



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 12, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-043

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of July 26, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – HELEN RUTH DAILEY/RUSSELL FORESTER HOUSE**

APPLICANT: Michael M. Mullin Family Trust c/o Constance Mullin Branscomb

LOCATION: 7750 Ludington Place, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House located at 7750 Ludington Place as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House located at 7750 Ludington Place as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1949 under HRB Criteria C and D. The 324 square foot addition constructed in 1962 and the 75 square foot addition constructed in 1997 are excluded from the proposed designation. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1949 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a prominent low sloped, off-set cross-gable roof with overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails; plaster-coated adobe walls; four sets of the original steel-framed windows, both fixed and casement; a hewn-wood garage door; the original wood paneled front door; and a large wide adobe chimney along the southern side elevation of the structure.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is one of two of Russell Forester's earliest designs and is unique in that it is not typical of Forester's later more modern designs and was designed based on his client's life style and interests.

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 house is a one-story building with a single-car garage and is located on the western side Ludington Place within the La Jolla Park Neighborhood of the La Jolla Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the original owner, Helen Ruth Dailey and Russell Forester, a Master Architect, who designed the house which was constructed in 1949.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Constance Mullin Branscomb, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff concurs 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 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 building is a one story Custom Ranch house constructed in 1949 and features an off-set, cross-gabled roof with cement fiber shakes that simulate wood, overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The house is constructed of plaster-coated adobe blocks. Four sets of the original steel-framed windows, both fixed and casement, are a prominent feature of the front of the house. The hewn-wood overhead garage door features cross-braced members. The paneled wood front door is to the left of the attached garage. The southeastern side of the home is also visible from the street and features a vertical-rise wide adobe covered chimney. Fenestration throughout the structure include the steel-framed fixed and casement windows and a French door with sidelights in the rear of the structure.

Modifications to the structure identified are a 324 square foot bedroom and bathroom addition as well as an extension to the garage for a second water heater all constructed in 1962; and a 75 square foot dining room addition, constructed in 1997. Also in 1997, the original cedar-shingle roof was replaced with a fire-proof cement-fiber shakes, similar in color and appearance to the original roof; and a window was replaced with a door for access to the back yard directly from the rear of the house. All these exterior modifications occurred in the rear of the structure and are not visible from public view. The modifications do not impact the overall architectural integrity of the structure however the 324 square foot addition constructed in 1962 and the 75 square foot addition constructed in 1997 have been excluded from the proposed designation.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch because these homes were typically custom-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 than their tract counterparts. Like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Exterior materials include wood siding, stone, concrete block, brick, and sometimes adobe. Detailing may include paneled wood doors, divided lite windows, wood shutters, and prominent, wide chimneys. The subject house conveys the historic significance of Custom Ranch architecture by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including a prominent low sloped, off-set cross-gable roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; custom adobe walls; steel-framed windows, both fixed and casement; a hewn-wood garage door; a wood paneled front door; and a large wide adobe chimney. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject building under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Custom Ranch architecture and retains integrity to the 1955 date of construction. The 324 square foot addition constructed in 1962 and the 75 square foot addition constructed in 1997 are excluded from the proposed designation.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Russell Forester began his architectural career in the mid-1940s as a draftsman in the Army Corps of Engineers, where he worked for Lloyd Ruocco. In 1948, Mr. Forester opened his own establishment as a freelance architectural designer. In 1950, Mr. Forester was inspired by Lloyd Ruocco to begin his formal study of architecture at the Institute of Design in Chicago, where he was mentored by Mies Van Der Rohe. Forester opened his first office at 633 Pearl Street at the time his Rushville Street home was chosen by a distinguished jury as one of the top residences in the United States for *Progressive Architecture* magazine. Forester's second home on Hillside Drive was displayed in an international architecture exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1952. By the time he obtained his architectural license in 1960, Forester had already completed a wealth of modernist structures. Known for not compromising his designs for clients, he was among the first wave of practicing architects to push Mies Van Der Rohe's brand of steel & glass modernism on commercial and residential clients across San Diego. From his La Jolla practice Forester is credited with many high profile commissions for individuals such as Bob Peterson, for whom he designed the first Jack-in-the-Box.

In 1976, Forester's lifelong passion for art became his full-time career, and he became a distinguished painter and sculptor in Europe and the United States. Russell Forester's career melding art and architecture was honored by his unusual FAIA recognition. Rather than his career of progressive building designs being honored, he was recognized by his AIA colleagues for his contribution to art and architecture aesthetics. His architectural designs varied in material and style over the decades while always retaining central design principles – the problems the client needed solving; and how the whole project was vastly more than the sum of its parts. Forester was established as a Master Architect in 2002 with the designation of HRB Site #528, a Custom Ranch home. Since then, an additional three sites have been designated reflecting his work in the Organic Geometric, International and Post-and-Beam styles.

While not typical of his subsequent more modern homes, the subject structure, designed by Forester in 1948 and completed in 1949, is one of two of Forester's oldest extant homes. The other original Forester structure located at 304 Playa del Norte in La Jolla has been significantly altered with a second-story addition over the original garage in 1975. The subject structure at 7750 Ludington Place illustrates the baseline of Forester's architectural development and is an excellent example of his ability to design a home based on his client's lifestyle and interests. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject building under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

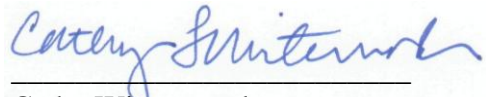
If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House located at 7750 Ludington Place be designated with a period of significance of 1949 under HRB Criterion C as a resource embodying the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch style and under Criterion D as representative of a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester. The 324 square foot addition constructed in 1962 and the 75 square foot addition constructed in 1997 are excluded from the proposed designation. 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.



Jeffrey E. Oakley
Associate Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

JO/ks/cw

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A

ADOPTED ON 7/26/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/26/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester House** located at **7750 Ludington Place, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **350-231-05-00**, further described as BLK A LOT 6 ST CLSD ADJ & 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 Helen Ruth Dailey/Russell Forester 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 Custom Ranch architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1949 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a prominent low sloped, off-set cross-gable roof with overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails; plaster-coated adobe walls; four sets of the original steel-framed windows, both fixed and casement; a hewn-wood garage door; the original wood paneled front door; and a large wide adobe chimney along the southern side elevation of the structure. 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 Russell Forester and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is one of two of Russell Forester's earliest designs and is unique in that it is not typical of Forester's later more modern designs and was designed based on his client's life style and interests. 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**. The designation excludes the 324 square foot addition constructed in 1962 and the 75 square foot addition constructed in 1997.

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: _____
KEITH BAUERLE
Deputy City Attorney