



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 10, 2017 REPORT NO. HRB-17-051

HEARING DATE: August 24, 2017

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building**

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

APPLICANT: Upas Park HOA; represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1740 Upas Street, North Park Community, Council District 3
APN 452-482-1601

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building located at 1740 Upas Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building located at 1740 Upas Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1960 under HRB Criterion D. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

1. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architects Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is notable as a rare example of Ruocco and Delawie's work in multifamily residences, both in their independent architectural practices and during their partnership.

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, originally named the Park Garden Apartments, is a two story, 24 unit multifamily residence constructed in 1960 overlooking Balboa Park.

The property was located within the boundary of the 2016 North Park Survey Report but was not identified in the survey because the property was not evaluated.

The historic name of the resource, the Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the specific name placed on the building upon construction and the names of Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco, the Master Architects responsible for the design of the building.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff concurs that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion D, but not Criterion C. 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 1740 Upas Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or North Park'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 1740 Upas Street 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 two story, 24 unit multifamily residential complex constructed in 1960. The complex is composed of two attached structures with an interior courtyard. At the front façade a lower level is used for covered parking beneath the two floors of habitable space. The structure is topped by a flat roof with minimal eave overhang. Both buildings are clad in stucco and feature large metal windows. Balconies are entered through metal sliding glass doors and accented with a solid corrugated metal railing. The interior of the complex is accessed on the lower level where the main entry is recessed at the center of the parking area. Concrete walls with shadow block accents line the path to the metal mesh entry gate. The concrete walls continue into a landscaped courtyard which features metal railings on stairs, balconies and elevated platforms.

Few modifications have been made to the structure since its construction in 1960. Building permits indicate that the interior of several of the units have been remodeled but no major work has been done to the exterior other than the modification of the roof in 1982. There has been at least one sliding door replacement which was determined consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by historic resources staff in 2012.

Initially, the Historic Resources Research Report asserted that the property was constructed in the Post and Beam style with International influences but staff asked that the property be reevaluated as an example of the Contemporary style. The addendum to the report proposes that the property is an amalgamation of the Post and Beam, International and Contemporary styles and should simply be called Modern. Although it is apparent that the subject property is a Modern building, the term can refer to a wide variety of styles including Minimal Traditional, Organic Geometric, Brutalist, Tract Ranch, Tiki-Polynesian and Googie. The character defining features of these styles vary greatly and the subject building does not fall squarely within any of substyles identified in the San Diego Modernism context statement, or other architectural guides on Modernist architecture.

The basis of the Post and Beam style is that the structural system of the building is articulated by placing visual emphasis on load bearing beams. This minimizes the use of load bearing walls and allows for the floor to ceiling glass which is characteristic of the style. Although the property exhibits a horizontal massing and a flat roof it's design does not directly express its structural system and does not feature floor to ceiling glass panels. Additionally, the subject property exhibits load bearing exterior walls. Therefore, the property cannot be considered an example of the Post and Beam style.

The International style is characterized by the simplification of form and rejection of ornament. Often horizontal bands of flush windows are the most prominent feature on an International style building. Although the subject property features a lack of applied ornament on the exterior façades and a flat roof the, the recessed balconies detract from the flushness of the bands of windows and create two planes of glazing. Typically International style buildings are asymmetrical, a feature which this building does not display. Therefore, the property cannot be considered an example of the International style.

Unlike earlier styles which are generally defined by exterior decorative details, the Contemporary style focused on interior spaces and their relation to the outdoors. Emphasis was placed on integrating the indoors with the outdoors by utilizing windows and exterior living areas such as balconies and courtyards. The style was popular in San Diego in the 1950's and 1960's largely because it could be easily adapted to hillside lots. Character defining features include strong roof forms with deep overhangs and exposed beams; large, aluminum framed windows; non-traditional exterior finishes including vertical wood siding, concrete block, stucco and flagstone; sun shades, screen or shadow block accents; broad masonry chimneys; and distinctive triangular, parabolic or arched forms. Contemporary houses often incorporate angular massing; attached carports or garages; courtyards or balconies; obscured or recessed entries; and split-level designs.

The property most closely reflects a Contemporary style building. The structure features a strong flat roof, stucco exterior, large metal windows, concrete masonry with shadow block accents, and an attached carport. While the property displays many of the character defining features of the Contemporary style they are weakly expressed on the exterior façades. The metal windows are large but are purely utilitarian and are not used as a design feature. Additionally, the concrete masonry and shadow block accents are in obscured locations. These are generally prominent features when present on good examples of the style. While the property is best defined as a Contemporary style building it cannot be considered a good example of the style. Additionally, designating the building simply as a Modernist building is problematic, since Modernist architecture is reflected through a wide variety of features and substyles. Therefore, because the property does

not exhibit a clear and distinct style aside from the broad characterization of Modernist, 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.

