



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 15, 2010 REPORT NO. HRB-10-005

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of January 28, 2010

SUBJECT: **ITEM #12 – The Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins Richards House**

APPLICANT: Merlin Kastler, property owner  
represented by Scott Moomjian, consultant

LOCATION: 3360 Harbor View Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins Richards House as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins Richards House at 3360 Harbor View Drive as a historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

1. The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Modern Contemporary architecture style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952-1963 period of significance; and
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of established Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards.



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## BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the house and site designated as a historical resource. The house at 3360 Harbor View Drive is a single family home that was originally constructed in 1952 with a 1963 addition that designed by Sim Bruce Richards.

The historic name of the house is based on the first owner and architect of the house and is consistent with the adopted naming policy. The house is noted as the Mr. and Mrs. Sim Bruce Richards Residence #3 in the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*; however this name is not consistent with the adopted naming policy.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Scott Moomjian on behalf of the property owner, Merlin Kastler, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C and D. Staff does not concur with the determination that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and B. However, staff does concur that the property is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Modern Contemporary house embodying the distinctive characteristics of Organic Geometric style architecture and Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards, This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of the 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.*

Staff does not believe that the subject structure 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. While the property was one of three sites in the immediate vicinity developed by Richards, staff does not believe that the argument for Criterion A was fully developed as stated in the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*. For that reason, staff does not recommend designation of the 3360 Harbor View Drive based on HRB Criterion A.

*CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

The consultant recommends designation under Criterion B for its association with Sim Bruce Richards. The property was occupied by Richards and his family from 1952 to 1956 when the property was sold to family friends. Staff believes that the consultant has not fully addressed the importance of Richards in relation to this particular house. Richards lived in this house for only a short period of time and appears to have had a longer tenure with the house that his widow still lives in located in the same neighborhood. The argument for Richards' association with the property was not fully developed nor was there any comparison to other resources associated

with him as required by the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under 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.*

Constructed in 1952 by Sim Bruce Richards, the residence was constructed in the Modern Contemporary style with an Organic Geometric sub-style. The property embodies many of the common features found on an Organic Geometric style: exposed structure and materials, square and diamond design motifs, natural materials, sharp angular massing, asymmetrical facades, complex roof forms and site specific design.

The property consists of 2,312 SF of livable space. The house was built with wood frame construction on a concrete block foundation. The exterior has vertical and horizontal redwood siding. The roof is a mixture of a butterfly and low pitched gable roof sheathed with composition roofing. The roof features a wide overhang with exposed rafter tails. A brick chimney is located at the center of the house in the location of what use to be the east façade of the house.

The windows on the house are primarily fixed or casement style windows. While the original casement windows were single light wood, a number of them have been replaced with aluminum windows with anodized finish.

The west elevation presents a full view of the butterfly roof. Just under the roof line are clerestory windows in descending sizes. On the lower floor of the house are a single car carport and a single car garage. Both the carport and the garage feature single bay garage doors with vertical wood siding. The driveway features red brick paving.

The north (rear) elevation features a deck over the parking area and a secondary outdoor living area off of the living room. The east elevation features a small side yard and a few randomly placed windows.

The south (main) façade has the main entrance to the house. The entrance is located within a small courtyard area. The entrance is a pair of solid wood doors flanked by half sidelights. There are several fixed, casement and clerestory windows that look onto the courtyard area. The courtyard features some small planting areas and is paved with red brick.

Several existing trees in the front and side yard are also notable and planted by Janet Hopkins Richards around the time of construction. The large Torrey Pine tree was planted at the southwest corner of the property was planted to commemorate the birth of their daughter and two Sycamores were planted along the southern façade.

In 1963, Sim Bruce Richards designed an addition to the east side of the house. The addition included a bedroom, living room, bathroom, deck and a shop in the basement area. The addition required the relocation of the front door to the east of the original one. The original door appeared to be a single door while the new entrance is a pair of doors. The original location

appears to have been converted to a window and would be easily reversible. Overall, the addition is seamless to the original structure and duplicates the Organic Geometric design principles originally used on the house.

Staff recommends that the house, addition and associated trees are designated under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Modern Contemporary house embodying the distinctive characteristics of Organic Geometric style architecture.

*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 on September 25, 2003.

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.

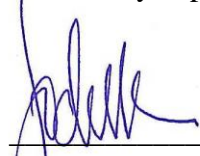
After leaving Taliesin, Richards arrived in San Diego in 1938. Richards was drafted into the US Navy and remained with the Navy until 1946. In the same year, Richards began working for William Templeton Johnson. In 1949, Richards started his own office and practiced architecture for nearly three decades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

As the subject Modern Contemporary house with Organic Geometric style architecture is a notable work of Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards' works in quality of design and detail, staff recommends designation of the Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins Richards House under HRB Criterion D.

## CONCLUSION


Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that 3360 Harbor View Drive is designated as a historical resource under HRB Criterion B for its association with Sim Bruce Richards, Criterion C as an excellent example of a Modern Contemporary residence embodying distinctive characteristics of the Organic Geometric style architecture with a period of significance from 1952 to 1963 and under 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.



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Jodie Brown, AICP  
Senior Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

jb/cw

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 1/28/2010

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/28/2010, to consider the historical designation of the **Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins Richards House** (owned by Merlin L. Kastler Trust 03-16-06, 3360 Harbor View Drive, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **3360 Harbor View Drive, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **531-641-04-00**, further described as the southerly 82 feet of Lots 1 and 2 of Golden Park, Map 958, 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 Sim Bruce Richards and Janet Hopkins 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 the Modern Contemporary with Organic Geometric architectural style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1952-1963 period of significance. Specifically, the house retains a butterfly and low pitched gable roofs; overhanging eaves with exposed decorative rafter tails; horizontal and vertical wood siding; fixed and casement wood windows. 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 for its representation of a notable work of Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards and retains integrity as it relates to the original 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN LEMMO, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

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

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
NINA FAIN  
Deputy City Attorney