



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: February 12, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-008

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of February 26, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Industrial Developers/Loch Crane Office Building**

APPLICANT: Cal-Sorrento, LTD, owners; represented by the Office of Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 3344 Industrial Court, Torrey Pines Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Industrial Developers/Loch Crane Office Building located at 3344 Industrial Court as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Industrial Developers/Loch Crane Office Building located at 3344 Industrial Court as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1965 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 the Contemporary sub-style of Modernism and retains a very good level of architectural integrity from its 1965 period of significance.

The designation shall include building E and the trellised walkway with vertical pierced concrete block posts and wood slat roof that leads to building E.



City Planning & Community Investment
202 C Street, MS 5A • San Diego, CA 92101-3865
Tel (619) 235-5200 Fax (619) 533-5951

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a discretionary permit application for a proposed building demolition of a structure located at 3344 Industrial Court. A historic resource technical report was required as part of the CEQA review process. The building site consists of a central three-story Contemporary style office building surrounded by a small courtyard and four single story buildings to the east, north and west. The complex was built in 1965 for Clark Higgins, partial owner under the name Industrial Developers Ltd, who commissioned friend and architect Loch Crane to design the project. The completed building would house Crane's office on the ground floor, Industrial Developers' offices on the second floor, and a gym space on the third floor.

The historic name of the resource, the Industrial Developers/Loch Crane Office Building, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of Industrial Developers and Loch Crane, the original tenants of the building.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Kathleen Crawford of the Offices of Marie Burke Lia, 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 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 is a Contemporary style office and warehouse/manufacturing complex built in 1965 for partial owner Clark Higgins by friend and architect Loch Crane. Higgins had seen an office complex in La Mesa that had buildings grouped around a central courtyard and he liked the concept. The decision was made to incorporate these ideas into the overall design as they corresponded with Crane's views towards nature and use of structures. The site consists of five buildings, labeled A-E on the original plot plan. Buildings A-D are single story warehouse/manufacturing buildings which are grouped in a general "U" configuration around a small central courtyard and building E, which is a three story office building.

Buildings A, B and C are one contiguous single-story structure consisting of concrete block with vertical wood siding and a flat roof. The facades which face the interior courtyard includes vertical wood posts connected to the front of the building with horizontal wood posts, creating an "L" shaped design motif. These posts are placed at intervals along the façade to add an additional horizontal/vertical element to the design. Windows vary in size, shape and placement around the structure and include metal framed, rectangular shaped fixed pane and slider windows. Entrance doors are composed of a variety of materials, including metal, metal and glass, wood, and wood and glass. The main entrance on building C is more elaborate than others and visually connects with building E through the use of similar stylistic elements. The entrance area has a corrugated metal flat roof which extends out over the entrance and is supported by a pierced, openwork, concrete pillar and supplementary posts. The south, north and east façades of

the structure contain bays with metal service doors for delivery and distribution. Building D is a one story concrete block building with vertical wood siding and a flat roof. The south façade of the building contains an entrance area to the offices which includes a concrete trellised walkway framed by a series of rectangular shaped arches. The arches are composed of vertical pierced concrete block posts with a wood slat roof over walkway which leads to building E. The west façade has several openings for different retail units with different interior configurations. The building's windows vary in size, shape and style and include metal framed, rectangular shaped fixed pane and slider windows. Entry doors include metal and wood. The west façade also contains bays with metal service doors for delivery and distribution. Buildings A-D are largely utilitarian structures with minimal expression of the Contemporary style. In addition, these buildings have undergone various modifications which, although relatively minor, do have an adverse impact on the very simple structures. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation of buildings A-D under HRB Criterion C. The only exception is the trellised walkway in front of building D which leads to building E.

Building E is sited as the focal point and central element of the complex. Building E is a three story Contemporary style commercial/office structure on a concrete foundation. It features a flat roof with overhanging eaves and a concrete block exterior with vertical wood detailing. Roughly centered on the building is the exterior stairwell leading to the upper floors. The stairs themselves are recessed inside a concrete block mass which projects slightly forward of the building. A simple railing with vertical wood balusters set on thin top and bottom rails are present at each landing. Access to the building is taken at each level through single metal doors. To the left of the central stairwell two columns of large fixed pane picture windows are present at the second and third floors. The columns are separated by decorative concrete block which runs from the foundation up past the roofline. The windows are metal frame and consist of a larger upper pane over a smaller lower pane. A corner balcony with a simple wood railing sits to the left of the windows at the second and third floors. Metal frame slider windows with vertical wood siding below look out onto the corner balconies. Horizontal wood slat sunshades accent the windows and balconies at each level on this façade, which receives considerable sun exposure. Large fixed pane metal frame windows and metal frame doors are present at the ground floor, which is taller than the two upper floors. To the right of the central stairwell is a large decorative vertical mass consisting of stacked, pierced cement block. To the right and set back from this decorative mass is a recessed plane consisting of more fixed metal frame windows with horizontal wood siding above and below. The recessed bay is topped with a flat roof and overhanging eaves. The three remaining facades are less ornate and consist of concrete block and horizontal wood siding that accents metal frame windows of varying sizes and operations. Some windows appear to have been replaced within the original openings; however, all existing windows are metal frame and sash.

Unlike buildings A-D, building E clearly embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Contemporary style, as identified in the San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement, including all of the primary character defining features and many of the secondary character defining features. Primary character defining features are considered fundamental elements of the design and are more essential to the expression of the style. Secondary character defining features may be commonly found on examples of the style, but are not critical to its expression. The primary and secondary character defining features of the Contemporary style found on the building include:

Character Defining Features of the Contemporary Style (from the Modernism Context Statement)	Character Defining Features Found on Building E
Primary	
Strong roof forms including flat, gabled, shed or butterfly, typically with deep overhangs.	A strong flat roof. Overhangs are present at the southeast corner. The illusion of overhangs is created through the use of sunshades.
Large windows, often aluminum framed.	Large aluminum frame windows throughout.
Non-traditional exterior finishes include vertical wood siding, concrete block, stucco, flagstone and mullion-free glass.	Extensive use of vertical wood siding, concrete block and mullion-free glass throughout.
Secondary	
Angular massing.	Strong angular massing is seen in both vertical and horizontal elements. Angular elements are emphasized through the use of concrete block and wood siding. No curvilinear or arched elements are found on the building.
Sun shades, screens or shadow block accents.	Sunshades are present above the windows and balconies at the second and third floors.
Attached garages or carports for homes.	N/A; commercial site.
Split-level design, especially on sloped residential sites.	N/A; commercial site on a flat lot.
Horizontally oriented commercial buildings.	Horizontal emphasis on an otherwise vertical building is achieved through strong horizontal elements including the flat roof; wood slat sunshades which break up the vertical massing and emphasize horizontal lines; and large picture windows which create greater transparency and de-emphasize the vertical nature of the three story building.
Distinctive triangular, parabolic or arched forms.	Not present.
“Eyebrow” overhangs on commercial buildings.	Not present.
Integrated, stylized signage on commercial buildings.	Not present. The building was designed as an office building in an otherwise undeveloped area and signage was not an important element.

The applicant’s report states that the building is not a good example of the Contemporary style due to the vertical nature of the 3-story building. The report also asserts that the building does not express any secondary character defining features of the Contemporary style, which is not consistent with the analysis above. As to the vertical nature of the building, the office use and needs of the client, Mr. Higgins, required a multi-story structure. Employing his fundamental principle of “form follows function” which states that the shape of a building or object should be

primarily based upon its intended function or purpose, architect Loch Crane designed a building which met the functional needs of his client while at the same time expressing a strong Contemporary design aesthetic. As a very good example of the Contemporary style, embodying all of the primary and most of the applicable secondary character defining features of the style, which retains a high degree of integrity to its 1965 period of significance, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C. The designation shall include building E and the trellised walkway with vertical pierced concrete block posts and wood slat roof that leads to building E.

