



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 8, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-017

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of March 22, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #13 – Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House**

APPLICANT: Owner represented by Vonn Marie May

LOCATION: 1262 Fleetridge Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House located at 1262 Fleetridge Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House located at 1262 Fleetridge Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1961-1980 under HRB Criteria B, C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is identified with Elsie Herman, a historically significant person, and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was owned and occupied by Herman from 1961-1980, during which time she served as a social worker in group and private practice; became one of the founding faculty members of the School for Social Work at San Diego State University where she would teach for 24 years; was actively involved in public policy and establishing state-wide standards in her field; served on professional commissions and panels; and received several honors for her work.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Post and Beam architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1961 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a “L”-shaped floor plan with a low-pitch cross gable roof; overhanging eaves; exposed rafter tails; narrow wood lap siding; direct expression of the structural system through exposed beams and floor-to-ceiling glass; a wide masonry chimney set a few feet behind the entry door opening onto both the foyer and living room; and fenestration consisting of fixed wood frame windows, jalousie windows and aluminum sliding doors.

Development Services Department

1222 First Avenue, MS 512 • San Diego, CA 92101-4155
Tel (619) 235-5200 Fax (619) 446-5499

3. 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 reflects Forester's work both prior to and after his licensure as an architect; blending design elements of Post and Beam and Ranch architecture in a manner that met the needs of his clients and marked a new level of his design capabilities as an emerging architect.

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 set on a corner lot in the residential subdivision of Fleetridge Unit No. 7.

The historic name of the resource, the Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Elsie Herman, who is a historically significant individual; and the name of Russell Forester, an established Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Vonn Marie May and Robert Broms, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria B, C and D. 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.

Elsie Herman and her husband, Edmund, commissioned Russell Forester to design the subject house, which was completed in 1961. Elsie Herman was born in Chicago in 1920 and attended the University of Chicago at 16 or 17 years of age, earning her bachelor's degree in psychotherapy and a master's in social work at the School of Social Service Administration. Upon graduation in 1942, Herman began work for the Red Cross, counseling families of servicemen who had been killed or injured in WWII. In 1943 or 1944, she began counseling interned Japanese-Americans working on sugar beet farms in Colorado. Following the end of the war, she counseled "war brides who were abandoned after immigrating to New York." It was there that she met Edmund, whom she married in 1946. By the early 1950s the Hermans had relocated to San Diego, where Elsie worked for Jewish Family Services. By the late 1950s, Herman appears in the City directories as an independent counselor, occasionally listed as a psychiatrist although not licensed as such. She maintained offices in Uptown during this time through 1960s, after building the subject house in 1961. In the 1970s, in addition to her own practice, she served as clinical director of Jewish Family Services.

In 1966, Herman became one of the founding faculty members of the School for Social Work at San Diego State University, where she would continue to teach for 24 years until 1980. She was also actively involved in public policy and establishing state-wide standards in her field. Herman

helped to author a law establishing the state board for licensing clinical social workers, and served on a committee of the National Association of Social Workers to develop standards for the private practice of social work and define the term “clinical social worker.” She was a consultant to the staff in San Diego of the California Fair Employment Commission, and she served on the Council of Social Work Education’s task force on structure and quality, as well as the dispute resolution panel of the California School of Professional Psychologists. She was honored with the first Lifetime Achievement Award conferred by the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and was posthumously inducted into the California Social Work Hall of Distinction.

When Herman became too ill to continue practicing in Uptown, she began seeing patients at her home at 1262 Fletridge Drive, which she lived and worked in until her passing in 1998. Based on the available record, it is difficult to pinpoint Herman’s most productive and significant period. However, it does appear that most of her highly significant work, including working to establish the SDSU School of Social Work and her involvement in public policy and legislation, occurred prior to 1980, when she retired from teaching. It appears that her work between 1980 and 1998 focused more on her private practice. Therefore, staff recommends as associative period of significance of 1961-1980. As detailed in the extensive research and information provided in the applicant’s report, Elise Herman made significant and lasting contributions to the field of social work during her ownership and occupancy of the subject house. Her accomplishments were recognized and honored by her peers both during her lifetime and after her passing. Because this house is significantly associated with the work of Elsie Herman, 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 Post and Beam house constructed in 1961, and features a “L”-shaped floor plan with a low-pitch cross gable roof; ceramic composite roof shingles; overhanging eaves; exposed rafter tails; narrow wood lap siding over wood frame construction; and a concrete foundation. The entry door is recessed 8 feet 9 inches with exposed beams supported on narrow wood posts, providing light to the entry. The entry door is framed by floor-to-ceiling glass with minimal wood framing, allowing visibility through the house to the rear yard. To the left of the entry, the master bedroom is obscured by a shoji-style fence, which replaced the original wood fence. The right of the entry, a ribbon of jalousie windows is set on the upper half of the wall. A wide masonry chimney is set a few feet behind the entry door, opening onto both the foyer and living room. Along the Point Loma Avenue elevation, wood frame fixed windows are set in the gable end above larger fixed windows and aluminum sliding doors. The garage, set at the northwest corner of the lot, is connected to the house by a small cross-gable section that forms the “L” shape of the house. Modifications are minimal and include replacement of the original wood roof with the composite roof; installation of skylights; installation of two false rafters with support posts at either side of the entry porch; replacement of the garage door with an aluminum roll-up door; and the replacement of the original fence outside the master bedroom with a shoji-style fence.

