fire insurance companies that refused to insure a structure with a wood shake roof and wood shingle siding within certain distances for a Very High Fire Severity Zone.

Eligibility Conclusion:

7960 La Jota Way is eligible for listing in the San Diego Register of Historical Resources. With a period of significance of 1952 it has been found significant under Criterion C as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century and Custom Ranch style of Modern Architecture as defined by the San Diego Modernism Context. The home has also been found significant under Criterion D with a period of significance of 1952 as a representative work of Robert Mosher and Roy Drew. Moreover, despite the few alterations that occurred after 1952, the house has been found to retain each of the seven aspects of integrity by which it conveys its significance.

We urge to you to designate 7960 La Jota Way as local landmark under criteria C and D.

Thank you for your consideration,



Bruce Coons
Executive Director