



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 20, 2023

TO: Historical Resources Board and Interested Parties

FROM: Alvin Lin, Assistant Planner, Historical Resources, Development Services Department

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House**

The property located at 7390 Via Capri is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. Staff is recommending designation of the property under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Contemporary style with a period of significance of 1961-1962 and includes the designation of the 1962 addition designed by Russell Forester and excludes the 1962 pool. Staff prepared this memo to address clarifying questions raised by Boardmember Coyle. Staff has also including a revised staff report which corrected spelling errors in the original March 9, 2023 staff report (Attachment 1).

Staff recommends that the swimming pool be excluded from historical designation. According to the 1962 building permit application, contractor "Aqua Pools," with state license No. 138879, constructed the pool. The 1962 San Diego Directory lists Albert W. Jenner and Constance D. Jenner employed at Aqua Pools Co. Neither Albert W. Jenner nor Constance D. Jenner has been established by the Historical Resources Board as Master Architects, Designers or Builders.

The 1970 *Sunset Magazine* article states that the homeowners had "Russell Forester design a guest addition...and designate a swimming pool oriented to it." Forester's 1962 plot plan indeed indicates a pool sited in the courtyard. However, the drawn shape of the pool and the location of the stairs differs from that of the pool that was built, which is L-shaped and includes stairs at a different corner. Forester's plans further note "Proposed Pool – N.I.C." meaning the pool was not in the contract. This evidence suggests that Forester's involvement was limited to siting the general location of the pool, but not its final design. The pool contributes to a broader spatial design of the parcel but does not specifically contribute to the Contemporary architectural style. In terms of alterations, the report states that the changes included the "resurfacing to the rear pool and pool wall." Transitional and aerial photos show modifications to the pool between April and August 2022,

including changing the pool steps, modifying the pool coping, and adding a new rectilinear spa structure (Attachment 2). These alterations further detracted from the pool's integrity of design and materials. Therefore, staff continues to recommend that the 1962 pool be excluded from historical designation.

Due to modifications to the landscape over time, staff is not recommending any specific landscape features to be included in the designation. According to the 1970 *Sunset Magazine* article, Wimmer and Yamada, a landscape architecture firm, designed the landscape at 7390 Via Capri; Joseph Y. Yamada of Wimmer and Yamada is an established Master Landscape Architect. The article (Attachment 3) provides a landscape plan as well as photos of the entry and courtyard. Between 1970 and 2022, the removal of the north elevation California sycamore trees; removal of the entry yard winding steps (replaced by a straight walkway); removal of the entry yard olive tree, a framing element that provides scale to the residence; removal of the entry elevation *delosperma alba* ground cover; removal of the entry elevation foundation shrubs; removal of the courtyard elevation foundation plants; removal of the courtyard play area sand; removal of the courtyard benches near the pool (replaced by a barbeque); and the removal of the courtyard olive tree, a focal point tree, have collectively impaired affected the landscape design's integrity. Extant landscape design features include *eugenia myrtifolia*, tall vertical screen hedges; courtyard *washingtonia robusta* (Mexican Palm) trees; entry elevation mound that "helps screen car lights and provides more privacy"; and the carport driveway. The current landscape retains some of the original spatial landscape design intent, including the courtyard open space form, earth mound/screening elements, and the siting of the pool. However, the cumulative modifications of the historical hardscape, removal of various trees, and alteration of the pool have impaired the integrity of the landscape design to longer reflect its historical significance. Therefore, staff finds the current landscape ineligible for designation under any HRB Criteria due to lack of integrity.

Between 2021 and 2023, staff approved a remodel project under a building permit and a subsequent scope change, which included a reroof, an interior remodel, and the addition of a new sliding door. Other modifications, like the jalousie window restoration and the front door restoration, were outside of the permitted scope of work and were not reviewed for consistency with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The specific landscape/hardscape work, window replacements, and door replacements were exempt from building permits as they meet San Diego Municipal Code §129.0203 (17) and §129.0203 (21).

