



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 8, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-040

HEARING DATE: July 22, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #1 – Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House**

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

APPLICANT: J G Irrevocable Trust 12-11-09; represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 807 La Jolla Rancho Road, La Jolla Community, Council District 1  
APN 357-334-21-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House located at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House located at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1962-1989 under HRB Criterion B, and a period of significance of 1961-1970 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is identified with William Ivans, a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource is the home that Ivans owned and lived in during the period of significance of 1962-1989, which marks a productive period of his career as an internationally renowned glider pilot.
2. The resource is a rare example of a unique method of construction as evidenced through its structural support system and retains a good level of integrity from its 1961-1970 period of significance. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this unique method of construction through its visibly expressed structural support system consisting of three 3,000-pound tapered steel beams anchored to reinforced concrete pier footings, which allows the resource to cantilever 58 feet off a canyon rim.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The property is a split-level single-family residence located on a cul-de-sac in the La Jolla Corona Estates subdivision of 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 Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Robert and Rebecca Liebner who constructed the house as their personal residence, and the name of William Ivans, who is a historically significant individual.

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B and C, and staff concurs. 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.*

Research into the history of the property at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or La Jolla's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. While the residence does feature a unique structural system, sufficient documentation has not been provided to establish significance under HRB Criterion A. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

William Ivans was an internationally renowned glider pilot who was a key figure in the history and development of the sport of gliding in San Diego. The period of significance for Criterion B is defined by Ivan's arrival at the subject property in 1962 and his receipt of the Soaring Society of America's Exceptional Service Award in 1989, one of his final accolades of his gliding career.

Ivans lived at the subject property beginning in 1962. Although Ivans had already established himself as a record-breaking glider by this time, his career continued to flourish as he remained an active member of the local, regional, national, and international gliding community. He also continued to succeed in business while living at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road. There is evidence that the resource's carport was extended to hold Ivan's glider, which illustrates his strong association with the property, specifically regarding his gliding career.

During Ivan's time living at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road, he set a US speed record for the 100km triangle course with an average speed of 84 mph in 1967 and would go on to set two additional US speed

records in 1984. Ivans was also voted into the Soaring Hall of Fame (1962), elected president of the Soaring Society of America twice (1963 and 1964), and received the SSA's Exceptional Service Award three times (1965, 1970, and 1989).

Ivans received many accolades during his gliding career, including the Warren E. Eaton Memorial Trophy for outstanding contributions to the science and sport of soaring in the United States. In addition to his individual accolades, Ivans was a prominent figure in the development of gliding in general. He became a leader in the Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California in 1949 and served as the Chairman of the Pacific Coast Championships in 1950. He served as Vice President of the Soaring Society of America in 1957, 1958 and 1961. Ivans also served the United States delegate to the International Gliding Commission.

Ivans was also a significant figure in the San Diego business community. After starting his career as a chief electronics engineer at Convair/General Dynamics in 1946, Ivans left to join Cohu Electronics in 1957. He held positions as vice president, president, and CEO during his tenure, which lasted until 1983. Ivans was a member of the San Diego International Trade Commission from 1987 until the mid-1990s, served as Chair of the San Diego Export Council in 1985 and 1986, and was on the Board of Directors of the San Diego Opera from 1995 to 1999.

Significance Statement: William Ivans was an internationally known glider pilot and businessman who established himself as a major figure in the history and development of gliding in San Diego. Although Ivans resided at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road from 1962 until his death in 1999, the period of significance is defined as 1962-1989 as that was his most productive years. The property is the only extant property in San Diego that can be closely associated with Ivans. The property's carport was expanded in 1970 to accommodate Ivan's glider, which further illustrates the property's important association with Ivans. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 resource is a split-level single-family residence constructed between 1961 and 1962 in the Post-and-Beam subtype of the Modern architectural style. Designed by aerospace engineer and original owner, Robert Liebner, the property is located on a cul-de-sac and was designed to be rear facing to capture panoramic views toward the Pacific Ocean. The property's attached garage is the only structure built on solid ground. The rear façade features a unique tapered steel beam structural system to support the home as it cantilevers 58 feet over a canyon. The resource features reinforced concrete pier footings which anchor the structural frame.

This property's unique method of construction reflects how new technologies allowed mid-twentieth century architects, designers, and builders to develop difficult lots, particularly those located on steep canyon slopes. The subject resource's design solution of cantilevering over a canyon is made possible by three 3,000-pound tapered steel beams, two of which run directly under the exterior side walls while the third is located under the center of the house. The structural support system is a feat of residential engineering which allowed Robert Liebner to use the site's extreme topography to his ultimate advantage.

The subject resource is clad in redwood siding and is covered by a low-pitch gable roof with composition shingles and wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. Fenestration consists of clerestory windows, full-length fixed wood windows, aluminum and wood sliding glass doors, and one metal-framed casement window. The house was originally constructed in 1961 and included the main level and deck, and a single unenclosed carport. The second lower level and deck were designed by Leibner the following year.

The front façade faces northwest onto a cul-de-sac at the end of La Jolla Rancho Road. This secondary elevation features a short concrete driveway leading to an attached double garage that has been modified. Following an extension of the carport designed by Liebner to accommodate Ivan's glider in 1970, the carport was enclosed to create a garage in 1995. To the right of the two garage doors, a wall covered in stone veneer and pierced with one solid core door and clerestory windows connects the garage to the main house. William Ivans and Rebecca Liebner made an addition to this portion of the façade after a car crashed into the building in 1987. The addition is delineated from the original construction through the use of skylights. Although this addition negatively impacts the architectural integrity related to the residence's Post and Beam style, it is included in the designation due to its association with William Ivans, a historically significant individual.

The property features two large wooden decks with wooden and metal rails that wrap around the west, south, and east sides of the residence on both levels. The two levels are connected by a staircase at the rear, while a staircase on the east side of the lower level provides access to the canyon below.

The west elevation of the property is largely obscured from the public view. The primary entrance to the property is accessed from the main level deck using two 21-paneled wooden doors. Upper and lower level decks run the length of this elevation, which is heavily fenestrated with full-length fixed windows and sliding glass doors on both levels. The structural system is visible from the lower level deck.

The south elevation is out of the public view but features the character defining features of the resource's unique method of construction and is considered the primary façade. The orange painted crossbeam is visible as it protrudes from the center of the home on the upper level between a row of clerestory windows. The two-level deck system is present on both levels of the south façade, which cantilevers over the canyon below. Shaded by the main level, the lower level features the tapered beams and cross ties of the steel structural system. Fenestration on the lower-level consists of full-length wood-framed fixed windows and sliding glass doors.

The east elevation is not visible from the public right of way. The rear of the garage is visible on the north end, while the two-level deck system continues the remainder of the elevation. As seen on the west elevation, the structural system is visible from the lower level deck. The upper level features fixed and sliding glass windows, while the lower level has one sliding glass door and one casement window.

The property exhibits many character defining features of the Post-and-Beam sub-style of the Modern architecture style, including floor-to-ceiling glass; direct expression of the structural system; a low-pitched roof with wide, overhanging eaves; horizontal massing; and a strong interior/exterior

connection. However, due to alterations to the property, including enclosure of the carport and the addition including the stone-veneer wall visible on the front façade, the property no longer retains integrity to embody the Post-and-Beam architectural style.

Although the property's modifications significantly impair the resource's ability to convey its significance as a good example of the Post-and-Beam style of architecture, integrity of design, materials and workmanship are still retained as it relates to the property's significant method of construction. The subject resource was constructed using a support system consisting of three tapered steel beams and cross ties anchored to a concrete foundation. This system allows the home to cantilever off the edge of a canyon. The support system is exposed on the east, west, and south facades and remains directly expressed through the design of the home, which is believed to be the first use of tapered steel beams for a residential building in San Diego.

Significance Statement: The resource is a rare and unique example of method of construction due to the use of three 3,000-pound tapered steel beams anchored to reinforced concrete pier footings as a support system. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this unique method of construction through its visibly expressed tapered steel beam support system which allows the residence to cantilever 58 feet over a canyon. The structural support system illustrates the way that technological advancements allowed mid-twentieth century architects, designers, and builders to develop difficult lots, particularly those located on steep canyon slopes. 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.*

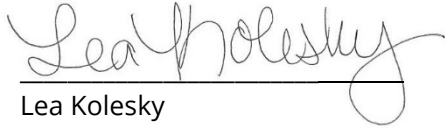
The subject property at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road was designed by the original owner, aerospace engineer Robert Liebner. Robert Liebner has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Designer, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time. Eligibility under this criterion may be reevaluated at a future date pending submittal of additional information and analysis. 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 Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House located at 807 La Jolla Rancho Road be designated with a period of significance of 1962-1989 under HRB Criterion B as a resource that is identified with historically significant glider pilot William Ivans, and under HRB Criterion C with a period of significance of 1961-1970 as a good example of the unique method of construction using a cantilevered tapered steel structural system.



Lea Kolesky  
Junior Planner



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison  
Development Services Department

lk/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER  
ADOPTED ON 7/22/2021

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/22/2021, to consider the historical designation of the Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House (owned by J G Irrevocable Trust 12-11-09, 1197 Abrigo Road, Palm Springs, CA 92262) located at **807 La Jolla Rancho Road, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **357-334-21-00**, further described as PAR 2 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. ,** 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 Robert and Rebecca Liebner/William Ivans House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B for its association with glider pilot William Ivans. Specifically, the resource is the home that Ivans owned and lived in during the period of significance of 1962-1989, which marks a productive period of his career as an internationally renowned glider pilot. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its unique method of construction as evidenced through its structural support system and retains a good level of integrity from its 1961-1970 period of significance. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this unique method of construction through its visibly expressed structural support system consisting of three 3,000-pound tapered steel beams anchored to reinforced concrete pier footings, which allows the resource to cantilever 58 feet off a canyon rim.

(3) 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. .**

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