Lloyd Ruocco was born in 1907 in Portland, Maine. In 1923, his family moved to southern California, first to Los Angeles then to Long Beach and finally ending up in San Diego. While attending San Diego High School, Lloyd entered a contest run by Richard Requa for an original home design. Ruocco's design was so unusual that he was awarded a special third prize and a chance to meet Requa. After attending San Diego State College for one term, Ruocco obtained a job with the office of Requa and Jackson. Then he decided to attend the University of California at Berkeley graduating in 1933. While at Berkeley, Ruocco was exposed to the Beaux Arts tradition but favored the designs of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright. Returning to San Diego after graduating from Berkeley, Ruocco worked for Requa again on the County Administration Building.

Lloyd Ruocco has been called, after Irving Gill, the second most significant Modernist architect in San Diego architectural history. A proponent of the Modernist International Style, Ruocco is one of the most innovative and community minded architects that San Diego has ever produced, regarded as San Diego's "No. 1 designer and thinker" during the 1950's and 1960's. Ruocco was also an advocate for social change and sound city planning. In 1961, Ruocco founded Citizens Coordinate for Century 3, an organization which continues to perform a leadership role in promoting strong city planning today. Ruocco was also a founding member of the San Diego County Creativity Research Committee and a member of the San Diego City Urban Renewal Commission. During the 1960's, Ruocco mentored young architects in the Design Center building. In 1974, he was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects.

Homer Delawie was born and raised in Santa Barbara, California. In 1945, he enlisted in the Navy and after the war he returned to Santa Barbara to spend a year working with the US Forest Service as a firefighter. Searching for a career, Veterans Administration tests pointed him toward architecture. Delawie enrolled at California Polytechnic College in San Luis Obispo and became part of the second graduating class in the school of architecture. Delawie was the first graduate of the school to receive his license to practice architecture. While on vacation in San Diego in 1958, he was driving up Fifth Avenue and discovered Ruocco's Design Center. Intrigued by the design he decided to contact Lloyd Ruocco. Two days later Ruocco's partner called Delawie asking him to move to San Diego to work for the firm. One of his first projects was to work on a studio for Channel 10, the most advanced television station in the country. After working with Ruocco for only a year and a half, Delawie was asked to be a partner in the firm. Delawie left his partnership with Ruocco and started his own firm in 1961.

Projects designed by Delawie and his firm have received over 65 design awards. In 1973, Delawie received the Cal Poly School of Architecture Distinguished Alumni Award. The National Urban Land Institute and the California and San Diego chapters of the AIA have awarded Delawie their highest honors. Delawie has received Service Citations in 1972 and 1973, a Presidential Citation in 1997 and a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997 from the AIA. The Department of Defense has twice awarded Delawie its highest award.

Serving on several local boards for many years, Delawie has been part of the Museum of Man, the Children's Museum and the UCSD Board of Overseers. He has also been continuously active in historic preservation through involvement with the San Diego Historical Society and the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. In 2003, Save Our Heritage Organization presented him with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his work in preserving the works of local Modern architects. Delawie served on the planning commission for 13 years and served on the Historic Resources Board for 8 years.

Ruocco and Delawie's partnership lasted from 1958 to 1961. Ruocco planned to travel internationally in 1960 and 1961 and Delawie agreed to run the firm in his absence. Plans for the Park Garden Apartments indicate the building was designed by Ruocco and Delawie Architects but neither are specifically called out as the designer. The building permit application lists "Ruocco and Delawie AIA" as the architect and is signed by "WR Fisher for Homer Delawie." Although Delawie's name is in the signature box there is no other evidence to confirm that he was the designer of the subject property.

Both Ruocco and Delawie worked on a variety of projects which included residential, institutional, commercial, religious, educational and civic buildings. Although both architects designed many single family homes in San Diego there are very few examples of their work in multifamily buildings. Other than the subject property, two Delawie apartment buildings have been identified and are extant: 3525 Bayside Lane and 8111 Camino del Oro. At this time, there are no multifamily residences attributed to Ruocco other than the subject property. The property at 1740 Upas Street is notable as a rare example of Ruocco and Delawie's work in multifamily residences.

Significance Statement: The subject property, 1740 Upas Street, is the work of Master Architects Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco. The subject property is notable as a rare example of Ruocco and Delawie's work in multifamily residences, both in their independent architectural practices and during their partnership. As such, staff recommends 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 1740 Upas Street 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 1740 Upas Street 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 Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building located at 1740 Upas Street be designated with a period of significance of 1960 under HRB Criterion D as rare example of Lloyd Ruocco and Homer Delawie's work in multifamily residences, both in their independent architectural practices and during their partnership.



Suzanne Segur
Associate Planner



Elyse W. Lowe
Deputy Director
Development Services Department

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Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 8/24/2017

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 8/24/2017, to consider the historical designation of the **Park Garden Apartments/ Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building** (owned by *[separate resolution for each owner]*, 1740 Upas Street, San Diego, CA 92104) located at **1740 Upas Street, San Diego, CA 92104**, APN: **(452-482-16-01 thru 452-482-16-25)**, further described as LOT 1 US **(1-25)** PER DOC 83-118030 & UND INT IN 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 Park Garden Apartments/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco Building on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architects Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is notable as a rare example of Ruocco and Delawie's work in multifamily residences, both in their independent architectural practices and during their partnership. 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: N/A

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney