



The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House

5126 Canterbury Drive

Proposed Designation under HRB Criterion C · Built 1950

Minimal Traditional 1935 - 1950

Why the Minimal Traditional house matters to the American architectural record

The Minimal Traditional house is a snapshot in time of a specific American moment. It emerged in the late 1930s as the country climbed out of the Great Depression, when new federal programs rewarded builders who could deliver sound, restrained, economical houses to families.

World War 2 then froze residential construction almost completely. When it ended, millions of returning servicemen and their families needed housing immediately, and they needed simplified designs. Builders answered with the form already proven: compact, one story, structurally simple, and stripped of the elaborate ornament carried by the revival styles of the 1920s that came before it.

That restraint is precisely the point. The Minimal Traditional house kept the familiar traditional silhouette, the gabled roof, the brick chimney, the front door facing the street, while shedding elaborations that this generation could neither afford nor wanted. Restraint was not a failure of ambition. It was the design program.

It is recognized as a distinct style nationally by architectural historians and locally by the San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement. It is not a diminished version of another style. It is the house that housed the Greatest Generation.



1940s Minimal Traditional becomes the dominant form of new construction nationwide.

Post 1945 Government programs for returning G.I.s favored compact, economical traditionally styled houses.

1950 The proposed Jorgensen house is built, at the height and close of the style's period of greatest influence.

Identifying a Minimal Traditional House

From *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia Savage McAlester



Illustration of a Minimal Traditional style house taken from McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*



The proposed Jorgensen House built in 1950



Example Minimal Traditional house #7, South San Francisco 1940's taken from McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*



Example Minimal Traditional house #5, South San Francisco 1940's taken from McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Generally small and one story in height
- Roof eaves usually with little or no overhang
- Minimal architectural details or elaborations added
- Dormers are rare
- Low or intermediate pitched roof, generally gabled
- Double hung multi pane windows

The attributes of the style, as presented in the standard national reference on American domestic architecture.

The Defining Features, Stated Plainly



“Low or intermediate pitched roof, more often gabled; small house, generally one-story in height; roof eaves usually have little or no overhang; double hung windows, typically multi pane or 1/1; minimal amounts of added architectural detail; rarely has dormers.”

A Field Guide to American Houses, page 587

The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House

Traditional detailing with restrained ornamentation. Single story. Low pitched gabled roof. Shallow eaves. Multi pane wood framed windows. Wood siding and brick.

Context: A Neighborhood Built in Layers

The 1920s established the character. It was never a single moment of construction.



“By the late 1920s the result of the Kensington Heights deed restrictions on architectural styles was apparent. Implemented for a harmonious appearance of Spanish colonial homes, the cohesive use of stucco and red clay tile roofs give the neighborhood the feel of the Spanish Village. The two Tudor homes in the background were constructed before the restrictions on architectural styles were enacted by the Davis-Baker Company.”

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann



“By the 1940s, the first unit of the Talmadge Park subdivision [in Kensington] had been largely built up. Although residences in the Spanish colonial style were most popular, others such as Tudor and French eclectic are seen.”

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann

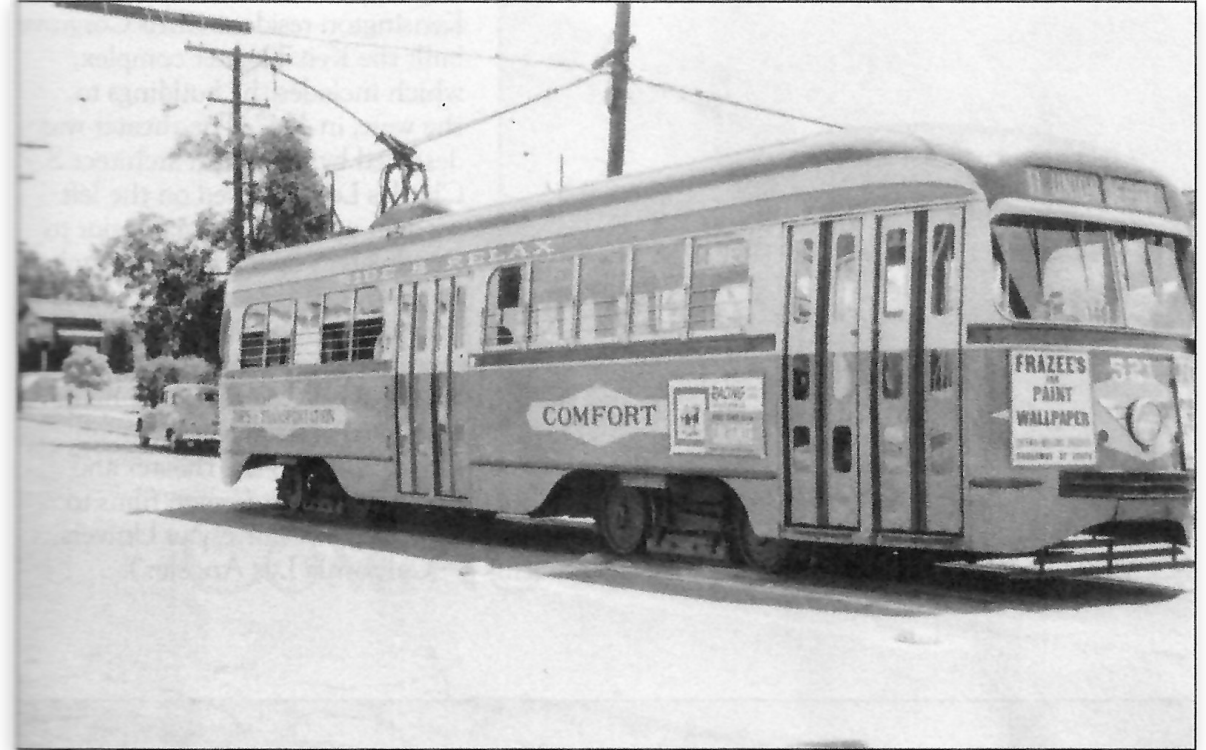
Kensington - The Edge of the City in the 1940s

