



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 10, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-052

HEARING DATE: September 24, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House**

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

APPLICANT: Irwin Pfister represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 6051 Folsom Drive, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 357-182-07-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House located at 6051 Folsom Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House located at 6051 Folsom Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1950 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the attached garage constructed outside of the period of significance, and the rear attached former carport, which was enclosed outside of the period of significance. 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 1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features direct expressions of the building's structural system, floor-to-ceiling glass, horizontal massing, a shallow pitch roof with deep overhangs, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, and the absence of applied decoration.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable and early example of Ruocco's work in the Post and Beam style, and his influence in helping to establish and popularize that style.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The subject resource is a single-family residence in the La Jolla Hermosa Unit No. 2 subdivision. The parcel slopes downwards to the south, towards the street.

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 Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Mitchell and Marian Lange, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Lloyd Ruocco, a Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D. 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 6051 Folsom Drive did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or La Jolla'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 6051 Folsom Drive 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 was originally constructed in 1950 as a one-story, single-family residence in the Post and Beam style with a rear attached carport. The main block of the house features a low-pitched hip roof with deep eaves and exposed rafters and beams. The west elevation contains the main entrance and strongly expresses the Post and Beam style, and therefore serves as the primary

façade, although it faces towards the side of the parcel. Both the primary façade and the south (street-facing) elevation are composed of floor-to-ceiling glass separated by wood posts topped by exposed beams, providing direct expression of the building's structural system. Other walls are clad in stucco but also feature exposed beams, and the east elevation contains three bays of floor-to-ceiling glass (one window and two double-doors).

The subject resource has undergone several modifications since its 1950 period of significance. The Assessor's Building Record mentions an addition and carport at an unknown date. Aerial photographs from 1964 and later appear to show an addition to the west of the original rear attached carport. On the Assessor's Building Record, the addition in this location (the current garage) was originally marked as a carport. The aerial photographs and notation on the Assessor's Building Record suggest that an addition, used as a carport, may have existed in that location prior to 2002, which is the year that the consultant's report states that the garage was constructed. However, the 1965 Sanborn map does not show this addition. Two other modifications occurred at unknown dates: a porch at the northeast corner of the main block of the house and a floor-to-ceiling window on the east elevation were infilled at unknown dates. The consultant's report states that the following modifications occurred in 2002: the infilling of the rear attached carport, the construction of an attached garage to the west of the former carport, the enclosure of a porch at the northwest corner of the main block of the house, the replacement of a floor-to-ceiling window with a glass door on the south elevation, the recladding of the brick chimney and foundation with white stone, the recladding of the front entryway steps with stone tiles, and extensive new hardscaping including the replacement of the driveway and retaining walls with new materials, the addition of terraces at the rear of the property, and the addition of a concrete deck on the south elevation.

The Post and Beam style was popular between 1950 and 1970. The style is primarily characterized by direct expression of the structural system, which is usually wood or steel, and floor-to-ceiling glass. Other character-defining features include horizontal massing, flat or shallow pitch roofs with deep overhangs or no parapet, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of solid loadbearing walls, absence of applied decoration, strong interior/exterior connections, open interior floor plans, and the frequent use of wood, steel and glass as exterior finish materials.

Although there are numerous modifications to the subject resource, its integrity was evaluated under the San Diego Modernism Historic Context, which states that, "due to the relative rarity of this [Post and Beam] sub-style and high degree of individualization any extant examples should be considered for historic designation." Due to the relative rarity of examples of the Post and Beam style in San Diego, the modifications' impact on integrity of design, materials workmanship and feeling does not impair eligibility for designation under HRB Criterion C. The building still clearly displays the Post and Beam style through the retention of repetitive façade geometry, extensive areas of floor-to-ceiling glass and direct expression of the structural system

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Post and Beam style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including direct expressions of the building's structural system, floor-to-ceiling glass, horizontal massing, a shallow pitch roof with deep overhangs, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, and the absence of applied decoration. 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.*

Lloyd Pietrantonio Ruocco was born in Maine in 1907 but moved to Canada when he was a baby. In 1923, his family moved to Southern California, first to LA, then to Long Beach, and finally to San Diego. While attending San Diego High School, Ruocco took an architectural drawing contest and 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. He then decided to attend UC Berkeley. While at Berkeley, Ruocco was exposed to the Beaux Arts tradition but favored the designs of Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright.

After graduating from Berkeley in 1933, Ruocco returned to San Diego. He worked for Requa again on the County Administration Building, as well as a model town exhibit for the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition, for which Requa was the chief architect. During World War II, Ruocco worked as a draftsman for the US Public Works Office.

Ruocco built the Lloyd Ruocco Design Center (HRB #434) in 1950 to serve as the offices for his firm, his wife Ilsa's interior design firm, and as a place to mentor younger architects. One of these younger architects was Homer Delawie. Ruocco and Delawie went on to form a partnership in 1958, which lasted until around 1961.

Ruocco has been called the second most significant Modernist architect in San Diego architectural history (after Irving Gill). Ruocco, along with several other San Diego Modernist architects, was instrumental in establishing the Post and Beam style. Characteristics of Ruocco's work include an economy of materials, extensive use of glass to create the visual effect of transparency; simple wood beams; the inclusion of small, private places with lighting, nooks, and window seats; floor-to-ceiling cabinetry of fine wood; walls and ceilings made from redwood; Masonite floors; intricate landscape relationships; sliding panels; and flat roofs with wide eave overhangs.

Six of Ruocco's works have so far been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Lloyd Ruocco Design Center (HRB #434), which established him as a Master Architect in 2000, the Robert and Alma Lard/Homer Delawie and Lloyd Ruocco House (HRB #1297), and the Ruth Smith and Louise Neece / Lloyd Ruocco and Homer Delawie Duplex (HRB #1340).

Ruocco designed the subject resource in the Post and Beam style in 1950, the same year that the Lloyd Ruocco Design Center was built, which is also in the Post and Beam style and is seen as the catalyst of the style. Therefore, the subject resource also serves as an early example of Ruocco's design work that helped to establish this architectural style.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains integrity and continues to reflect Master Architect Lloyd Ruocco's original design, intent and aesthetic. It is a notable and early example of Ruocco's work in the Post and Beam style, and his influence in helping to establish and popularize that style. Therefore, 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 6051 Folsom Drive 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 6051 Folsom Drive 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 Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House located at 6051 Folsom Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1950 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Post and Beam style and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Lloyd Ruocco. The designation excludes the attached garage constructed outside of the period of significance, and the rear attached former carport, which was enclosed outside of the period of significance.



Gemma Tierney
Associate Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

GT/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/24/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/24/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco House (owned by Foit/Bobin-Foit Family Trust 12-18-14, 6051 Folsom Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037) located at **6051 Folsom Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037**, APN: **357-182-07-00**, further described as BLK 34 LOT 16 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 Mitchell and Marian Lange/Lloyd Ruocco 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 Post and Beam style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features direct expressions of the building's structural system, floor-to-ceiling glass, horizontal massing, a shallow pitch roof with deep overhangs, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, and the absence of applied decoration. 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 Lloyd Ruocco and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable and early example of Ruocco's work in the Post and Beam style, and his influence in helping to establish and popularize that 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 designation shall exclude the attached garage constructed outside of the period of significance, and the rear attached former carport, which was enclosed outside of the period of significance.

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