The San Diego Modernism Context Statement identifies 1950-1970 as the period for Post and Beam architecture, which is characterized primarily by direct expression of the structural system, usually wood or steel frames; horizontal massing; flat or shallow pitch roofs with deep overhangs or no parapet; and floor-to-ceiling glass. The style is characterized secondarily by repetitive façade geometry; minimal use of solid load bearing walls; absence of applied decoration; strong interior/exterior connections; open interior floor plans; and exterior finish materials that usually include wood steel and glass. The Context Statement notes the relative rarity of the style, and identifies expression of the structural system through expansive floor-to-ceiling glass and wood or steel framing as critical elements to conveying the style.

The subject building exhibits all of the primary and secondary character defining features of Post and Beam architecture. The limited modifications do 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 1961 date of construction. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Post and Beam architecture 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 Post and Beam architecture and retains integrity to the 1961 period of significance.

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

Russell Forester was born in Salmon, Idaho in 1920. He moved to La Jolla at age five and graduated from La Jolla High School in 1938. Forester spent three decades working with architecture and the fine arts. In the mid-1940s, he served in the Army Corps of Engineers, where he began his architectural career as a draftsman working for architect Lloyd Ruocco. In 1948, Forester opened his own establishment as a freelance architectural designer. In 1950, Forester was inspired by Ruocco to begin his formal study of architecture at the Institute of Design in Chicago, where he was mentored by the famous architect Mies Van Der Rohe.

Forester completed several modernist structures in La Jolla and participated in the design of airports, hospitals and California First Bank buildings before he received his architectural license in 1960. He is considered to have introduced the International Style to adventurous post-WWII consumers with his innovative designs for the original Jack in the Box drive-thru hamburger stands, the first of which was located on El Cajon Blvd. In 1976, Forester began to shift his interest to art, becoming a distinguished painter and sculptor in Europe and the United States. Forester was designated a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1995, and was established as a Master Architect by the HRB with the designation of HRB Site #528 in 2002, just two months after his passing. The Board has since designated two other Forester buildings, HRB Site #959, which is listed on the California Register, and HRB Site #992, a condominium building La Jolla.

The subject building reflects Forester's work both prior to and after his licensure as an architect. He began designing the home in 1957, modifying the design to meet the needs of the Hermans

through the end of construction in 1961. As detailed in the applicant's report the building reflects not only Post and Beam architecture, but elements of a Ranch style aesthetic, as well. The report notes that this blending of design elements in a manner that met the needs of his clients resulted in a fresh and original design that marked a new level of his design capabilities as an emerging architect. The house therefore conveys the historic significance associated with Forester, and staff recommends designation of the subject building under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of established 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 Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House located at 1262 Fleetridge Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1961-1980 under HRB Criterion B for its association with Elsie Herman, Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Post and Beam architecture, and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester. 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 Stanco
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 3/22/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/22/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House** located at **1262 Fleetridge Drive, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **530-551-10-00**, further described as LOT 306 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 Elsie Herman/Russell Forester House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B for its association with Elsie Herman, a historically significant person, and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was owned and occupied by Herman from 1961-1980, during which time she served as a social worker in group and private practice; became one of the founding faculty members of the School for Social Work at San Diego State University where she would teach for 24 years; was actively involved in public policy and establishing state-wide standards in her field; served on professional commissions and panels; and received several honors for her work. 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 C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Post and Beam style architecture and retains integrity to the 1961 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a “L”-shaped floor plan with a low-pitch cross gable roof; overhanging eaves; exposed rafter tails; narrow wood lap siding; direct expression of the structural system through exposed beams and floor-to-ceiling glass; a wide masonry chimney set a few feet behind the entry door opening onto both the foyer and living room; and fenestration consisting of fixed wood frame windows, jalousie windows and aluminum sliding doors. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(3) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester. Specifically, the resource reflects Forester’s work both prior to and after his licensure as an architect; blending design elements of Post and Beam and Ranch architecture in a manner that met the needs of his clients and marked a new level of his design capabilities as an emerging architect. 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: _____
KEITH BAUERLE
Deputy City Attorney