Kensington began as a community outside of the City of San Diego, but was largely built out at the close of the 1940's and early 1950's as the streetcar use was being slowly replaced by automobiles



"In 1940, the view to the north from the backyard of the home of Fred and Helen Morrison at 4274 Middlesex Drive showed open space in Mission Valley [below Kensington]. This area would eventually be developed as Grantville."

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann



"Pictured in 1948 on Adams Avenue, the streetcar has reached the end of the No. 11 line at Forty-Second Street. The following year, this route was eliminated and replaced with a bus route that extended north to Marlborough Drive between Hilldale Road and Middlesex Drive."

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann

Kensington - 1950s Infill Completes the Neighborhood

The vacant lots of an earlier subdivision were finished with the houses of a new era. The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House, built in 1950, is one of them.



“Aunt Red of the Mogavero family, visiting from New York, proudly shows off her new shoes and hand tooled leather purse in front of 5232 Marlborough Drive around 1950. This view looks north on Marlborough and shows some of the later post World War Two infill homes on the right side.”

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann



“The home of Henry and Lena Van Harten at 4810 Edgeware Road was built around 1953 by Ray Perrigo.”

San Diego's Kensington, Wallace and McCann

Note the mixture of historic architectural styles in the Kensington neighborhood.



The Ervin and Ethel Jesse House – HRB #1454

Built 1938

Designated under Criterion C as Minimal Traditional in 2022

- Single story, compact massing on a modest footprint
- Low pitched gabled roof with shallow eave overhang
- Wood siding as the primary street facing material
- Multi pane wood framed windows
- Small covered front porch at the entry
- Brick chimney
- Shutters flanking front windows



The J. Frank & Ola G. Jorgensen House

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The Ervin and Ethel Jesse House - HRB #1454



Excerpts from HRB-22-017 City Staff Report

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 12, 2022 REPORT NO. HRB-22-017
HEARING DATE: May 26, 2022
SUBJECT: ITEM #02 - Ervin and Ethel Jesse House
RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\)](#)
APPLICANT: James K. Morris; represented by IS Architecture
LOCATION: 7402 Eads Avenue, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 351-062-02-02
DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ervin and Ethel Jesse House located at 7402 Eads Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ervin and Ethel Jesse House located at 7402 Eads Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1938 under HRB Criterion C. The designation is limited to APN 351-062-02-02. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character-defining features of the Minimal Traditional style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1938 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a single-story "gable-and-wing roof" form, low pitch gable roof with shallow overhangs, channel rustic wood siding, gable-end vertical scalloped edge details, a small front porch, a brick chimney, various divided-lite and single-lite wood double-hung windows, and a large divided-lite picture window.

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 resource is bounded by Eads Avenue to the east and Mabel Dell Lane to the west.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been surveyed in recent years.

The building is located on APN 351-062-02-02 as part of a condominiumized parcel which includes one other residence under separate ownership located to the west: 7402 1/2 Eads Avenue (APN 351-062-02-01). The proposed designation does not include APN 351-062-02-01 and is limited only to the subject property identified as 7402 Eads Avenue (APN 351-062-02-02). The other buildings on the other parcels will be subject to review for potential significance under SDMC Section 143.0212.

The historic name of the resource, the Ervin and Ethel Jesse House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ervin Jesse and Ethel Jesse, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C, and staff concurs. 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 subject property was constructed in 1938 in the Minimal Traditional style with a "gable-and-wing roof" denoting a front projection from the primary roof. This one-story house contains two wings, one front-facing, and one rear-facing. The building is clad in channel rustic wood siding.

The east elevation, facing Eads Avenue, features a 16-lite fixed picture window, a covered front porch with rounded steps, and a wing projection with vertical scalloped edge siding on the gable end with a six over one double hung window. The front door is typical of a six-panel exterior door. The windows on the east elevation are set in simple rectangular molding with decorative lower shutters. On the south elevation, an unpainted brick chimney with steeply pitched shoulders is present. Penetration on this elevation includes three double-hung wood windows in various sizes and the patterns. The rear west elevation consists of a gable wing projection, a raised covered entry with a half-glass service door and scored concrete steps, and double-hung windows. The north elevation features three evenly spaced double-hung wood windows in various sizes. The site contains white picket fences around the property line with trimmed hedges along the front and side facades.

Modifications to the property include a 1955 fence installation and the c.1986 construction of a two-story residence on the western portion of the parcel, including the demolition of the original garage. Additional modifications completed since 1938 at unknown dates include the replacement of the rear door, the in-kind replacement of the channel rustic wood siding, the construction of a rear porch awning, and the addition of wood shutters to the front divided-lite picture window. Overall, these modifications do not significantly impair the integrity of design, materials, workmanship, or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

Minimal Traditional style buildings reflect traditional architectural forms and eclectic styles, but generally display simpler and less extensive decorative architectural detailing of the previous Revival styles. Minimal Traditional houses are usually modest in scale with one level, although there are some two-story examples. Common resources include one and two-story houses, single front porches, chimneys, and low pitch shallow eave roofs. Pre-War examples reference Moderne and older styles

and usually have a detached garage. Post-War examples often integrate the garage and reflect the emerging Contemporary trends. Though sometimes employing brick or stone materials, this was the first style to typically delete the expensive treatment from the side and rear facades, reflecting the frugal times. It is most prevalent in residential construction but is also common in small-scale commercial, retail, and office use. Minimal Traditional style houses are usually clustered together, especially in the 1940s residential neighborhoods, although they can also be found separately as later infill in previously developed neighborhoods of Craftsman, Bungalow, and earlier styles.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Minimal Traditional style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including its single-story "gable-and-wing roof" form, low pitch gable roof with shallow overhangs, channel rustic wood siding, gable-end vertical scalloped edge detail, a small front porch, brick chimney, various divided-lite and single-lite wood double-hung windows, and a large divided-lite picture window.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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. 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 Ervin and Ethel Jesse House located at 7402 Eads Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1938 under HRB Criterion C. The designation is limited to APN 351-062-02-02.


Alvin Lin
Junior Planner

AL/sa

Attachment(s):

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


Shannon Anthony
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

“Minimal Traditional style buildings reflect traditional architectural forms and eclectic styles, but generally display simpler and less extensive decorative architectural detailing of the previous revival styles. Minimal Traditional houses are usually modest in scale with one level...”

“The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Minimal Traditional style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style...”

“...it is recommended that the Ervin and Ethel Jesse House located at 7402 Eads Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1938 under HRB Criterion C.”

The Gabriel and Marie Berg House – HRB #1407

Built 1942

Designated under Criterion C as Minimal Traditional with Colonial Revival elements in 2021



- Single story, compact size
- Low pitched roof with shallow overhangs
- Horizontal wood siding
- Brick accent at the entry
- Modestly sized wood framed windows
- Small entry porch
- Restrained traditional detailing, including shutters

“The subject property is a good example of the Minimal Traditional style with Colonial Revival elements which retains character defining features of the style...”

HRB Report dated February 11, 2021

The J. Frank & Ola G. Jorgensen House

Built 1950

Proposed for designation under Criterion C as Minimal Traditional



- Single story, compact size
- Low pitched roof with shallow overhangs
- Horizontal wood siding
- Brick accent at the entry
- Modestly sized wood framed windows
- Small entry porch
- Restrained traditional detailing, including shutters

The LIFE House - HRB #1025

Built 1939

Designated under Criteria A and C as Minimal Traditional in 2011



- Single story, compact size, simple rectilinear massing
- Low pitched gabled roof with shallow overhangs
- Brick chimney
- Multi pane wood framed windows with shutters
- Small front porch sheltering the entry
- Traditional materials combining siding, stucco and brick
- Detached garage set back from the house

“The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Minimal Traditional style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity...”

