



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 12, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-008

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of January 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #12 - 2744 Azalea Drive**

APPLICANT: James Huck; represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 2744 Azalea Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 2744 Azalea Drive as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 2744 Azalea Drive under any adopted HRB Criteria.

### 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 building is a one-story Ranch style home constructed in 1951 with an addition by Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards constructed in 1964.

The building is located on APN 450-170-13-00. The property was evaluated as part of the Quieter Home Program (QHP) and was identified as a non-contributing resource to the potential Plumosa Park National Register Historic District.

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff finds that the site is not a significant historical resource under any HRB Criteria. 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 2744 Azalea Drive did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Peninsula's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. 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.*

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 2744 Azalea Drive did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation 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 was originally constructed in 1951 as a one-story Ranch style house. Portions of the Ranch house are still visible on the north, west and south façades. These sections feature an exterior stucco finish and double hung wood sash windows. Additionally, the Ranch house's brick chimney is still visible on the south façade. In 1964, Sim Bruce Richards designed additions to the north and east sides of the house. These portions are distinct from the earlier Ranch style house and feature a gable roof with vertical board and batten wood siding. The wood has an unfinished appearance typically seen in Richards' work. The doors of the attached garage on the east wing showcase a diamond pattern. Additionally, two triangular fixed windows are present in the gable end of the east façade. The front entrance is located at the north addition and is accessed from a wooden deck. The north section contains the living room which features floor to ceiling glazing on one facade and an interior window seat.

The building has undergone many alterations since its construction in 1951. The garage was remodeled and a carport was constructed, both in unknown locations, in 1954. The Richards alterations occurred in 1964 and included partial demolition and modification to the north, east and south elevations, roof modifications, and relocation of the garage. In the 1980's, skylights were added, a jalousie window was replaced with a casement window and a window opening on the west elevation was converted to a door. Additionally, the shake shingle roof was replaced with composition shingles.

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.

The property displays several features typical of the Organic Geometric style but lacks the connection with nature which is the style's defining characteristic. The house has an asymmetrical façade, a diamond pattern on the garage doors and is constructed of natural materials. The living room is the only portion of the house that hints at a relationship with nature. The glass windows and interior window seat facilitate a connection with the outdoors but the house as a whole lacks this quality and does not promote indoor/outdoor living. Additionally, the building does not have a relationship with the site. Other than the windows, the house does not take advantage of any views, natural features or topography and does not exhibit a site specific design. Furthermore, Richards' work was not a comprehensive remodel but an addition to an existing home. There is a clear distinction between the Ranch style home and Richards' design. Because of this, the resource as a whole cannot be considered a good example of Organic Geometric style architecture or Ranch architecture. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criteria C.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The consultant has also recommended that this house is nominated under Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards. Richards was previously established as a Master Architect with HRB Site #615—the Richard Olney/Sim Bruce Richards House at 1644 Crespo Drive.

Richards was born in 1908 in Oklahoma. In 1920, the Richards family moved to Phoenix and learned about Frank Lloyd Wright. Richards studied architecture UC Berkley in 1930, but soon transferred to the art department. While studying art, he honed his abstract weaving skills. Prior to his graduation in 1934, Frank Lloyd Wright had an opportunity to view one of Richards' rug designs in an art show in San Francisco. Following correspondence with Wright, Richards was invited to join the Taliesin Fellowship and studied there from 1934 to 1936.

After leaving Taliesin, Richards arrived in San Diego in 1938. Richards was drafted into the US Navy and remained with the Navy until 1946. In the same year, Richards began working for William Templeton Johnson. In 1949, Richards started his own office and practiced architecture for nearly three decades until his passing in 1983. Richards designed over 200 projects not including his work in weaving, painting and furniture design. Richards worked mostly in the Organic Geometric style and characteristics of his work include the use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms, site specific design and unpainted surfaces/ unfinished appearance.

As detailed above, the subject resource is not a good example of the Organic Geometric style. Additionally, although the house exhibits some characteristics generally associated with Richards, the property is not a notable example of his work and is not representative of the quality of design and detail typically associated with this work. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

CRITERION E - *Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 2744 Azalea Drive has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - *Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

The property at 2744 Azalea Drive is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 property located at 2744 Azalea Drive not be designated under any HRB Criteria. 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.

  
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Attachment(s):

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover