



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 9, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-032

HEARING DATE: July 23, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence**

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

APPLICANT: Hastings Trust represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 211 Avenida Cortez, La Jolla Community, Council District 1  
APN 357-030-06-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence located at 211 Avenida Cortez as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence located at 211 Avenida Cortez as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1948 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 Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features horizontal massing; one-story construction; custom details such as the house's diamond pane windows, wood paneled entranceway, and "service yard" area; low-sloped gabled roof with deep overhangs; sprawling "L" shaped floor plan that wraps around a courtyard, and large attached garage.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Thomas Shepherd and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Shepherd's work because it marks a shift from his use of European-inspired designs to the popular Custom Ranch style.

### 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 in the middle of a block in the La Jolla Hermosa subdivision of the La Jolla Community and contains a single-family residence.

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 Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Louis and Frances Stroud, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Thomas Shepherd, a Master Architect.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, 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 resource was originally constructed in 1948 as Custom Ranch house with an attached garage. The resource is "L" shaped and clad in smooth stucco. The low-pitched hipped roof is clad in composition shingles. The house features wood fixed and casement windows. The asymmetrical primary facade features a protruding center bay, two groupings of diamond-paned casement windows and a recessed entryway. The front door features eight panels and two lites and is flanked by columns of five panels on either side. The house's "L" shape wraps around a rear patio and yard, and the attached garage is in the rearmost end of the L. On the south (side) elevation, there is a "service yard" area with a tile floor, smooth stucco perimeter walls with decorative tile accents, and a tiled counter below one of the house's windows.

The house features few modifications since its 1948 period of significance. A remodel in 1958 removed a window on the north (side) elevation and added a window on the south elevation. A remodel in 1986 expanded the kitchen into the rear patio. The ceramic tile floor was added to the service yard at an unknown date after 1948. The original wood shake roof was replaced with composition shingles. A pergola structure in the rear yard was removed except for a concrete post. Additionally, there are some discrepancies between Shepherd's plans and the as-built conditions, such as the front walkway, rear patio, and front door, but it is unclear if the discrepancies are a result of later modifications or if they were design changes made during construction. These modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch houses because Custom Ranch houses were 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 in materials and craftsmanship 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 construction; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick

or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan that is 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.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including horizontal massing; one-story construction; custom details such as the house’s diamond pane windows, wood paneled entranceway, and “service yard” area; low-sloped gabled roof with deep overhangs; sprawling “L” shaped floor plan that wraps around a courtyard, and large attached garage. 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.*

Thomas Leroy Shepherd was born in Wisconsin and studied architecture at the University of Wisconsin and Columbia University. He moved to Southern California in the 1920s and began working in Pasadena. He then worked for noted architect George Washington Smith in Santa Barbara. In 1926, he relocated to La Jolla. In 1927, he formed a partnership with architect Herbert Mann, which ended in 1932.

Most of Shepherd’s buildings from the 1920s and 1930s were designed in the Spanish Eclectic style. He sometimes included English, Japanese, and French Eclectic influences in his designs. During the Great Depression, Shepherd shifted to working on more modest house designs. In the late 1930s, he travelled to Europe. The local architectural styles he observed provided him with design inspiration for elements of some of his subsequent work. The 1940s was Shepherd’s most productive decade of work, even though he served in the Navy during World War II. As his career progressed, he expanded beyond Spanish Eclectic and Mediterranean Revival architectural styles to also design in Colonial Revival, Minimal Traditional, Custom Ranch, Zigzag Moderne, Tudor and French Eclectic. Shepherd claimed to prefer no particular style, instead focusing on designing according to his clients’ needs and preferences.

Shepherd’s body of work comprises over 200 buildings in La Jolla, including nonresidential structures such as the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club and the Marine Room. Although he primarily worked in La Jolla, examples of his work can be found throughout the San Diego area. Twenty of Shepherd’s works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include his contributions to the Darlington House (HRB #327), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB in 1995, the Little Hotel by the Sea (HRB #181), and the Thomas Shepherd House (HRB #1296).

The subject resource reflects Shepherd’s philosophy of eschewing allegiance to a particular architectural style in favor of designing to his clients’ desires and using high-quality craftsmanship. This resource indicates his willingness to shift away from the more European-inspired and revival styles that characterized his earlier career to build to the changing preferences of his clients. The resource is a notable example of his shift to employing the then-popular Ranch style to design a custom house that emphasized secluded indoor-outdoor connections, a modern layout with rear attached garage, and high-quality details.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains integrity and continues to reflect Master Architect Thomas Shepherd's original design, intent and aesthetic. It is a notable example of Shepherd's work because it marks a shift from his use of European-inspired designs to the popular Custom Ranch style. Therefore, staff recommends 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 Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence located at 211 Avenida Cortez be designated as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1948 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Custom Ranch style and Criterion D as a notable example of the work of Master Architect Thomas Shepherd.



Gemma Tierney  
Associate Planner

GT/ss



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner  
Development Services Department

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 7/23/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/23/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence (owned by Hastings Trust 11-30-17, 252 Bonair Street, La Jolla, CA 92037) located at **211 Avenida Cortez, La Jolla, CA 92037**, APN: **357-030-06-00**, further described as BLK 7 LOT 6 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 Louis and Frances Stroud/ Thomas Shepherd Residence 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 Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features horizontal massing; one-story construction; custom details such as the house's diamond pane windows, wood paneled entranceway, and "service yard" area; low-sloped gabled roof with deep overhangs; sprawling "L" shaped floor plan that wraps around a courtyard, and large attached garage. 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 Thomas Shepherd and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Shepherd's work because it marks a shift from his use of European-inspired designs to the popular Custom Ranch style. 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