



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 12, 2019 REPORT NO. HRB-19-034

HEARING DATE: September 26, 2019

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Rose Vollmer/ Richard Lareau House**

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

APPLICANT: The City of San Diego; represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 4515 Ladera Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 532-510-1400

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Rose Vollmer/ Richard John Lareau House located at 4515 Ladera Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Rose Vollmer/ Richard John Lareau House located at 4515 Ladera Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1964 under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Post and Beam style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1964 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits the direct expression of the building's structural system, horizontal massing, a very low-pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves, floor to ceiling glass, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of load bearing walls, the absence of applied decoration, strong interior/ exterior connection, an open floor plan, vertical wood siding and aluminum windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of proposed Master Architect Richard Lareau, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality residential, religious, institutional, educational and commercial buildings in the City, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is one of his earlier residences in the Post and Beam style that expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The subject resource is a one-story residential structure located within the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park in a natural coastal environment on the cliffs above the Pacific Ocean.

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 Rose Vollmer/Richard Lareau House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Rose Vollmer, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Richard Lareau, a proposed Master Architect. The deed from the date of construction also lists Vollmer's mother, Sarah Wood, as an owner of the property; however, the house has traditionally been referred to as the residence of Rose Vollmer.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by Scott Moomjian, 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 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 4515 Ladera Street 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 4515 Ladera 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 resource is a one-story, single family residence constructed in the Post and Beam style in 1964. The structure is rectangular in shape with a wide, horizontal massing and consists of three modules; the main residence, a carport and guest quarters. The roof is a very low pitched, side facing gable with wide, overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. Vertical wood boards sheath most

of the exterior of the house but the east and north facades are also accented with concrete block. The structural system is clearly articulated on the exterior of the house which features exposed load bearing beams and the expansive use of glass. The modular design of the building and the exposed structural system combine to create a repetitive geometrical pattern especially on the western façade of the main residential section. Fenestration includes aluminum windows in fixed, slider and casement varieties. Also, the floor to ceiling glass windows are featured on the west façade to facilitate the connection between the interior of the house and the ocean views. The eastern façade features a recessed entrance to the main living space, a covered walkway area and small courtyard.

Several modifications have been made to the subject resource since its 1964 date of construction. An original jalousie sidelite at the front entrance were replaced with opaque glass at an unknown date. Also, a wooden deck was constructed on the rear elevation and minor modifications were made to the landscaping and hardscaping on the east façade. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling.

Post and Beam is a method of construction in which the structural framing consists of load bearing beams supported by columns rather than solid bearing walls. From the 1950's through the 1970's this method of construction became popular because it allowed for the expansive use of glass which facilitated the indoor/ outdoor connection so important to modern design. Structures designed in the Post and Beam style generally have a rectilinear shape with open floor plans and a layout based on a consistent module. Roofs are usually flat with wide overhanging eaves emphasizing the structure's horizontal massing. A defining characteristic of Post and Beam design is the direct expression of a building's structural system on its façade. Other important features of this style include repetitive façade geometry; the absence of applied decoration; and the use of wood, steel and glass on the building's exterior. In San Diego, residential examples of Post and Beam architecture can be found in established neighborhoods such as Mission Hills, La Jolla and Point Loma on sloping lots that were previously unused. According to the *San Diego Modernism Context Statement*, the style is relatively rare and any extant examples should be considered for historic designation.

Significance Statement: The subject resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Post and Beam style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including the direct expression of the building's structural system, horizontal massing, very low-pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves, floor to ceiling glass, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of load bearing walls, the absence of applied decoration, strong interior/ exterior connection, open floor plan, vertical wood siding and aluminum windows. Therefore, staff recommends 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.

Richard John Lareau was born in Bremerton, Washington and moved to Chula Vista at a young age. After graduating high school, Lareau enrolled in military service after which he began attending classes at San Diego State University. Eventually, he transferred to UC Berkeley, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture. Lareau eventually returned to San Diego where he felt there would be more business opportunities in a city with few licensed architects. Starting his professional career in the offices of Kitchen and Hunt and later working for Paderewski, Mitchell and

Dean, he eventually opened his own office on 6th Avenue in 1957. By 1965 the office moved to Nimitz Boulevard where he continues to keep his practice. Lareau taught at the University of California Extension and California Western University and played an active role in the community through his associations with the Pont Loma Planning Group, American Institute of Architects and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce.

Early in his career, Lareau served as the campus architect for Cal Western (currently Point Loma Nazarene) and grew his practice by taking on a number of residential commissions. These early residential works include the Jack Bone House located at 1914 Guy Street in Mission Hills and the Michael and Clara Brown House located at 5645 Taft Avenue which is currently designated as HRB #1246. Lareau's residences are generally designed in the Post and Beam or Contemporary styles and signature characteristics include flat roofs, wide overhanging eaves, projecting beams and the extensive use of glass. As the firm grew, Lareau expanded his commissions to include religious structures, commercial buildings, public schools and institutional buildings. Notable works in San Diego include the Mission Bay Visitor's Center, the Cal Western Science Building, the master plan for the United States International University and his own office in the Centre West Building in Point Loma. Lareau's design philosophy was based around expressing the structure of a building and the architect expressed an affinity for circular buildings.

Lareau designed 4515 Ladera Street for Rose Vollmer in 1964. He also designed two other structures for Vollmer in the near vicinity. The Ladera Street house is notable as an example of Lareau's early residential work in the Post and Beam style and demonstrates the high quality of design seen in his other works. Additionally, the house features a roof with wide overhanging eaves, projecting beams and the extensive use of glass typical of Lareau's residential work.

Significance Statement: The resource is representative of a notable work of proposed Master Architect Richard Lareau, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality residential, religious, institutional, educational and commercial buildings in the City. Specifically, the resource is one of his earlier residences in the Post and Beam style that expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works. Therefore, staff recommends the establishment of Richard Lareau as a Master Architect, and the designation of the subject property 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 4515 Ladera 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 4515 Ladera 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 Rose Vollmer/ Richard John Lareau House located at 4515 Ladera Street be designated with a period of significance of 1964 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Post and Beam style; and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of proposed Master Architect Richard Lareau.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

SS/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/26/2019

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/26/2019, to consider the historical designation of the Rose Vollmer/ Richard Lareau House (owned by City of San Diego, , , CA) located at **4515 Ladera Street, San Diego, CA 92107**, APN: **532-510-14-00**, further described as LOT 4 POR LOTS 65&145&146 IN MM 36&A 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 Rose Vollmer/Richard Lareau House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Post and Beam style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1964 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits the direct expression of the building's structural system, horizontal massing, a very low-pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves, floor to ceiling glass, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of load bearing walls, the absence of applied decoration, strong interior/ exterior connection, an open floor plan, vertical wood siding and aluminum windows. 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 proposed Master Architect Richard Lareau, a prominent and accomplished architect responsible for the design of many quality residential, religious, institutional, educational and commercial buildings in the City, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is one of his earlier residences in the Post and Beam style that expresses a quality of design seen in his other known works. 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:

BY: _____

DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

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