



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 5, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-60

HEARING DATE: November 19, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Ray and Phyllis Dickson House**

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

APPLICANT: Asaro Family Trust; represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 439 La Crescentia Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 532-430-1200

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ray and Phyllis Dickson House located at 439 La Crescentia Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ray and Phyllis Dickson House located at 439 La Crescentia Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1952 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the utility room and infilled southeast corner of the main floor which were constructed outside of the period of significance. 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 and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features angular massing; asymmetrical facades; a wood shingle roof; an exterior clad in horizontal wood siding and natural stone; a site specific design that takes advantage of its hillside location; and large wood windows and decks which enhance the property's indoor/ outdoor connection.

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 property is located on a hillside lot in the La Playa neighborhood of Point Loma.

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 Ray and Phyllis Dickson House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ray and Phyllis Dickson, 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 resource is a single family, one story residence with a finished basement level and attached two car garage constructed in 1952. When viewed from La Crescentia Drive, the resource appears to be one story; however, due to its siting on a steep hillside, the basement is visible on the rear façade which can be seen from San Geronio Road. The irregular shaped floor plan features sharp angles and geometric forms. The house is entered on the asymmetrical La Crescentia façade through a reeded glass door and sidelights. The garage is connected to the main house by a carport adjacent to the main entry. Clad mostly with horizontal wood siding, the main façade is accented by natural stone. Wood shingles cover the roof which is a combination of hip and shed forms. On the rear façade, the main floor features large sliding glass doors framed in wood which provide the living room with view of San Diego Bay. The sliding doors lead out to a full-length deck sheltered by the significant eave overhang of the roof. The basement level also features a full-length deck with a railing that matches the level above. Fenestration varies and includes wood and steel windows in casement and fixed forms.

Significant modifications have been made to the property since its 1952 date of construction; however, several of these were reversed during a 2019 restoration campaign. In 1957 a window was added to the lower level. The house underwent an extensive renovation in 1963 when the Broderick family purchased the property from the Dicksons. During this remodel the carport was enclosed and merged with the garage through the replacement of the original door with a larger door which protected both spaces. Additionally, the original reeded glass front door and sidelites were replaced with a wooden door and multicolored decorative glass sidelites. Other modifications that occurred during the Broderick's occupancy of the house were the extension of the main floor deck on the rear façade and the addition of a utility room in 1969. Alterations that occurred at unknown dates include, the infill of the south eastern corner of the main floor, the extension of the roof overhang on the rear façade, the addition of a modern brick driveway and the replacement of the rear sliding wood doors with an aluminum slider, the removal of a steel casement window on the front façade and the addition of a new awning window.

In 2019 the property underwent extensive restoration work with the guidance of historical resource staff. Restoration work was based off historic photos, architectural drawings and physical evidence. During this project the original garage door was restored and a black and glass door was added to give the illusion of a carport. Also on the front façade, the entry door and sidelites were restored to the original fluted glass and the steel casement window was reinstalled. On the rear, the

replacement aluminum slider was removed and the wood sliding doors were restored. The project also included the replacement of a window with a door on the south façade. The work completed in conjunction with the 2019 project was determined to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by historical resources staff.

According to the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, examples of Organic Geometric architecture should retain the majority of their character defining features. Due to the rarity of the style, a property may still be eligible for designation while having some impacts or loss to character defining features. With that in mind, the modifications described above do not significantly impair integrity of design, workmanship, materials 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.

Significance Statement: The resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Organic Geometric style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including angular massing; asymmetrical facades; a wood shingle roof; an exterior clad in horizontal wood siding and natural stone; a site specific design that takes advantage of its hillside location; and large wood windows and decks which enhance the property's indoor/ outdoor connection. 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 439 La Crescentia Drive was designed by Loch Crane. Although staff acknowledges that he is an excellent candidate, Crane has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time.

Interior designer Walter Broderick resided at the property from 1962 to 1977 and made significant modifications to the resource; however, Broderick has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Interior Designer, and there is insufficient information to determine if he is eligible at this time. Additionally, more research would be required to determine if the changes made to the property by Broderick would qualify this resource to be considered a notable example of his work. Therefore, staff is not recommending designation of the resource under Criterion D for its association with either Crane or Broderick.

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 Ray and Phyllis Dickson House located at 439 La Crescentia Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1952 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Organic Geometric style. The designation excludes the utility room and infilled southeast corner of the main floor which were constructed outside of the period of significance.



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 11/19/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/19/2020, to consider the historical designation of the (owned by Asaro Family Trust 10-09-02, 439 La Crescentia Drive, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **439 La Crescentia Drive, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **532-430-120-00**, further described as LOT 5 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 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of the Organic Geometric style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features angular massing; asymmetrical facades; a wood shingle roof; an exterior clad in horizontal wood siding and natural stone; a site specific design that takes advantage of its hillside location; and large wood windows and decks which enhance the property's indoor/ outdoor connection.

(2) 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 exclude the utility room and infilled southeast corner of the main floor which were constructed outside of the period of significance.

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