



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Historical Resources Board**

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-034

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of May 24, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – DR. FRANK DIXON HOUSE**

APPLICANT: Mark and Natalie Willoughby represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 2355 Avenida de La Playa, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Dr. Frank Dixon House located at 2355 Avenida de La Playa as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Dr. Frank Dixon House located at 2355 Avenida de La Playa as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1953-1987 under HRB Criteria B and C. The designation includes the mature bonsai plantings. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is identified with Dr. Frank Dixon, a historically significant person, and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was owned and occupied by Dixon from 1961-1987, during which time he established and led the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, a center for medical science and research, and was honored for his research in the field of immunology, which he helped to pioneer. The resource best represents Dr. Dixon's productive life and accomplishments and is the only home he lived in during his career in San Diego.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch architecture with Modern Post and Beam influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1953 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits an irregular shaped floor plan with a rear patio courtyard area; prominent low sloped gravel hipped roof with deep overhangs; exposed cantilevered floor beams and roof beams; the wide eaves with smooth white stucco soffit; vertical board and batten siding; direct expression of the structural system through exposed beams and floor-to-ceiling glass; and a wide fieldstone chimney that matches the foundation facing stone.

**Development Services Department**

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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 site designated as a historical resource. The house is a one-story building with a walk-out basement set on the south side of Avenida de La Playa east of La Jolla Shores Drive in the La Jolla Shores neighborhood of the La Jolla Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Dr. Frank Dixon House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Dr. Frank Dixon, who is a historically significant individual and owned the subject property from 1961 until his death in 2008.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B and C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria B and C. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows:

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

Frank J. Dixon was born in Minneapolis in 1920. By the age of 23, he had received an M.D. degree from the University of Minnesota. After serving in World War II as a lieutenant in the medical corps of the U.S. Navy; Dr. Dixon served as a research assistant at the Harvard School of Medicine, where he was trained in the use of isotopes. From 1948 to 1951, Dr. Dixon was an instructor at the Washington University (St. Louis) Department of Pathology and in 1951 became chairman of the Department of Pathology at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. It was in the 1950's when Dr. Dixon developed a method of attaching radioactive iodine to protein and other molecules which is still in use today. Dr. Dixon later conducted extensive research in the field of immunology, especially immunological causes of kidney disease and lupus, and on the effects of viruses on the immune system. Dr. Dixon was named the country's leading medical researcher under the age of 35 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1951. Dr. Dixon moved to La Jolla in 1961, where he established, with four other scientists, the Department of Experimental Pathology at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation. The Foundation later became the Scripps Research Institute. Dr. Dixon was the director of Scripps until he retired in 1987.

The historical report provides evidence that Dr. Frank J. Dixon was a historically significant individual because of his achievements and contributions to medical science and research, including co-founding and leading the Scripps Research Institute, pioneering the field of immunology and receiving highly distinctive awards recognizing his accomplishments. All of these occurred while residing at the subject property from 1961 until his retirement in 1987. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject building 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 building is a one-story Custom Ranch house with Modern Post and Beam influences constructed in 1953, and features an irregular, asymmetrical floor plan with a walk-out basement. The hipped roof consisting of gravel material is low pitched and has overhanging enclosed eaves with a smooth soffit and four vertical sections of large pane glass with clerestory windows above. Exposed cantilevered floor beams and roof beams extend from the inside of the structure and continue to the exterior walls. The front façade consists of alternating full height glass windows surrounded by stone walls and decorative paneled double front entry doors. These wide double doors with center knobs are an example of Mid Century Modern design elements. The wide, rectangular flat stone chimney tops the north facing elevation on the main portion of the house and aligns above the cantilevered living room section of the house. The cantilevered living room with angle cut joists over the field rock faced foundation is an architecturally defining feature of this house. The interplay of wood, glass, and stone combines the Custom Ranch architectural style with the Modern Post and Beam elements of the house. The fenestration consists of wood-framed sliding and casement windows, central fixed windows flanked by tall casement windows, and sliding glass doors that open the living room to the rear of the house.

The only modification identified is a small, shed roof sauna addition to the rear of the garage on the north end. This addition appears to have been constructed in the 1950's and is not readily visible. The addition does not alter the character defining features of the building or significantly impair the design, materials, workmanship or feeling aspects of integrity as it relates to the 1953 date of construction. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Custom Ranch architecture with Modern Post and Beam influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, as detailed in the Modernism Context Statement. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject building under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Custom Ranch architecture with Modern Post and Beam influences and retains integrity to the 1953 date of construction. The designation shall include the mature bonsai plantings, which contribute to the modernist character of the site.

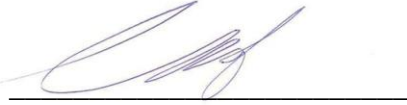
#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Dr. Frank Dixon House located at 2355 Avenida de La Playa be designated with a period of significance of 1953-1987 under HRB Criterion B for its association with Dr. Frank Dixon and Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Custom Ranch architecture with Modern Post and Beam influences. The designation includes the mature bonsai plantings. 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 5/24/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/24/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Dr. Frank Dixon House** located at **2355 Avenida De La Playa, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **346-400-01-00**, further described as LOT 1280 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 Dr. Frank Dixon House on the following findings:

1. The property is historically significant under CRITERION B for its association with Dr. Frank Dixon, a historically significant person, and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was owned and occupied by Dixon from 1961-1987, during which time he established and led the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, a center for medical science and research, and was honored for his research in the field of immunology, which he helped to pioneer. The resource best represents Dr. Dixon's productive life and accomplishments and is the only home he lived in during his career in San Diego.

2. The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch architecture with Modern Post and Beam influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1953 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits an irregular shaped floor plan with a rear patio courtyard area; prominent low sloped gravel hipped roof with deep overhangs; exposed cantilevered floor beams and roof beams; the wide eaves with smooth white stucco soffit; vertical board and batten siding; direct expression of the structural system through exposed beams and floor-to-ceiling glass; and a wide fieldstone chimney that matches the foundation facing stone. 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 shall also include the mature bonsai plantings on the property.

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