The original portion of the house was designed by Roger Matthews in 1961. In 1962, established Master Architect Russell Forester designed an addition to the subject property. Russell Forester began his study in architecture in 1950 at the Institute of Design in Chicago, mentored by Mies van der Rohe. After returning to San Diego, Russell began designing in Modernist styles. During this decade, Forester designed several modernist structures in La Jolla and participated in the design of airports, hospitals, California First Bank buildings, and a naval base. His work also included the design of the first Jack-in-the-Box restaurant. His designs of restaurants in the Googie and Futurist styles are his best-known commercial projects. He also worked in numerous other Modernist styles, including Streamline Moderne, Minimal Traditional, Custom Ranch, Organic Geometric, and Post and Beam. Forester shifted from working on relatively modest houses to larger houses and commercial projects as his career progressed. After a 28-year career, during which he received a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) designation, he retired in 1976 to become a full-time artist.

A number of residences have been designated as notable works of Russell Forester, such as HRB #959, HRB #1042, and HRB #1371, which were all 1960s modernist houses. These buildings feature post and beam designs, overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, floor-to-ceiling glass, masonry chimneys, jalousie windows, and repetitive façade geometry that defined the architecture. The Historical Resources Research Report further describes Forester as a master who was “not known for designing additions; instead, he was known on the basis of complete designs.”

According to the *City of San Diego Historical Resources Board Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, in order for a property to be designated under HRB Criterion D, it must be “representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.” The features most commonly associated with Forester’s buildings, such as post and beam design, exposed rafter tails, masonry chimneys, and repetitive façade geometry, are mostly absent from the 1962 addition at 7390 Via Capri. Furthermore, the property was not extensively remodeled by Forester, and the design of the addition is subordinate to the original Roger Matthews design of the residence. Therefore, staff does not find the property to be a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester and does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

The Historical Resources Research Report identifies Kevin J. Kinsella (Kevin John Kinsella) as the resident of the subject property between 1986-1997. However, the report does not ascertain any further information about Kinsella. Therefore, staff did not find sufficient evidence to support designation under HRB Criterion B at this time. Eligibility under this criterion may be reevaluated at a future date pending the submittal of additional information and analysis.

In conclusion, staff continues to recommend the designation of the Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House located at 7390 Via Capri as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1961-1962 under HRB Criterion C. The designation includes the 1962 addition designed by established Master Architect Russell Forester. The designation excludes the 1962 pool.



Alvin Lin
Assistant Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

al/SS

Attachments:

1. Revised Staff Report
2. Aerial Imagery showing Pool Alterations
3. 1970 *Sunset Magazine* article

Attachment 1 - Revised Staff Report



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 9, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-010

HEARING DATE: March 23, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House**

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

APPLICANT: Justin M. Rutherford; represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 7390 Via Capri, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 352-165-05-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House located at 7390 Via Capri as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House located at 7390 Via Capri as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1961-1962 under HRB Criterion C. The designation includes the 1962 addition designed by established Master Architect Russell Forester. The designation excludes the 1962 pool. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Contemporary style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1961-1962 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a strong flat roof form with wide overhanging eaves, vertical wood siding, floor-to-ceiling fixed and jalousie windows, floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors that emphasize integrating the indoors with the outdoors, an obscured primary entry, a courtyard, and an attached carport.

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. Located on a corner lot, the subject resource consists of a one-story residence with views oriented towards the Pacific Ocean.

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 Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Lloyd C. and Raymona C. Swortwood, who constructed the house as a speculation house.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C, and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the [*Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*](#), as follows.

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 built in 1961, with an addition and pool constructed in 1962. The building is single-story in height with a horizontal massing and is oriented parallel to Via Capri. The floor plan is irregular, and the overall form is asymmetrical. The property features a flat roof with widely overhanging eaves. The house is clad in vertical wood siding and stucco. A recessed, attached two-vehicle carport is located on the east elevation, facing the street.

The east (northeast) elevation features the driveway, the recessed primary entrance, and hardscaping. A prominent flat overhang projects from the façade, forming the carport cover. A series of posts support this flat overhang. Two rectangular roof penetrations are directly before the entrance door, allowing in natural light. This floor-to-ceiling door is flanked on one side by a sidelite. Along this elevation towards the north, a "garden room" without a roof cover is present and connected to the master bedroom. This garden room is surrounded by tall wood-siding-clad walls. Lastly, a floor-to-ceiling sliding glass door is present along the southern portion of the façade.

The north (northwest) elevation features a similar roof projection which forms an overhang. This façade comprises almost entirely of floor-to-ceiling windows, a character-defining feature, thus creating a window wall. A wood-siding-clad wall projects from this elevation and extends into the backyard. The southwest and southeast (courtyard) elevations feature expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass, including fixed glazing, louvered windows, and sliding glass doors. The subject property's design underscores a strong indoor-outdoor connection.

The courtyard facades of the 1962 bedroom addition are clad in stucco and exhibit comparatively restrained glass use. The design is compatible yet differentiated from the original construction. Because this addition was designed by established Master Architect Russell Forester and was built less than a year after the construction of the original portion of the house, it is included in the period

of significance. The 1962 pool has been modified and does not contribute to the Contemporary style and is therefore excluded from designation.

Modifications to the property include the 1962 addition, pool, and hardscape improvements; the 1981 fireplace addition; Undated changes include the infilling of the northeast elevation "utility court" space and the painting of the originally unpainted wood siding. Between 2021 and 2023, Historical Resources staff approved a remodel project comprised of interior modifications and a new exterior door opening on the northeast elevation. The owner also restored a jalousie window, replaced the roof, and restored the entrance door. The entry hardscape steps and the courtyard concrete hardscape have also been modified recently, and the pool was resurfaced. Overall, these modifications do not significantly impair the integrity of design, materials, workmanship, or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

Unlike earlier styles which are generally defined by exterior decorative details, the Contemporary style focused on interior spaces and their relation to the outdoors. Emphasis was placed on integrating the indoors with the outdoors by utilizing windows and exterior living areas such as balconies and courtyards. The style was popular in San Diego in the 1950's and 1960's largely because it could be easily adapted to hillside lots. Character defining features include strong roof forms with deep overhangs and exposed beams; large, aluminum framed windows; non-traditional exterior finishes including vertical wood siding, concrete block, stucco and flagstone; sun shades, screen or shadow block accents; broad masonry chimneys; and distinctive triangular, parabolic or arched forms. Contemporary houses often incorporate angular massing; attached carports or garages; courtyards or balconies; obscured or recessed entries; and split-level designs.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Contemporary style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a strong flat roof form with wide overhanging eaves, vertical wood siding, floor-to-ceiling fixed and jalousie windows, floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors that emphasize integrating the indoors with the outdoors, an obscured primary entry, a courtyard, and an attached carport. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

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

The subject property at 7390 Via Capri was designed by Roger Matthews and built by Richard L. Hamlin. Neither Roger Matthews nor Richard Hamlin have been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate them as such at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for Roger Matthews or Richard L. Hamlin.

The building includes a 1962 addition designed by established Master Architect Russell Forester. However, the addition's small scale and simple design do not represent a notable work of Forester's. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for Master Architect Russell Forester.

According to a 1970 *Sunset Magazine* article, the site contains a landscape design by Wimmer and Yamada (landscape designer Harriett Wimmer and established Master Landscape Architect Joseph Y. Yamada). However, because little to no plant materials from this period remain, the landscape

retains very little integrity. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for Master Landscape Architect Joseph Y. Yamada.

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 Lloyd and Raymona Swortwood Spec House located at 7390 Via Capri be designated with a period of significance of 1961-1962 under HRB Criterion C. The designation includes the 1962 addition designed by established Master Architect Russell Forester. The designation excludes the 1962 pool.



Alvin Lin
Assistant Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

al/SS

Attachment(s):

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

Attachment 2 - Aerial Imagery showing Pool Alterations

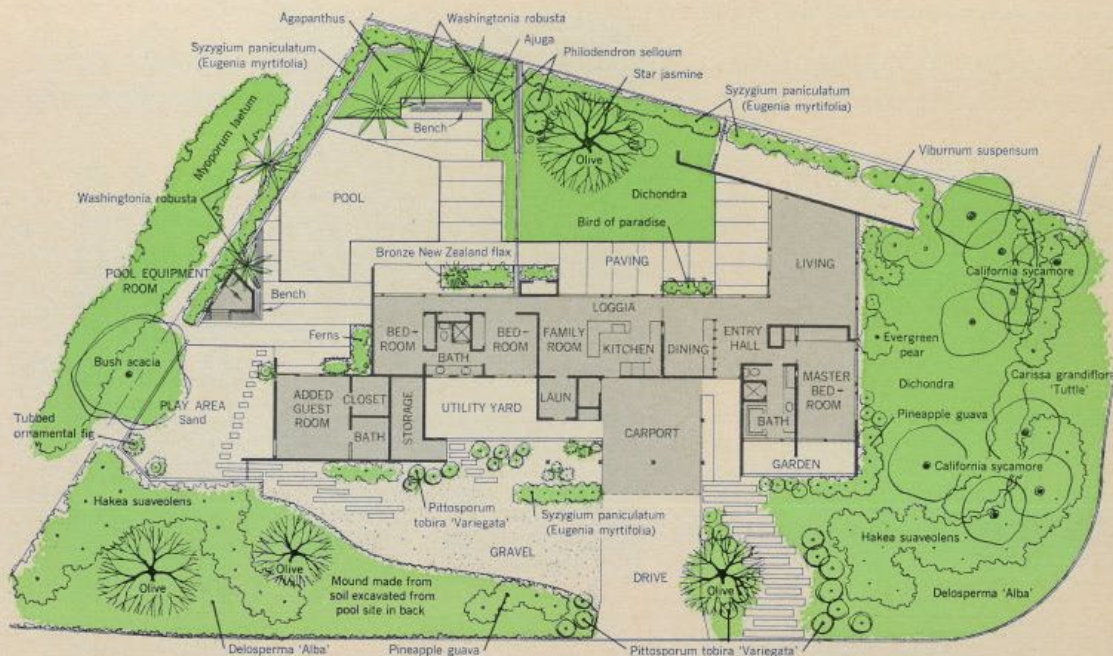
2014 NearMap Aerial Imagery



2022 NearMap Aerial Imagery



Attachment 3 - 1970 *Sunset Magazine* article

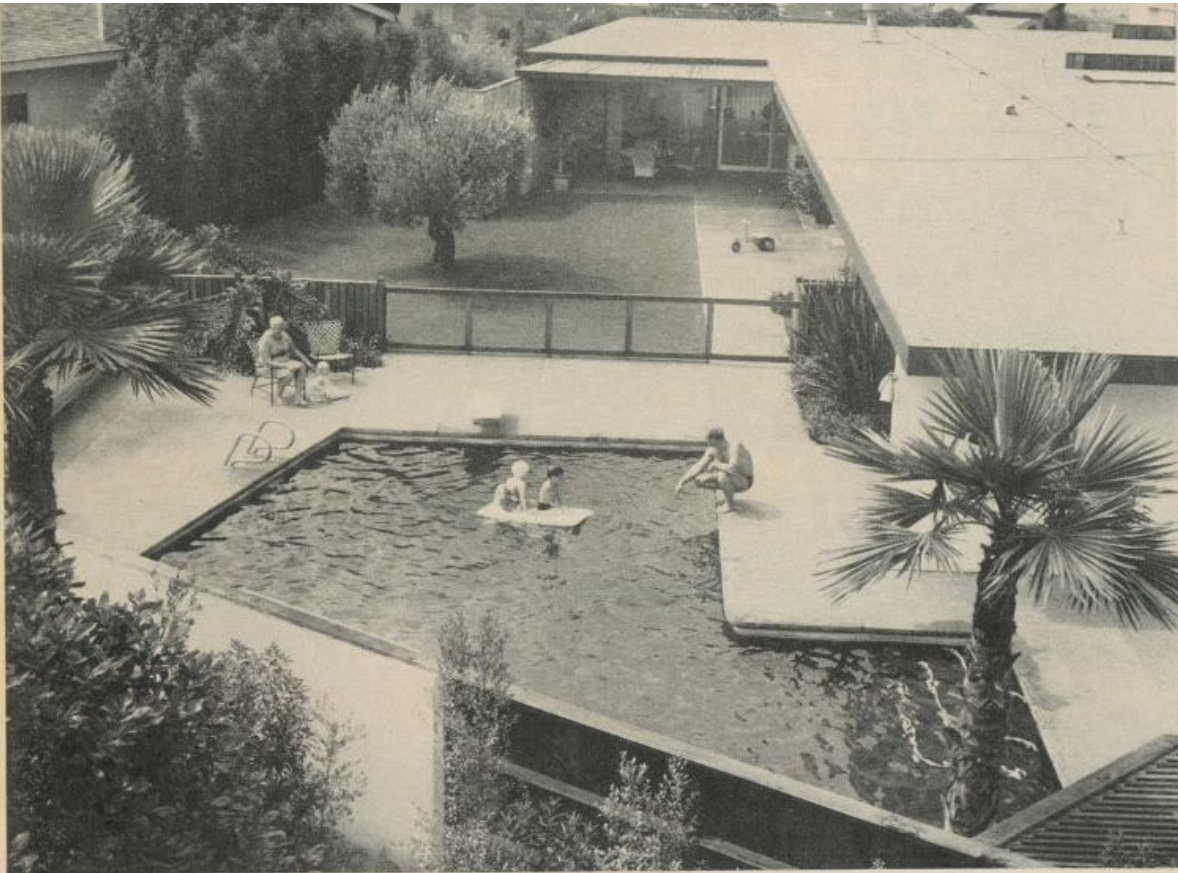


The mound between the street and house (at left), formed by soil excavated from pool site, helps screen car lights and provides more privacy. Guest quarters, pool can be reached through self-closing gate in the play area fence at left of the gravel area

This good-looking garden takes little upkeep



Behind the wood wall at right are secluded gardens off the master bedroom and bath. The entry shares its opening with the carport and has a sky-lit walk. The metal garden sculpture at left is by Russell Forester. Broad entry steps to right of olive



Pool is separated from main part of garden by 16-foot sliding wire mesh gate (built by owner) that rolls out of sight within

wood fence section at left when not needed to keep children from pool. Guest room is portion of house beyond palm (right)

RICHARD FISH

It may surprise you to know that this well groomed garden in La Jolla, California, requires only about 2½ hours of attention per week. During the hottest part of the year, the plants and dichondra lawn are watered twice a week. There is no built-in watering system; all is done by hose and movable sprinkler.

A low-maintenance garden that looks good at any season was the main requirement of the owners. Both operating a local business, they have little time for garden chores. The house was already built when they bought it, and about the first thing they did was to have architect Russell Forester design a guest addition (see plan opposite) and designate a swimming pool site oriented to it. Architect Roger Matheson designed the original house.

There was, according to the owners, "a bare hint of a garden," but they chose not to save the few existing plants; instead they had landscape architects Wimmer and Yamada design this new garden.

Lath-sheltered dining patio is direct extension of living room—note how ceiling and end wall are continued outside through the glass. Lath helps reduce sky glare

FEBRUARY 1970

