



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 13, 2022 REPORT NO. HRB-22-001

HEARING DATE: January 27, 2022

SUBJECT: **ITEM #02 – Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House**

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

APPLICANT: Habig Family Trust 04-03-17; represented by Nexus Planning & Research

LOCATION: 2354 Pine Street, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APN 443-051-09-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House located at 2354 Pine St as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House located at 2354 Pine St as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1952-1956 under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952-1956 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a single-story asymmetrical massing with horizontal emphasis; sprawling U-shaped floor plan; low-pitched hipped roof with Dutch gables and deep enclosed eaves; prominent stone chimney; a combination of exterior finishes; recessed entry; and a deep setback with a large landscaped front yard.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Richard George Wheeler and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1952 design. Specifically, the resource is significant as a notable example of Wheeler's residential work in the Custom Ranch style during his early career.

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. Located on a corner lot in the Mission Hills neighborhood, the subject resource is a one-story single-family residence with a detached two-car garage.

The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey and given a Status Code of 5S3, "Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ruth Dryer Dick, who constructed the house as their personal residence, and the name of Richard George Wheeler, a Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Nexus Planning & Research, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D 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 is a one-story, single-family residence built in the Custom Ranch style as designed by Master Architect Richard George Wheeler. Originally constructed in 1952, Wheeler also designed the family room and guest suite which were added to the rear of the residence in 1956.

The property features a deep setback with a large landscaped front yard. The resource has a wide, asymmetrical street-facing façade covered by a low-pitched hipped roof with Dutch gables and deep enclosed eaves and is clad in a combination of exterior finishes: stained horizontal and vertical wood siding, smooth stucco, painted concrete block, and fieldstone. Fenestration consists of wood and steel framed fixed, sliding, and casement windows.

The asymmetrical primary façade faces southwest onto Pine Street and features a strong horizontal emphasis. Moving from the left, the property's two-car garage is accessed by a concrete driveway. A continuation of horizontal wood siding from the main residence into a gate creates a visual screen that gives the appearance of an attached garage and adds to the property's horizontal emphasis. Directly to the right of the garage, the corner of the main residence features exposed eaves that create a trellis. The horizontal wood siding continues, with a row of clerestory casement windows above it. Vertical wood siding is present to the left of the off-center recessed main entrance, which consists of a solid wood door and a door-sized sidelight on the right. The predominant fieldstone chimney is set to the right of the entrance. Two fixed windows are present at the far end of the façade. A small concrete planter wall and wooden fins help to exaggerate the horizontal massing on the right side of this elevation.

The secondary elevation faces southeast onto Ampudia Street. On the left side, this façade features a large window unit that consists of a full-height sliding glass door and one fixed pane window. This window unit opens onto a concrete patio which is partially covered by a trellis created by the wood fins extending from the roof eaves. To the right, a section of horizontal wood siding separates the original construction from the 1956 addition, which is accessed by a large sliding glass door.

The property underwent a significant rehabilitation between 2017 and 2019 which was based on Wheeler's original drawings and historical photographs. The permitted project was reviewed by Historical Resources staff and approved as consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This rehabilitation included the repair of all windows, replacement of damaged fascia boards, removal of non-original paint from the redwood siding, repair of the concrete planer, reconstruction of the fins and canopy, and the replacement of non-compliant wood roof shingles. Other modifications to the property are limited to the replacement of the original driveway with contemporary concrete in 2000 and the construction of a wooden fence in

2019. Overall, these modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975. Unlike Tract Ranches of the era, Custom Ranch homes were typically custom-designed with a specific client in mind. The Ranch style became the era's most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. Custom Ranch Homes are generally more lavish than their tract counterparts, but like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Primary character defining features include horizontal massing, wide to the street; usually single-story; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan frequently "L" or "U" shaped around a central courtyard; large attached carports or garages; and expensive building materials such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding, brick, stone, and adobe which are usually much more generous in materials and craftsmanship than tract homes

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a single-story asymmetrical massing with horizontal emphasis; sprawling U-shaped floor plan; low-pitched hipped roof with Dutch gables and deep enclosed eaves; prominent stone chimney; a combination of exterior finishes; recessed entry; and a deep setback with a large landscaped front yard. 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 resource was designed by Master Architect Richard George Wheeler. Originally constructed in 1952, Wheeler also designed the family room and guest suite which were added to the rear of the residence in 1956. The resource is representative of Wheeler's custom residential buildings designed during the early phase of his career.

Richard George Wheeler, the son of Master Architect William Henry Wheeler, was born on June 30, 1917. Following his graduation from San Diego High School in 1935, Wheeler attended San Diego State University (SDSU) for three years before transferring to UC Berkeley where he received a degree in architecture in 1941.

Only months after his graduation, Pearl Harbor was attacked and the US entered World War II. Wheeler applied for a commission in the Navy, which was granted in 1942. After the war, Wheeler returned to work for his father at Wheeler & McGowan, Architects and Engineers. In 1947, he received his architectural license and left Wheeler & McGowan to open his own firm.

The office started out with primarily residential commissions, but quickly diversified to include commercial and medical buildings. At his young firm Wheeler mentored locally acclaimed architects Tom Tucker, Hal Sadler, Ed Bennett, Gayne Wimer and Roger Matthews. In the late 1950s, the firm changed its name to Richard G. Wheeler, AIA, & Associates, A Division of Charles Luckman Associates (later the Luckman connection was dropped). The firm grew to eventually employ forty architects, engineers and support staff. Wheeler retired in January of 1989 and passed away in May of the next

year. At retirement, Wheeler estimated that his firm designed approximately 400 buildings in his 41 years of practice.

The breadth of Wheeler's career as an architect spanned from 1947 to 1989, beginning with the design of custom residences and evolving to include numerous modern institutional and commercial buildings. Wheeler was established as a Master Architect by the Historical Resources Board with the 2021 designation of 3551 Garrison Street, HRB #1415, which was constructed in 1955 in the Custom Ranch style. The property located at 2354 Pine Street is a notable example of Wheeler's early residential work in the Custom Ranch style.

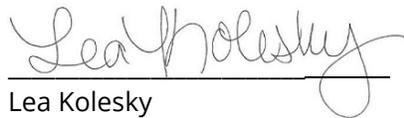
Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Richard George Wheeler's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as an example of Wheeler's work in the Custom Ranch style during the early phase of his career. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Richard George Wheeler.

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 Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House located at 2354 Pine Street be designated with a period of significance of 1952-1956 under HRB Criterion C, as a good example of the Custom Ranch style, and HRB Criterion D, for its association with Master Architect Richard George Wheeler.



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 N/A
ADOPTED ON 1/27/2022

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/27/2022, to consider the historical designation of the Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House (owned by Habig Family Trust 04-03-17, 2354 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **2354 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-051-09-00**, further described as BLK 501 LOT 4 SWLY 75 FT 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 Ruth Dryer Dick/Richard George Wheeler House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952-1956 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a single-story asymmetrical massing with horizontal emphasis; sprawling U-shaped floor plan; low-pitched hipped roof with Dutch gables and deep enclosed eaves; prominent stone chimney; a combination of exterior finishes; recessed entry; and a deep setback with a large landscaped front yard. 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 D as a notable work of Master Architect Richard George Wheeler and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1952 design. Specifically, the resource is significant as a notable example of Wheeler's residential work in the Custom Ranch style during his early career. 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 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

RECORDING REQUESTED BY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

2354 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **443-051-09-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**