The J. Frank & Ola G. Jorgensen House

Built 1950

Proposed for designation under Criterion C as Minimal Traditional



- Single story, compact size, simple rectilinear massing
- Low pitched gabled roof with shallow overhangs
- Brick chimney
- Multi pane wood framed windows with shutters
- Small front porch sheltering the entry
- Traditional materials combining siding, stucco and brick
- Detached garage set back from the house

A Family Home from the Start

The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House has been a family home for generations



AUGUST 19, 1967

Lawrence Stopak and Marie Miller Stopak on their wedding day, August 19, 1967, in the front yard of 5126 Canterbury Drive. They purchased the property just one month earlier, on July 10, 1967. Also pictured are Marie's daughters, Nancy and Cathy Hedger.

The Resource Need Not Be Distinguished

Staff asks the house to have “...defining architectural influences or features to distinguish itself from other houses built in the same style at the time.”

No adopted document imposes that test.

HRB DESIGNATION CRITERIA GUIDELINES · ADOPTED

“...it does not state that the resource must be a unique or distinguished example of a style, type, period or method of construction.”

The Designation Criteria Guidelines are the document the Board adopted to govern the application of the criteria. A context statement informs the Board about a style or era. City Staff cannot arbitrarily add a requirement above the adopted criteria that the Guidelines expressly disclaim. Where the two disagree, the adopted Guidelines control, and the Guidelines say uniqueness is not required.

The Standard the Board Applies

PRIMARY CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

- ✓ Compact size, usually single story
- ✓ Low-pitch gabled or hipped roofs with shallow overhangs
- ✓ Simplified details of limited extent, reflecting traditional or moderne themes
- ✓ Traditional building materials (wood siding, stucco, brick, and stone) emphasizing the street facade

SECONDARY CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

- ✓ Simple floor plan with minimal corners
- ✓ Small front porches
- ✓ Modestly sized wood framed windows, occasionally one large picture window
- ✓ Detached or attached front-facing garages, frequently set back from the house

From the City of San Diego *Modernism Context*

The Same House, Throughout the Decades

The house remains very intact and original, and exactly matches historic and transitional photos



CIRCA 1980s

Horseback rider in front of The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House, circa 1980s.



AUGUST 2026

The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House today

The Staff Report Misquotes the Context Statement

One substituted word, one added period, and one omitted clause, and the omitted clause is the one that describes this property

WHAT THE STAFF REPORT SAYS

***“most** ‘examples of the Minimal Traditional sub-style will gain their significance in a district context.’”*

WHAT THE MODERNISM STATEMENT ACTUALLY SAYS

***“Typically,** examples of the Minimal Traditional sub-style will gain their significance in a district context, either within a largely or exclusively Minimal Traditional tract, **Or as** **representations of later development in an earlier subdivision.**”*

1 A period was added The sentence was cut short at a point where the original has a comma, leaving out the rest of the complete sentence.

2 The alternative clause was omitted The removed clause names a second, independent path to historical significance.

5126 Canterbury Drive is the second case

Kensington was subdivided and largely built in the 1920s. 5126 Canterbury Drive was built in 1950 on a lot left vacant in that earlier subdivision.

That is the textbook definition of a representation of later development in an earlier subdivision.

The Context Statement identifies this circumstance as a basis for significance.

Proposed for Designation – The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House

Six findings the record supports

1 The style is significant

Minimal Traditional is a recognized architectural style representing the Depression recovery and postwar housing response.

2 The property embodies it

The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House exhibits all four primary character defining features and three and one half of four secondary features, with a high degree of integrity.

3 Staff already concedes the proposed resource represents the style

The staff report grants compact size, a low pitched hipped and gabled roof, traditional exterior materials, a small front porch, and modestly sized windows. That is five of the eight features.

4 Precedent has already been set

Three Minimal Traditional properties have been designated under Criterion C: The Ervin and Ethel Jesse House, The Gabriel and Marie Berg House, and The LIFE House. Two carry alterations more substantial than anything at The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House.

5 Uniqueness is not the test

The adopted Designation Criteria Guidelines state that Criterion C does not require a unique or distinguished example. Where the Context Statement suggests otherwise, the adopted Guidelines govern.

6 The quotation was incomplete

The Context Statement expressly recognizes significance for representations of later development in an earlier subdivision. The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House, built in 1950 in a 1920s subdivision, is exactly that.



The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House

5126 Canterbury Drive

Thank you for your consideration

Motion

FOR THE BOARD'S CONSIDERATION

The resource located at 5126 Canterbury Drive should be designated as **The J. Frank and Ola G. Jorgensen House** under **Criterion C** as a resource that embodies the Minimal Traditional style of architecture, with a **period of significance of 1950**.

Specifically, the resource embodies the Minimal Traditional style of architecture with its single-story compact size, low-pitched gabled roof with shallow overhangs, simplified details of limited extent, traditional building materials, simple floor plan, small front porch, modestly sized wood framed windows, and detached garage.

