



Save Our Heritage Organisation

Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

Monday, October 25, 2021

City of San Diego
Chair McCullough, Historical Resources Board & staff
202 C Street
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: October 28, 2021 agenda—Items 6 and 7

Chair McCullough, Board members & staff,

Item 6: 1773 Torrance St: Save Our Heritage Organisation disagrees with the staff report and instead finds the first family residence of Master Architect Homer Delawie significant under Criteria C and D. The 1958 Boxcar House is a unique example of the combined Post and Beam and Shed styles, and an award-winning building that helped launch and influence Delawie's career. This exceptional and rare resource warrants designation by the Historical Resources Board.

Significant under Criterion C, this distinctive resource was designed in the Post and Beam style and sensitively added to by Master Architect Homer Delawie in 1991 with Shed style features. Though modified, this resource continues to represent the original design intent for this restrictive site, which maintains the interior atriums (also proposed for designation) and focused viewsheds. Located on a narrow and steep parcel, Post and Beam features are still present in the visible structural system, vertical wood siding, absence of applied decoration, floor to ceiling glass, and a strong interior/exterior connection due to the atrium spaces and focused views on the hillside and deck. Shed style features include the "slipped" shed roof form, minimal eaves and asymmetry. The 1991 addition evolves the original design, however, the consultant's addendum explains there is interview evidence Delawie contemplated adding to this house at an earlier date. Master Architect Homer Delawie also chose intentionally to design this addition because this residence was significant to him and his own 2008 letter explains the sensitivity he used in designing the addition, "utilizing the post and beam mid-century modernist construction with a juxtaposition of forms, grooved and wood siding, large glass areas, floor to ceiling doors and window and rectangular building forms..."

Highly significant under Criterion D as the notable work of a Master Architect, this resource is special and rare for several reasons. Designed at the beginning of his career, this was Delawie's first family residence, an award-winning design that helped establish his firm and influenced his early commissions, and the Boxcar House demonstrated his skill as a young architect. Designed for his own family, they lived here from 1958 through 1963. Completed a few years before Master Architect Homer Delawie began his own firm, it earned the name Boxcar House for its creative design with focused viewsheds on a challenging lot. Discussed by the Delawie firm in a recent letter (see addendum), it states this is an "immensely important project to both our firm and to we believe the architectural history of San Diego." Winning his first design award for this property, this letter also acknowledges that without the recognition of this resource, Delawie may not have been commissioned for his other well-known and iconic projects, signaling the influence this resource had on his career and firm. Last, achieving the level of ingenuity to design a home for himself on a narrow and steep hillside lot, which was awarded by Sunset Magazine and

the local AIA Chapter, acknowledged Delawie's superior skill both to himself as well as the larger Modern movement due to it's wide publication.

Item 7: Inspiration Heights Historic District National Register Nomination: SOHO

supports listing the Inspiration Heights Historic District in Mission Hills on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). SOHO finds this district significant under Criterion A, with a period of significance from 1909 through 1961, for its association with the city planning and urban design principles expressed by the City Beautiful movement and John Nolen in San Diego's first master plan in 1908. SOHO also finds this district significant under Criterion C for architecture, as an exceptional and intact early suburban concentration of resources predominantly illustrating the Prairie School, Arts and Crafts, and Period Revival architectural styles of the twentieth century.

Significant under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development, the Inspiration Heights Historic District was highly influenced by San Diego's first 1908 master plan, created by landscape architect John Nolen. A strong proponent of the City Beautiful movement, various features of Nolen's 1908 plan are illustrated within the Inspiration Heights subdivision. These include arrangement of the street grid to complement the existing topography, creating streets of varying width to establish a circulation hierarchy and celebrating the natural landforms. Other features related to the City Beautiful movement are the three entrance pillars, which help identify the entry to a new suburban neighborhood, beyond the city center.

Also significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, the Inspiration Heights Historic District is an intact suburban concentration of 81 resources with buildings that illustrate architectural styles from the early twentieth century such as Prairie School, Arts and Crafts, Mission Revival, and Spanish Colonial. The district's high level of integrity is illustrated by the buildings' architectural styles, quality design and detail, and master architects and builders, which include Joel Brown, Richard Requa, Henry Lord Gay, Frank L. Hope, Martin V. Melhorn, and Nathan Rigdon. Further, the district already encompasses 19 individual resources listed on the City of San Diego's Historic Resource Register. Later infill styles, Minimal Traditional and Ranch, contribute to the larger collection because they are visually compatible with the existing character of the neighborhood including building scale, site position, and architecture, enabling these later styles to cohesively fit within the community. As a collection of intact resources, the Inspiration Heights Historic District embodies distinctive characteristics of an early suburban San Diego neighborhood (from 1909 through 1961), represents master architects and builders, and illustrates a high quality of design and craftsmanship.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,



Amie Hayes
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