



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 14, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-031

HEARING DATE: June 28, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House**

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

APPLICANT: Thomas and Donna Anderson represented by Vonn Marie May

LOCATION: 379 San Antonio Avenue, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 532-493-02-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 379 San Antonio Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 379 San Antonio Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1961 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the partial 2nd-story addition added in 2016. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. 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 1961 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains exposed wood frame structure; large rafters with chamfered ends beneath open eaves; geometric design motifs in fenestration; sharp and angular massing; and site-specific design of the building façades in response to views and vistas.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect, Sim Bruce Richards, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, emphasizing both the man-made and natural elements of the building within the geometric forms of the overall 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 resource is a single-family residence built in 1961 and originally designed by Sim Bruce Richards in the Organic Geometric style. It faces west onto San Antonio Avenue, midblock between Lawrence Street and Kellogg Street, in the La Playa subdivision, in the neighborhood of Point Loma, in the Peninsula community. The rear of the property borders Kellogg's Beach to the east, along the Shelter Island Yacht Basin.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy, reflecting the names of Raymond Spicer, Jr. and Avery Spicer, who were the first owners of the house and commissioned it as their residence; and Sim Bruce Richards, the established Master Architect who designed the house.

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, 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 resource was built in 1961 as a one-story single-family residence in the Organic Geometric style. The building is clad in mill sawn, select heart redwood in a "reversed" board and batten pattern of 1"x3" boards and 1"x10" battens. The composite roof features a wide, open eave overhang supported by large wood rafters with chamfered ends. The primary façade is symmetrical, fronted by an attached garage with a low-pitched gable-end roof facing the street. Brick columns and planter boxes frame privacy gates on the left and right side of the property.

The design of the façades responds to the parameters of the very narrow, flat, rectangular site that fronts onto the street to the west, and is adjacent to Kellogg's Beach at the east-facing rear of the property. From west to east, the façades are designed in a progression that transitions from more closed toward the street to more open toward the rear of the property to dramatically maximize beachfront views.

A pathway along the north side of the building leads to the entrance, which is centered at the north elevation. Brick porch steps ascend to a recessed entry with an oversized wood door with a transom above. To the left of the entry is a gable end with expansive windows in a geometric arrangement that regularly alternates between large fixed windows and narrower casement windows, additionally separated by a horizontal wood band course.

At the east elevation, the horizontal wood band course continues from the north elevation and separates three large fixed windows above and below it, presenting expansive views of Kellogg's Beach and San Diego Bay. To the left there is a setback brick patio anchored by an outdoor brick fireplace and chimney attached to the house and oriented at an angle facing the southeast corner of the property.

Utilitarian and functional spaces are located along the south elevation, that has doors to provide outdoor access to the kitchen and to the garage, and features ribbon windows that are abbreviated in height.

The property has undergone alterations since its 1961 construction. In 2016, a partial second story was added to the residence, and designed carefully to ensure consistency with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. It is set back from the east and west ends of the residence and from the roofline in general, and massing and detailing is modeled after the original design of the property however changed subtly in dimension to readily differentiate it from the original portions of the house. It is also clad in a "reversed" board and batten redwood siding but the battens are narrower and the boards are wider than the original. The eave of the addition is shallower, and the rafter beams are of a smaller overall dimension. At the west elevation, the addition is set back beyond the footplate and roofline of the garage. The second-story roofline gable is centered on the original garage gable but is deliberately more pitched and holds protruding walls, much like the prow of a ship, at the upper elevation. Two pairs of small square windows flank the gable-end. At the east elevation, an open viewing deck was added, and is encased by transparent plexi-glass low railing. Windows at the east elevation of the addition emulate the original windows but are also slightly diminished in scale in comparison to the original. The patio chimney required a small height extension, and the new brick was added vertically rather than horizontally. As part of the 2016 rehabilitation, all window glazing was replaced with dual pane glass, however all of the original window openings and operations remained intact, and the jambs, head, and sills are original or replaced in-kind, as per the Standards. Because the addition was designed compatibly and sympathetically to the original design of the house, the modifications noted do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling and do not result in a loss of integrity of the building, remaining recognizable to its 1961 construction as a single-family residence in the Organic Geometric style.

The *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* describes Organic Geometric architecture as a style that was promulgated by Frank Lloyd Wright, promoting a "harmonious relationship between buildings and nature." The Historic Context Statement notes that architects who designed in this style emphasized the man-made and natural elements of the buildings through the use of organic design within the structure of geometric forms. Organic Geometric style buildings are more prevalently located in the La Jolla and Point Loma areas, but are somewhat rare overall in the San Diego region.

The subject property is representative of the Organic Geometric style and features many of the primary character-defining features such as exposed wood structure and materials, square and polygon design motifs, and natural materials such as wood and glass. The secondary character-defining features of the Organic geometric style found at the property include sharp, angular massing; complex roof forms, and site-specific design of the building elevations.

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 exposed wood frame structure; large beams that project beneath open eaves; a massive, brick fireplace and chimney; geometric design motifs in fenestration; sharp and angular massing; and the site-specific design of the building façades in response to views and vistas. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 resource is representative of the notable work of Master Architect, Sim Bruce Richards, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.

Sim Bruce Richards was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 1908, and began studies in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley in 1930. There, Richards later switched his major to art, and excelled in the craft of weaving abstract designs in fabrics and rugs. Impressed by Richards' rug designs viewed on display for exhibition, Frank Lloyd Wright personally invited Richards to join him in the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin. Richards trained in Wright's experimental academy setting and was among the first class to make the move to Wright's Taliesin West outside of Phoenix, Arizona.

Richards relocated to San Diego, serving as a civilian Naval architect during WWII. In San Diego, he also briefly worked with architects Harold Abrams and William Templeton Johnson.

Richards' body of work which included several residences and a limited number of public and commercial buildings, were all of wood construction. They were usually with rough finishes, natural, and never painted. In addition to Richards, other architects who designed buildings in the Organic Geometric style are Lloyd Ruocco, Richard Lareau, and John August Reed. Richards often collaborated with friends who were artists and craftsmen, utilizing their craft such as metalworking, tilework, and masonry in his home designs. Among them were James Hubbell, Rhoda Lopez, and Bill Davey. Richards was also active in his community as a supporter of the Sierra Club, the Ilan Lael Foundation, and a land use advocacy group called the Citizens Coordinate for Century Three (C3), and as president of the San Diego chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Sim Bruce Richards lived from 1908-1983.

Significance Statement: The resource retains good integrity and continues to reflect Sim Bruce Richards' original design, intent and aesthetic. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, emphasizing both the man-made and natural elements of the building within the geometric forms of the overall structure. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards.

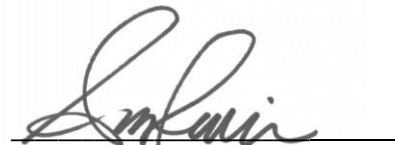
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 379 San Antonio Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1961 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the partial 2nd-story addition added in 2016.



Sonnier Francisco
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison

SF/jb

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 6/28/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/28/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards House** (owned by Thomas R and Donna C Anderson, 379 San Antonio Avenue, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **379 San Antonio Avenue, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **532-493-02-00**, further described as BLK 123 LOTS 3 & 6 ST CLSD ADJ & S 40 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 Raymond, Jr. and Avery Spicer/Sim Bruce Richards 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 1961 period of significance. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion C. 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, Sim Bruce Richards. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, emphasizing both the man-made and natural elements of the building within the geometric forms of the overall 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 partial 2nd-story addition added in 2016.

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: _____
JEREMY JUNG,
Deputy City Attorney