



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 12, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-048

HEARING DATE: August 26, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #03 – Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Aida Van Herk and Jacqueline Orlando represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 4252 Alder Drive, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9  
APN 465-271-05-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2 located at 4252 Alder Drive as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2 located at 4252 Alder Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1938-1959 under HRB Criterion B and a period of significance of 1938 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is identified with Abraham and Anne Ratner, historically significant individuals and retains integrity for that association with a period of significance of 1938-1959. Specifically, the resource was the primary residence of noteworthy leaders and philanthropists in the San Diego Jewish Community and the clothing manufacturing industry.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character-defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1938 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical front façade, low-pitched roof with red mission terra cotta half-barrel tiles, original smoother skip-trowel stucco cladding, original casement and double-hung wooden windows, walled entry courtyard, elaborated chimney top, and a fountain in the entry courtyard.

## 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 resource is a single-family one-story residence located in the Talmadge Park subdivision of the Kensington neighborhood on a corner lot.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Abraham Ratner and Anne Ratner, who are historically significant individuals.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B and C, and staff concurs. 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.*

The subject property located at 4252 Alder Drive was constructed in 1938 and occupied by Abraham Ratner and Anne Ratner from 1938 until 1959. In 1959, the couple moved to 541 Silvergate Avenue in Point Loma, which is historically designated as the Abraham and Anne Ratner House, [HRB #1153](#), under Criterion C. At the designation hearing, staff did not recommend designation of the Silvergate property under Criterion B as concluded in the Historical Resources Research Report due to lack of information.

Born in 1905, Abraham Ratner worked for his father's hat factory in San Diego. In 1921, the company was re-established as "United Cap Works," and Ratner worked in a more official capacity as a salesman. During World War II, the company relocated to a two-story warehouse on F street, and Abraham became the chief executive officer. Under Abraham's leadership, the business began producing flannel, tweed pants, then sports coats. The company also made military apparel, including officer's caps with hand-woven, miniature insignias. After the war, Abraham strategically shifted the product line to menswear. Beginning from 1945 to the 1950s, the company grew and expanded to markets outside of San Diego. Abraham drove to reach stores individually in El Centro, Calexico, Yuma, and Phoenix. His company produced clothing for Lions Clothing, Worth's Clothing, Jacobsen's, Sears and Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, Penny's, and Robinson's. The company was later renamed "Ratner Clothing Co." Under Abraham's leadership, the company employed many San Diegans, up to 2,300 workers at its peak. The San Diego Magazine named Abraham Ratner as the "Industrialist of the Year" in 1975. Abraham was also an active member and generous philanthropist of the Jewish community. He was a pioneering member and generous contributor of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1950s, Abrahams served on the first Board and fundraising committee of the Donald N. Sharp Memorial Community Hospital.

Anne Frances Ratner was born in 1911 and migrated from Russia, eventually settling in San Diego in 1923. She worked as a legal secretary in Downtown San Diego before marrying Abraham in 1931. Both Abraham and Anne Ratner were generous supporters of the San Diego's United Jewish Federation. Anne assisted in founding the Sisterhood of Tifereth Israel and the women's division of the Jewish Federation of San Diego County, a social and philanthropic organization. She served diligently for many years in its executive committee, helping to bring female voices to the growing Jewish community, and became the division's first honorary life member. Anne and Abraham endowed the congregation's Abraham Ratner Torah School and its scholar-in-residence program. Furthermore, she supported the Jewish Family Service and the San Diego Hebrew Homes. Anne was a founding member of the women's auxiliary of the Salk Institute and was a member of the San Diego Symphony executive committee, where she was also an honorary life member. She was an honoree of Meals and Wheels and was named Women of Elegance of the Salvation Army in 1968. In 1995, Anne helped fund the construction of a 3,000 square-foot clinic at UCSD named Abraham Ratner Children's Eye Center. On November 19, 2011, the university posthumously awarded Anne the Chancellor's Medal of Honor.

Other properties associated with Abraham and Anne Ratner include 561 F Street, 710 13<sup>th</sup> Street, and 541 Silvergate Avenue. The industrial buildings have been modified to the extent that they no longer retain integrity as it relates to Criterion B. The Ratner's retirement-age residence lack association with the Ratner's most significant achievements. The significance of 4252 Alder Drive is due to the resource's association with Abraham and Anne Ratner's most productive years in San Diego, beginning in 1938 until the home's donation to the Veterans Affairs in 1959.

Significance Statement: The subject resource was the primary residence of Abraham Ratner, a business leader and philanthropist, and Anne Ratner, a matriarch and benefactor of San Diego's Jewish community, during their most productive years. Abraham Ratner operated the regionally significant Ratner Clothing Co; was a pioneering member and generous contributor of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue and San Diego's United Jewish Federation; and served on the first Board and fundraising committee of the Donald N. Sharp Memorial Community Hospital while residing at 4252 Alder Drive. Anne Ratner was active in establishing social and philanthropic organizations such as the women's division of the Jewish Federation of San Diego County and the Sisterhood of Tifereth Israel. Together the Ratners endowed the congregation's Abraham Ratner Torah School and its scholar-in-residence program. Therefore, staff recommends the designation of the subject property at 4252 Alder Drive under HRB Criterion B with a period of significance of 1938-1959.

*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 was constructed in 1938 in the Spanish Eclectic style. The house was built with a compound floor plan and hipped roofs lined with terra cotta red mission tiles. Along the roof, rafter tails are present on all elevations. Its south-facing primary façade contains a bay window with a twelve-lite fixed window flanked by casement windows, a decorated capped chimney, and a decoratively paneled front door. The west elevation is flat with eight original two-lite double-hung wood windows of multiple sizes. The north elevation consists of a small projection with matching stucco texture, two double-hung windows, and a rear door. The three-bay east-facing side elevation contains a recessed, covered porch. Fenestration on the east façade includes double-hung windows, fixed windows, and a bay window towards the south. This bay window consists of a single-lite fixed

pane flanked by two divided-lite casement windows. This elevation is enclosed with a brick-capped concrete block perimeter wall. An original detached garage clad with stucco and a modern garage door situates north of the residence and features an attached workshop. The outdoor hardscape is brick-paved and includes a modern outdoor fireplace on the east patio.

Modifications to the property include the glass replacement on the south elevation bay windows to double plane glass, the removal of wooden shutters on the south elevation projection, the replacement of the backyard gate and garage doors, a garage workshop addition, and the removal of the front porch handrail all at unknown dates. A perimeter wall extension was added on the south elevation around 1938-1953, and between 2007-2017 trellis structure and rear fireplace were added to the backyard. The construction of the fireplace was reviewed by historical resources staff and determined to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Overall, these modifications do not significantly impair the integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

Following the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition, the romantic ideal of Spanish and Latin American architecture was revived. What resulted was the Spanish Eclectic style which was the predominant style in Southern California between 1915 and 1940, significantly altering the architectural landscape until the Modernist movement took hold during and after WWII. The style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. These may be of - 3 - Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, or Renaissance inspirations, and unusually rich and varied series of decorative precedents. The style employed a variety of floor plans, as well as gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include Mission and Spanish clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historical significance of the Spanish Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including the asymmetrical front façade, low-pitched roof with mission terra cotta half-barrel tiles, original smoother skip-trowel stucco cladding, original casement and double-hung wooden windows, walled entry courtyard, elaborated chimney top, and a fountain in the entry courtyard. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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. 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 Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2 located at 4252 Alder Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1938-1959 under HRB Criterion B and a period of significance of 1938 under HRB Criterion C.



Alvin L in  
Junior Planner



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison  
Development Services Department

AL/eh/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 8/26/2021

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 8/26/2021, to consider the historical designation of the Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2 (owned by Herk Aida V&Orlando Jacqueline, 4252 Alder Drive, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4252 Alder Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **465-271-05-00**, further described as LOT 352 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 Abraham and Anne Ratner House #2 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B in connection with Abraham Ratner and Anne Ratner who are historically significant persons and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was their main residence during their most productive years as business leaders and philanthropists with a period of significance of 1938-1959. 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 for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character-defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1938 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical front façade, low-pitched roofs with red mission terra cotta half-barrel tiles, original smoother skip-trowel stucco cladding, original casement and double-hung windows, walled entry courtyard, elaborated chimney tops, and a fountain in the entry courtyard. 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:

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney

RECORDING REQUESTED BY  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD  
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501  
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

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SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

**4252 Alder Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **465-271-05-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**