



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 9, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-017

HEARING DATE: March 23, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 - Michael and Clara Brown House**

CHRID: [CHRID Location](#)

APPLICANT: Trudeau Family 2002 Trust represented by Vonn Marie May

LOCATION: 5645 Taft Avenue, 92037, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 357-452-09-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Michael and Clara Brown House located at 5645 Taft Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Michael and Clara Brown House located at 5645 Taft Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1968 under HRB C. The designation excludes the new two story addition at the rear of the property. 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 1968 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its vertical wood siding, asymmetrical design, low horizontal design integrated into the sloped lot, large expanse of fixed wood windows, wide stacked concrete block chimney dominating the roof line, and exposed structure.

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 in the Bird Rock area of La Jolla in a predominantly single family neighborhood.

The property was located within the boundary of the 2004 Draft La Jolla Survey, but was not identified in the survey because the survey did not include post-1960s buildings.

The historic name of the resource, the Michael and Clara Brown House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the owners who constructed the house as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

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

Constructed in 1968, the property is constructed on a lot that slopes up to the rear. The roof, sheathed with asphalt shingles, appears to follow the contours of the lot sloping up gently before sloping down at the rear. The northeast corner of the property is slightly elevated to accommodate a loft area. The center of the roof is dominated by a wide stacked concrete block chimney. The exterior of the house features wide vertical cedar planks with windows placed asymmetrically around the house. The front of the building is slightly more narrow than the rear half of the building. The narrowed portion of the building allows for large over hang with heavy beams on the south side creating a small covered porch area. Access to the house is provided via a covered niche on the north side. The wood entry door has a transom window above that extends to the ceiling. The south elevation is characterized by floor to ceiling glass windows with wood frames and a French door for access to the living room.

Modifications include alterations to the landscaping and flat work at the front yard, replacement of a front façade window and a two story addition at the rear of the property. The original front yard consisted of a simple walkway to the front entrance, grass, trees and shrubs. Concrete pads, wood fencing and planting areas have replaced the original design. The small awning window in the original master bathroom was replaced in its original opening. The window was originally two awning windows and it was replaced with one frosted awning window. Set at the back of the lot, a two story addition with a roof deck was added in 2016. The addition was approved by HRB staff as consistent with the Standards. The addition is attached via a hyphen to the historic house leaving the majority of the original house intact. The addition is sheathed with a vertical metal siding that complements the historic house, but allows for it to be visually different. The modifications do not detract from the character-defining features of the house.

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 house continues to convey the historic significance of the Organic Geometric style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including its vertical wood siding, asymmetrical design, low horizontal design integrated into the sloped lot, large expanse of fixed wood windows, wide stacked concrete block chimney dominating the roof line, and exposed structure. Therefore, staff recommends designated 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 5645 Taft Avenue was designed Richard Lareau. Lareau has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information provided in the applicant's report to designate him as such at this time. 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 Michael and Clara Brown House located at 5645 Taft Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1968 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of an Organic Geometric style house. The designation excludes the new two story addition at the rear of the property.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Elyse W. Lowe
Deputy Director
Development Services Department

JB/ks/el

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 3/23/2017

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/23/2017, to consider the historical designation of the **Michael and Clara Brown House** (owned by Trudeau Family 2002 Trust, 5666 Waverly Avenue, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **5645 Taft Avenue, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **357-452-09-00**, further described as BLK 4 LOT 9 SELY 31.7 FT LOT 8 &/ EXC SELY 26.7 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 Michael and Clara Brown 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 Organic Geometric style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1968 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its vertical wood siding, asymmetrical design, low horizontal design integrated into the sloped lot, large expanse of fixed wood windows, wide stacked concrete block chimney dominating the roof line, and exposed structure. 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 new two story addition at the rear of the property.

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: N/A

BY: _____
COURTNEY ANN COYLE, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney