



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 8, 2016 REPORT NO. HRB-16-032

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of September 20, 2016

SUBJECT: **ITEM #12 – Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House**

APPLICANT: Adam Schwartz represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 391 Catalina Blvd, 92106, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 391 Catalina Boulevard as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 391 Catalina Boulevard as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1971-1983 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 Modern Organic Geometric and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains a horizontal floor-plan integrated into the building site; complex off-set roofs with broad overhanging eaves; sharp right angles in rectangular forms; offset wall planes; large expanses of fixed and casement wood-framed windows that minimize the separation between indoor and outdoor spaces, particularly within the common areas of the house.
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 showcases his quality of design and detail with the use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site specific design.

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 located on a main thoroughfare just before the entrance to Naval Base Point Loma. Surrounding properties include a number of single family residential and office buildings.

The building is located on APN 532-380-21. 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 Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Rodney Eales who constructed the house as his personal residence and the name of Sim Bruce Richards, a Master Architect. The property was originally constructed in 1946 by R.N. and Dorothy Rowray and then transferred hands a couple of times before being purchased by Harold and Joyce Eales in 1954. In 1971, the Eales hired Sim Bruce Richards to design an addition to the house after which the house was transferred to their son, Rodney Eales, who continued to reconstruct the 1946 house with the help of Richards. Based on his overall involvement in transforming the property into the Modern Organic Geometric style that is present today, it is appropriate that the house is named after Rodney Eales.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Marie Burke Lia 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 parcel was originally developed in 1946 and expanded beginning in 1971 by Sim Bruce Richards at the request of Rodney Eales. The building is designed as a series of three connected forms extending from the front on Catalina Boulevard to the back of the lot. These forms feature a two story element at the front and the rear flanking a one story element. The exterior of the house is sheathed primarily with vertical board and batten siding but also features cobblestone and flagstone accents at the front entrance and the stem wall. Fenestration on the building varies in placement, size and shape and includes fixed, slider and casement windows. The use of two story window walls in the public areas connects the indoor and outdoor spaces. The roof forms consist of flat and gable with deep overhangs and exposed rafter ends.

Very few alterations have been completed on the property since Sim Bruce Richards completed his work in 1983 with the exception of a wood deck extension that was added between the two 2-story elements and a small rear detached storage building that is similar in materials, but with a painted exterior and shallow eaves. These minor modifications do not adversely impact the character-defining features of the house.

Organic Geometric architecture is a philosophy of design which promotes a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. Organic Geometric designers made use of natural building materials such as wood and stone and designed building respectful to the site. Like their Post and Beam Modern contemporaries, Organic Geometric architects also used glass to minimize the separation between interior and exterior and encourage indoor/outdoor living. Buildings were carefully sited to take advantage of views and other site features, often built on steep slopes and boasting large balconies. In terms of shape, architects designed these buildings with an emphasis on rectilinear geometry, and the designs are characterized by asymmetrical facades, unusual rooflines, and angular

shapes. Primary character-defining features of an Organic Geometric style house are: exposed structure and materials; square, diamond and polygon design motifs; natural materials. Secondary features are: sharp angular massing; asymmetrical facades; complex roof forms; and site specific design.

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 a horizontal floor-plan integrated into the building site; complex off-set roofs with broad overhanging eaves; sharp right angles in rectangular forms; offset wall planes; large expanses of fixed and casement wood-framed windows that minimize the separation between indoor and outdoor spaces, particularly within the common areas of the house. 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.

The consultant has also recommended that this house is nominated under Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards. Richards was previously established as a Master Architect with HRB Site #615—the Richard Olney/Sim Bruce Richards House at 1644 Crespo Drive.

Richards was born in 1908 in Oklahoma. In 1920, the Richards family moved to Phoenix and learned about Frank Lloyd Wright. Richards studied architecture UC Berkley in 1930, but soon transferred to the art department. While studying art, he honed his abstract weaving skills. Prior to his graduation in 1934, Frank Lloyd Wright had an opportunity to view one of Richards' rug designs in an art show in San Francisco. Following correspondence with Wright, Richards was invited to join the Taliesin Fellowship and studied there from 1934 to 1936.

After leaving Taliesin, Richards arrived in San Diego in 1938. Richards was drafted into the US Navy and remained with the Navy until 1946. In the same year, Richards began working for William Templeton Johnson. In 1949, Richards started his own office and practiced architecture for nearly three decades until his passing in 1983. Richards designed over 200 projects not including his work in weaving, painting and furniture design.

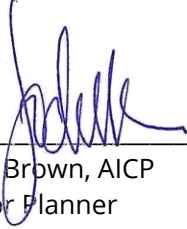
Significance Statement: The subject property is a notable work of Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards' work and showcases his quality of design and detail with the use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site specific design. Staff recommends designation of the Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 391 Catalina Boulevard be designated with a period of significance of 1971-1983 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of a Modern Organic Geometric architectural style and Criterion D as a notable work by Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards. 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.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

JB/ks

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/20/2016

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/20/2016, to consider the historical designation of the **Rodney Eales/Sim Bruce Richards House** (owned by Adam Schwartz, 391 Catalina Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **391 Catalina Blvd, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **532-380-21-00**, further described as LOT 3 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 Rodney Eales/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 Modern Organic Geometric and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1971-1983 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains a horizontal floor-plan integrated into the building site; complex off-set roofs with broad overhanging eaves; sharp right angles in rectangular forms; offset wall planes; large expanses of fixed and casement wood-framed windows that minimize the separation between indoor and outdoor spaces, particularly within the common areas of the house. 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 and retains integrity as it relates to his 1971-1983 design. Specifically, the resource showcases his quality of design and detail with the use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site specific design. 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: _____
COURTNEY ANN COYLE, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney