



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 15, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-054

HEARING DATE: October 29, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Paul Basile and Julie Wilson; represented by Johnson & Johnson

LOCATION: 7224 Carrizo Drive, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 352-250-0200

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House located at 7224 Carrizo Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House located at 7224 Carrizo Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1951-1969 under HRB Criterion C. The designation includes the 1969 Post and Beam addition. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Organic Geometric style with Post and Beam influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1951-1969 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a site specific design with a strong indoor/outdoor connection, an asymmetrical façade, angular massing, floor to ceiling glazing, shed roof with large overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, and the use of natural materials including wood board and batten siding and battered concrete walls with large stone aggregate.

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 consists of a single-family residence situated on a wooded hillside lot in La Jolla.

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 Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Johnson & Johnson, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. Staff disagrees and concludes that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C but not HRB Criterion A 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.

The Historical Resources Research Report finds that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion A as a resource that exemplifies the architectural influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Fellowship of Taliesin West that came to San Diego through the apprentices who settled in San Diego after World War II; however, staff concludes that there is not enough evidence to support designation under Criterion A. More information is needed as to why this architectural movement was important to the development of San Diego. Additionally, the HRRR needs to explain why the subject resource can be considered a special element of this movement and call out specific design features that are influenced by Wright's work. Therefore, staff cannot recommend designation under HRB Criterion A at this time.

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 resource is a single-family residence constructed in 1951 and designed in the Organic Geometric style by Frederick Liebhardt for use as his personal residence. The resource also features a 1969 Post and Beam addition also designed by Liebhardt. Situated on a hillside lot, the resource was specifically designed to highlight the indoor/outdoor connection with large expanses of glass that provide ocean views from the primary interior living spaces. The house features an asymmetrical front facade and is generally U-shaped forming a courtyard that opens to a downhill view. The exterior of the original 1951 house is mostly composed of unpainted wood and large expanses of glass set within wood frames. A large shed roof with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails dominates the front façade and serves as the unifying factor for the carport and main residence. A character defining feature of the house is the unique battered walls consisting of a large stone aggregate set within board formed concrete. The main entrance is obscured and accessed by a concrete path between the carport and the main residence. The exposed structure of the roof is highly visible while on the path approaching the entrance.

The 1969 Post and Beam addition is at the rear of the house and forms one arm that surrounds the courtyard. The style of this later addition is clearly differentiated from the original residence and features a lack of applied ornamentation. Featuring a large expanse of floor to ceiling glazing and a board and batten exterior, the massing appears to float above the courtyard. A slightly sloping shed

roof extends over a porch which wraps around two facades of the addition. The structural system is clearly expressed on the exterior primarily through the prominent porch supports and minimal use of load bearing walls. Like the original Organic Geometric residence, the addition displays a strong indoor/outdoor connection.

Very few modifications have been made to the subject resource since its 1951 date of construction. The original path to the entrance which displayed a circular geometric pattern has been replaced with smooth concrete and tile. Additionally, some of the concrete hardscape in the courtyard has been changed to wood decking. The Post and Beam addition constructed in 1969 does not rise to the level of significance to be individually eligible for designation; however, it exhibits many of the character defining features of the style and compliments the original structure in a way that adds to its architectural significance and documents its evolution. Also, the addition was designed by Liebhardt and helps illustrate the progression of his work. Staff is recommending that the period of significance of the resource be extended to 1969 in order to include the Post and Beam addition. These modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

Organic Geometric architecture is a philosophy of design which promotes a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. Organic Geometric designers made use of natural building materials such as wood and stone and designed building respectful to the site. Like their Post and Beam Modern contemporaries, Organic Geometric architects also used glass to minimize the separation between interior and exterior and encourage indoor/outdoor living. Buildings were carefully sited to take advantage of views and other site features, often built on steep slopes and boasting large balconies. In terms of shape, architects designed these buildings with an emphasis on rectilinear geometry, and the designs are characterized by asymmetrical facades, unusual rooflines, and angular shapes. Primary character-defining features of an Organic Geometric style house are exposed structure and materials; square, diamond and polygon design motifs; natural materials. Secondary features are sharp angular massing; asymmetrical facades; complex roof forms; and site specific design.

Post and Beam is a method of construction in which the structural framing consists of load bearing beams supported by columns rather than solid bearing walls. From the 1950's through the 1970's this method of construction became popular because it allowed for the expansive use of glass which facilitated the indoor/ outdoor connection so important to modern design. Structures designed in the Post and Beam style generally have a rectilinear shape with open floor plans and a layout based on a consistent module. Roofs are usually flat with wide overhanging eaves emphasizing the structure's horizontal massing. A defining characteristic of Post and Beam design is the direct expression of a building's structural system on its façade. Other important features of this style include repetitive façade geometry; the absence of applied decoration; and the use of wood, steel and glass on the building's exterior. In San Diego, residential examples of Post and Beam architecture can be found in established neighborhoods such as Mission Hills, La Jolla and Point Loma on sloping lots that were previously unused. According to the *San Diego Modernism Context Statement*, the style is relatively rare and any extant examples should be considered for historic designation.

Significance Statement: The resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Organic Geometric style with Post and Beam influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated

with both styles; including a site specific design with a strong indoor/outdoor connection, an asymmetrical façade, angular massing, floor to ceiling glazing, shed roof with large overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, and the use of natural materials including wood board and batten siding and battered concrete walls with large stone aggregate. 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 subject property at 7224 Carrizo Drive was designed by Frederick Charles Liebhardt. Liebhardt has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time; however, staff acknowledges that he is an excellent candidate. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

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 Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House located at 7224 Carrizo Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1951-1969 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Organic Geometric style with Post and Beam influences. The designation includes the 1969 Post and Beam addition.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

SS/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 10/29/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/29/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House (owned by Paul Basile and Julie Wilson, 1050 G Street, San Diego, CA 92101) located at **7224 Carrizo Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037**, APN: **352-250-02-00**, further described as PAR 1 THAT POR OF LOT 14 IN BLK B OF MAP 1975 IN 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 Frederick and Marianne Liebhardt House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of the Organic Geometric style with Post and Beam influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1951-1969 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a site specific design with a strong indoor/outdoor connection, an asymmetrical façade, angular massing, floor to ceiling glazing, shed roof with large overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, and the use of natural materials including wood board and batten siding and battered concrete walls with large stone aggregate. 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 designation shall include the 1969 Post and Beam addition.

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:

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney