



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 12, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-041

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of September 26, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Robert and Lillian Orr House**

APPLICANT: Robert Lambert and Robin Felice represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 2382 Via Capri Court, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Robert and Lillian Orr House located at 2382 Via Capri Court as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Robert and Lillian Orr House located at 2382 Via Capri Court as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1963 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Modern Post-and-Beam/Contemporary style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features direct expression of the wood frame structural system; horizontal massing; flat roofs with no parapet; shallow pitch roofs with deep overhangs; floor-to-ceiling glass; open floor plan with interior and exterior connections; and stucco and concrete block exterior wall sheathing.

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 property is a Modern Post-and-Beam/Contemporary style single family residence constructed in 1963 and located at the north corner of Via Capri Court and Via Capri in the La Jolla Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Robert and Lillian Orr House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the names of Robert and Lillian Orr, who constructed the resource as their personal residence in 1963.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource technical report was prepared by Scott 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 Criterion C. 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 was constructed in 1963 as a single story single family residence with a garage below. The property is located along the northeastern slope of Mount Soledad and is built of wood frame construction on a concrete block foundation with floor joists. The building's overall form is generally "H"-shaped and is oriented to capitalize on the canyon and ocean views the lot provides. The east and west elevations make up the two sides of the "H" and are rectangular masses with flat roof forms, while the central portion of the house conveys three low pitched gable roof forms that project out at both ends. The attached garage is below-grade and accessed from Via Capri along the east side elevation. Exterior building materials consist generally of stucco, floor-to-ceiling glass, and concrete block in the area of the fireplace along the west elevation. A horizontal band of vertical wood board acts like a cornice and wraps around the entirety of the structure. Fenestration generally consists of floor-to-ceiling metal sash louvered and fixed windows. When viewed from Via Capri Court, the property appears closed and confined. However, the rear of the structure is practically transparent – left wide open to the outside with the liberal use of floor-to-ceiling glass.

Modifications to the subject building are limited. In 1965, shortly after the building's construction, wooden decks, walkways and fencing were installed at the property. These modifications were designed and executed in a manner sympathetic to the existing style of the building. No significant alterations have otherwise occurred at the property.

Early 20th century Modernism had a tremendous effect on San Diego's built environment, most notably during the construction boom following World War II – and resulted in the development of a variety of architectural sub-styles that reflected the progressive attitudes of the Modernist movement. Each of these sub-styles were characteristically distinct but would occasionally overlap within a single building. Stylistically, the subject property has been identified as one such "hybrid" – exhibiting a blend of Modern sub-styles, namely Post-and-Beam and Contemporary. This unique blending of architectural sub-styles seen here is a testament to the fluidity of Modernism in an architectural context.

The *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* determines a period of ca. 1950-1970 during which Modern Post-and-Beam was most popular as a design style. The Post-and-Beam style is characterized by rectilinear forms and open floor plans that are grid-like and often

constructed with modular components. The subject property exhibits all the primary character-defining features of the style in the direct expression of the wood frame structural system; horizontal massing; flat roofs with no parapet; shallow pitch roofs with deep overhangs; and floor-to-ceiling glass. Secondary character-defining features of the style are seen in the repetitive façade geometry (especially the rear and east side elevations); minimal use of solid load-bearing walls; strong interior and exterior connections; and open interior floor plan. The Context Statement notes the relative rarity of this style, and identifies the expression of the structural system through expansive floor-to-ceiling glass and wood or steel framing as critical elements to its conveyance.

As discussed in the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, the Modern Contemporary sub-style was a popular design style for tract communities in the 1950s and 1960s. While clusters of Contemporary tracts retaining integrity should be considered for potential designation as districts, custom residential examples like the subject property may be eligible for individual designation. Some of the primary character-defining features of the Contemporary style that the subject house presents are found in the large aluminum framed windows; the stucco and concrete block exterior finishes; and the strong gabled roof forms with deep overhangs. The attached, below-grade garage satisfies a secondary character-defining feature of the style.

Overall, the subject property retains excellent integrity to its 1963 date of construction and period of significance. The limited modifications to the site do not alter the building's character defining features or significantly impair the design, materials, workmanship or feeling aspects of integrity. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Post-and-Beam style architecture by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including strong horizontal massing; honest expression of structural systems; flat roof forms with no parapet; low-pitched gabled roof forms with deep overhangs; repetitive façade geometry; floor-to-ceiling glass; and open floor plan with strong interior/exterior connections. The house conveys historic characteristics of the Contemporary style through the large aluminum framed windows; non-traditional exterior finishes; strong gabled roof forms with deep overhangs; and attached below-grade garage. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion C.

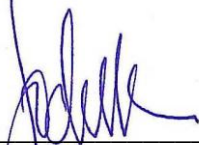
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Robert and Lillian Orr House located at 2382 Via Capri Court be designated with a period of significance of 1963 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Modern Post-and-Beam/Contemporary style architecture. 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



Cathy Winterrowd
Interim Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

JB/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 9/26/2013

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/26/2013, to consider the historical designation of the **Robert and Lillian Orr House** (owned by Robert J. Lambert and Robin M. Felice, 4135 Porte De Palmas #217, San Diego, CA 92122) located at **2382 Via Capri Court, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **352-161-07-00**, further described as LOT 9 POR 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 **Robert and Lillian Orr 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 Post-and-Beam/Contemporary style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features direct expression of the wood frame structural system; horizontal massing; flat roofs with no parapet; shallow pitch roofs with deep overhangs; floor-to-ceiling glass; open floor plan with interior and exterior connections; and stucco and concrete block exterior wall sheathing. 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: _____
JOHN LEMMO, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney