



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 13, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-045

HEARING DATE: July 27, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – 842 Muirlands Vista Way**

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

APPLICANT: Debra R. Moncrieff represented by Scott A. Moomjian and Brian F. Smith and Associates

LOCATION: 842 Muirlands Vista Way, La Jolla Community, Council District 1  
APN 351-701-03-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 842 Muirlands Vista Way as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 842 Muirlands Vista Way under any adopted HRB Criteria.

### 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 building is a one-story Custom Ranch style single-family residence built in 1955 on the northwest side of Muirlands Vista Way in the Muirlands Del Norte Subdivision of the La Jolla Community.

The property was identified in the Draft La Jolla Historic Survey in 2002 and given a Status Code of 7R, "Identified in a Reconnaissance Level Survey: Not evaluated."

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Brian F. Smith & Associates, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria 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 842 Muirlands Vista Way 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. 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 842 Muirlands Vista Way 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 property is a one-story Custom Ranch style single-family residence built in 1955 of standard wood frame construction on a concrete foundation. The building is sited on a rectangular, rearward-sloping lot overlooking part of La Jolla and the ocean to the northwest. The building presents a generally rectangular plan form set wide to the street. The low-pitched, side gabled roof is sheathed in wood shake and exhibits wide eave overhang with exposed rafters. Cladding at the primary elevation consists of a mixture of wide horizontal and vertical wood siding with a small amount of brick wainscoting. Remaining elevations are clad in stucco. A brick walkway leads to a modest recessed entry porch and brick planter covered by the principal roof. Fenestration consists primarily of wood divided light casement windows appearing singly or in groups, some with diamond light patterns at the primary elevation. A large brick chimney is visible near the center of the building, and an attached, two-car garage with two doors sits somewhat forward of the main house.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch homes because they 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; 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.

The report identifies a number of alterations at the rear of the property which have had nominal impact to the building's character defining features and overall integrity. Sometime before 1963 an enclosed patio addition was constructed behind the attached garage. More recently, windows and doors along a portion of the rear elevation were replaced with new French door units; a new rear deck was built; and new paving was installed also at the rear. Overall, the alterations noted in the report do not significantly impact character defining features or integrity.

The applicant's report provides an evaluation of the subject building as both a Tract Ranch and a Custom Ranch style building, but ultimately concludes it is of the Tract Ranch variety. The two styles, and their primary and secondary character defining features, as outlined in the Modernism Historic Context Statement, are arguably quite similar. However, staff disagrees with the conclusions of the report and finds that the building is better classified as a Custom Ranch style, chiefly due to the greater variety of the traditional building materials present, and because it does not appear to be part of a larger tract cluster built en masse by a single builder in the area. Nevertheless, staff finds the building to be only a minimal example of the Custom Ranch style, and without unique or distinguishing features.

The building exhibits a very limited degree of custom details concentrated largely at the primary elevation. The building's visual interest at the façade ends strictly at its two front corners, where the balance of the building features simple stucco cladding, straightforward fenestration, and no other architectural detailing. Though it is expected for more decorative features of residences to be reserved for display at the front of the building, superior examples of Custom Ranch style homes would have a greater degree of custom details, and expensive building materials present on more than just the primary façade.

As compared to the United States Holding Company Spec House, HRB #1135 at 2304 Juan Street, a similarly styled Custom Ranch residence currently on the local register, the subject property exhibits a smaller amount of brickwork, a much less prominent chimney, no distinct bay window set, no "L" shaped plan form, and no decorative cupola (Attachment 1). Likewise, compared to the Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House (HRB #1064) at 7750 Ludington Place, the subject property lacks a highly prominent chimney, distinct adobe building material, a "U" shaped plan form, and an association with a Master Architect (Attachment 2). Finally, compared to the Ben and Frieda Kaplan House (HRB #1057) at 1225 Concord Street, the subject property lacks such a considerable amount of brickwork, "U" shaped plan form, rooftop cupola, and decorative gable ends (Attachment 3). Note also that in all three of the above examples, custom features and/or expensive materials are applied more generously and on more elevations than just the front.

As a very minimal example of its style, with only a modicum of custom details and expensive building materials, the subject property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of the Custom Ranch style sufficient to convey the historic significance of that style. The building is not a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials nor does it exemplify high craftsmanship and design. The property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a rare or unique building type or method of construction. Finally, the building's age and physical features do not exemplify or reflect the era when its style, type or method of construction became popular. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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 842 Muirlands Vista Way was built by R.A. Jones Contracting Co., Inc. in 1955. The R.A. Jones Contracting Co., Inc. has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate it as such at this time. 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 842 Muirlands Vista Way 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 842 Muirlands Vista Way is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

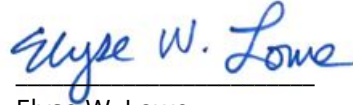
Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility 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 property located at 842 Muirlands Vista Way not be designated under any HRB Criteria.



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Associate Planner



Elyse W. Lowe  
Deputy Director  
Development Services Department

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Attachments:

1. Photo of HRB Site #1135 at 2304 Juan St
2. Photo of HRB Site #1064 at 7750 Ludington Pl
3. Photo of HRB Site #1057 at 1225 Concord St
4. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover



Attachment 1: Custom Ranch residence at 2304 Juan St (HRB Site #1135)



Attachment 2: Custom Ranch residence at 7750 Ludington Pl (HRB Site #1064)



Attachment 3: Custom Ranch residence at 1225 Concord St (HRB Site #1057)