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Re: 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA

Background

On October 24, 2011 Circa: Historic Property Development (Circa) attended a meeting with County staff to discuss proposed plans for the property at 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA, and address the motion made and adopted by the Historic Resource Review Board (HRRB) at their meeting of August 4, 2011. Circa presented a response to the motion stating that the "...residence in question does appear to be significant at the local level under Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources for, among other aspects, its architecture which embodies the distinctive characteristics of the American International or Contemporary style and reflects the design approach associated with the forward-looking second phase of the Bay Area Tradition".

It was observed that the property's ability to meet the County of Monterey (County) criteria for historical resources was omitted from the previous evaluation, the HRRB meeting minutes and the staff report. The Circa response (dated October 17, 2011) did address County Criterion B. *Historic, Architectural, and Engineering Significance*, however it was agreed that the complete set of criteria should be addressed in a good faith effort of completeness for the application.

The Monterey County Criteria for Evaluation for 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA is as follows:

The Monterey County Criteria for Evaluation

18.25.070 Review Criteria

An improvement, natural feature, or site may be designated an [sic] historical resource and any area within the County may be designated a historic district if such improvement, natural feature, site, or area meets the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or one or more of the following conditions are found to exist:

A. Historical and Cultural Significance.

1. The resource or district proposed for designation is particularly representative of a distinct historical period, type, style, region, or way of life.
2. The resource or district proposed for designation is, or contains, a type of building or buildings which was once common but is now rare.



3. The resource or district proposed for designation was connected with someone renowned.
4. The resource or district proposed for designation is connected with a business or use which was once common but is now rare.
5. The resource or district proposed for designation represents the work of a master builder, engineer, designer, artist, or architect whose talent influenced a particular architectural style or way of life.
6. The resource or district proposed for designation is the site of an important historic event or is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community.
7. The resource or district proposed for designation has a high potential of yielding information of archaeological interest.

B. Historic, Architectural, and Engineering Significance.

1. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies a particular architectural style or way of life important to the county.
2. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies the best remaining architectural type of a community.
3. The construction material or engineering methods used in the resource or district proposed for designation embody elements of outstanding attention to architectural or engineering design, detail, material or craftsmanship.

C. Community and Geographic Setting.

1. The proposed resource materially benefits the historic character of the community.
2. The unique location or singular physical characteristic of the resource or district proposed for designation represents an established and familiar visual feature of the community, area, or county.
3. The district is a geographically definable area, urban or rural possessing a significant concentration or continuity of site, buildings, structures, or object unified by past events, or aesthetically by plan or physical development.
4. The preservation of a resource or resources is essential to the integrity of the district.

The Monterey County Criteria for Evaluation for 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA

A. Historical and Cultural Significance.

1. The resource or district proposed for designation is particularly representative of a distinct historical period, type, style, region, or way of life.

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is one of hundreds constructed in the area between 1959 and 1963 (i.e. on the cusp of 50 years old)¹. An initial search of data shows that over 760 residences of similar age, and presumably also of the Contemporary Style so prolific at the time, exist in the immediate area. No evidence indicates that the property is *particularly* representative of a distinct historical period, type, style, region, or way of life.

The historic resource evaluation² (DPR set October 2010) states that Pebble Beach is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." Continuing the discussion of modernism at the local level, the report alludes to the fact that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

2. The resource or district proposed for designation is, or contains, a type of building or buildings which was once common but is now rare.

Based on the facts stated in response #1 the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road was/is commonplace and not rare.

3. The resource or district proposed for designation was connected with someone renowned.

The residence was the summer/weekend residence of Arthur L. Connell of Los Angeles. Mr. Connell had no particular historic association to Pebble Beach or Monterey County.

4. The resource or district proposed for designation is connected with a business or use which was once common but is now rare.

The building was designed and used as a residence and is not considered rare.

5. The resource or district proposed for designation represents the work of a master builder, engineer, designer, artist, or architect whose talent influenced a particular architectural style or way of life.

The residence was designed by the prominent southern California architectural firm of Richard Neutra, however, there is no evidence that Neutra himself designed the residence or even approved the set. What appears to be the original project plans (on file) are not signed by Neutra, or anyone from the firm, therefore the plans cannot be presumed to be approved (or not approved) by Neutra. The residence is not identified as one of the firm's exemplary or even particularly distinctive residential designs. Indeed, the residence is noted for its incompatibility with the environment (water leaks, wind gusts

¹ Research utilized the Monterey County's Assessors Books 007 and 008 (Del Monte Forest) 009 (Carmel Unincorporated) and 241 and 243 (Carmel Highlands – HWY 1 to Palo Colorado Road).

² Kirk evaluation/DPR set October 2010.



throughout, heating problems, etc.) and has suffered from undocumented changes and alterations to the original design including replacement of Neutra's signature ribbon windows.

6. The resource or district proposed for designation is the site of an important historic event or is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community.

The residence is not the site of an important historic event that made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community.

7. The resource or district proposed for designation has a high potential of yielding information of archaeological interest.

The residence does not have a high potential of yielding information of archaeological interest.

B. Historic, Architectural, and Engineering Significance.

1. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies a particular architectural style or way of life important to the county.

As stated in criterion A1 above, the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is one of hundreds (over 760) constructed in the area between 1959 and 1963. No evidence indicates that the property is of *particular* style or way of life important to the county.

The historic resource evaluation³ (DPR set October 2010) states that Pebble Beach is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." Continuing the discussion of modernism at the local level, the report alludes to the fact that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

2. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies the best remaining architectural type of a community.

The evaluation does not substantiate, explain or defend how the subject property meets the CR Criterion 3. Indeed, the Significance discussion elaborates on the subject of local modernism but does not mention the contribution of 1170 Signal Hill Road in this movement.

"In contrast to Carmel and Monterey, modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war, although the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible. In 1940 Frank Lloyd Wright

³ Kirk evaluation/DPR set October 2010.

designed a spacious house for John Nesbitt on 17 Mile Drive, but it was never constructed. Near the end of the decade Jon Konigsberger created a handsome residence for the Robert Buckner family in Pebble Beach that was one of fifty-three houses featured in the exhibition 'Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region', which opened in October 1949 at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Several years later Konigsberger built a house for Macdonald and Margaret Booze on Signal Hill Road, and throughout the mid-century other architects associated with modernism, such as Gardiner Dailey, Walter Burde, Will Shaw, Henry Hill, and Charles Moore, also designed houses in Pebble Beach."

The evaluation eludes to the fact that as an example of modernism at the local level 1170 Signal Hill Road is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." The evaluation continues the discussion by saying that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

The 2010 evaluation cites several Pebble Beach properties including one by "... Konigsberger...for the Robert Buckner family in Pebble Beach..." another Konigsberger house built "...for Macdonald and Margaret Booze on Signal Hill Road [emphasis added], and throughout the mid-century other architects associated with modernism, such as Gardiner Dailey, Walter Burde, Will Shaw, Henry Hill, and Charles Moore, also designed houses in Pebble Beach."

From these statements, and others elaborated upon in the evaluation, it is clear that 1170 Signal Hill Road is not "the best remaining" architectural type of a community.

3. The construction material or engineering methods used in the resource or district proposed for designation embody elements of outstanding attention to architectural or engineering design, detail, material or craftsmanship.

Nothing in the evaluation of 1170 Signal Hill Road recognizes outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, material or craftsmanship.

C. Community and Geographic Setting.

1. The proposed resource materially benefits the historic character of the community.

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road neither materially benefits nor detracts from the historic character of the Pebble Beach.

2. The unique location or singular physical characteristic of the resource or district proposed for designation represents an established and familiar visual feature of the community, area, or county.

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road does not represent an established or familiar visual feature of the community, area, or county.



3. The district is a geographically definable area, urban or rural possessing a significant concentration or continuity of site, buildings, structures, or object unified by past events, or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

The property at 1170 Signal Hill Road has not been identified as a district. The community of Pebble Beach is a world renown planned development/leisure community (district).

4. The preservation of a resource or resources is essential to the integrity of the district.

The preservation of the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is not essential to the integrity of Pebble Beach.

In conclusion, the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road does not meet the Monterey County Criteria for Evaluation of Historic Resources and therefore is not considered a historic resource at the national, state or local level.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila McElroy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheila McElroy
Principal
Circa: Historic Property Development