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

Loch Crane was born in Wyoming and his family moved to Point Loma in 1929. Crane's childhood interest in drawing led to high school drafting classes, after which he worked in the offices of Richard Requa and William Templeton Johnson. In March of 1941 Crane was accepted to Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. Under Frank Lloyd Wright's tutelage, Crane adopted Wright's credo of "form follows function", borrowed from his own mentor Louis Sullivan, as his most fundamental principle of design. After the attack on Pearl Harbor Crane relinquished his fellowship and joined the Army Air Corps in April 1942. During the postwar period he stayed in Japan and during his travels he was able to explore his love of Japanese culture, lifestyle, housing and architecture, which would influence his design philosophy. Crane appreciated the "human scale" of Japanese architecture, which emphasized flexibility and versatility of spaces. The connection between indoor and outdoor elements and the blending of the two through the use of natural elements and materials was a value which Crane also shared and would incorporate into his design.

Crane returned to San Diego in 1946 and began an architectural practice. His first project was his own family residence on Udall Street in Point Loma, which was designed to be built in stages and expand as the family grew. Soon Crane was obtaining commissions for various projects, including private residences, business buildings and warehouses. As an unlicensed architect, Crane soon came under pressure from the City of San Diego to obtain his architect's license. Under the G.I. Bill, Crane received his education at the University of Southern California, completing the five year degree program in just three years (1954-1957). Crane worked as an architect designing both residential and commercial buildings in San Diego during the 1950's and 1960's. A partial list of Crane's known work was provided in the applicant's report.

Crane's core beliefs in architecture were influenced by his time spent with Wright at Taliesin, his experiences in Japan, and his early work with Requa and Johnson. In a 2009 interview discussed in detail in the report, Crane stated that his primary design philosophies and principles were:

1. Form follows function.
2. The honesty of the exposed structure.
3. The structure should be open and spacious.
4. Natural materials in texture and color should be used.
5. The modular unit was essential to a sense of scale and proportion.
6. The use of the hexagon as a measure to ensure openness of the interior and allow for different activities within the interior space.

The applicant's report states that the subject property is not representative of Crane's work, as it reflects the preferences of his client and lacks the horizontal layout of his residential design. The fact that several of his commercial buildings, including two of his other former offices, are multi-story show that Crane was not at all adverse to constructing a multi-story Modern building when the function required it. In addition, Modern structures, including Contemporary style structures, are not limited to single story buildings by nature. As to the building reflecting only the preferences of his client, the building clearly exhibits Crane's design aesthetic when compared to his other commercial buildings, most notably the La Jolla Racquet Club. The two buildings share some striking similarities, including a flat roof, extensive use of decorative pierced concrete block, vertical wood siding, large fixed pane windows, covered walkways, and the same balcony railing seen on the landings on the subject property.

Although building E appears to be representative of Crane's commercial work, it is not clearly documented at this point in time that the building is a *notable example* of his work. More importantly, while the report does provide a good deal of information on Crane, it stops short of providing an analysis of Crane's work and whether or not he could be considered a Master Architect. An analysis of Crane's work within the context of the Modernist movement is not provided and a clear and compelling case for his overall body of work reflecting that of a Master has not been made. Therefore, it is not appropriate at this time to establish Loch Crane as a Master Architect. With further research and analysis this may be possible, at which time building E could be reconsidered for its association with Crane as a Master Architect. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D at this time.

As a side note, although building E did serve as Crane's office from 1965 through an unknown date, it would not be appropriate to designate the building for that particular association under any criteria. Crane has not been established as a Master Architect or a historically significant individual, and there is insufficient evidence to show that this building would be the most appropriate to reflect an association with him or his work.

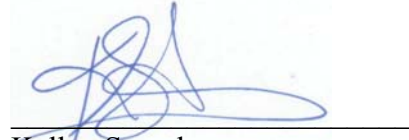
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Should the applicant chose to apply for a Mills Act, 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.

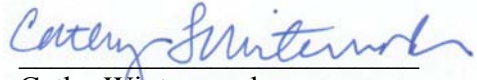
CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Industrial Developers/Loch Crane Office Building located at 3344 Industrial Court be designated under HRB Criterion C as a very good example of the Contemporary style, embodying all of the primary and most of the applicable secondary character defining features of the style, which retains a high degree of integrity to its 1965 period of significance. The designation shall include building E and the trellised walkway with vertical pierced concrete block posts and wood slat roof that leads to building E. 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.



Kelley Saunders
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

KS/cw

Attachment(s): Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover