ATTACHMENT 2

DATE ISSUED: July 17, 2003 REPORT NO. P-03-190

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of July 31, 2003

SUBJECT: **ITEM # 6 – Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House**

APPLICANT: Robert Mosher, FAIAE, interested member of the public

LOCATION: 3250 McCall Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the Designation of the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House as a Historical Resource Site.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House under HRB CRITERIA A (Cultural Landscape), B (Historical Person), C (Architecture) and D (Master Architect).

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with an interested member of the public's desire to have the site designated as a historical landmark. The current owners do not support historical designation. A historical report was prepared by Robert Mosher, FAIAE assessing the site's cultural, historical and architectural significance. The wood frame house at 3250 McCall Street is a one-story Modernist style house with oriental influences built in 1951, and rests on a concrete foundation. The house retains its integrity of form, material and landscaping.

ANALYSIS

A historical report was prepared by Robert Moser. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB CRITERIA A (Cultural Landscape, C (Architecture) and D (Master Architect) and also recommends designation under HRB CRITERION B (Historical Person) as follows:

CRITERION A - *Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.*

The Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House is one of a cluster of five Modernist style houses, with oriental/craftsman influences, located on the original estate site of the historically-designated Hamilton House (Site #371) at 480 San Fernando Street. The Hamilton House was designed by Master Architect Emmor Brooke Weaver who is known for his Craftsman/Japanese style architecture. In addition to the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House and the Hamilton House, other Modernist structures on the original Hamilton site are the Farnan house (architect unknown, but presumed to be originally an accessory structure to the Hamilton house) in the middle of the block but accessed via San Gorgonio Street; a second house by architect Robert Mosher, the Driscoll house on San Gorgonio Street; and one by architect Frederick (Fritz) Leibhardt, the Faucett house located south of the Hamilton House on San Fernando Street. Taken as a group, these five buildings, all built of wood left to weather naturally and situated in lush landscaping, create a homogeneous whole demonstrating 90 years of Humanist Modern architecture. For this reason, staff recommends designation of the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House under HRB CRITERION A (Cultural Landscape).

A fifth recently-constructed Spanish-style stucco with tile roof structure, situated at the corner of McCall and San Fernando Streets in the southeast corner of the original Hamilton House estate site is not a part of this cultural landscape. For a Cultural Landscape Map, please see Attachment 1.

CRITERION B - *Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Herbert Kunzel was born in Los Angeles in 1909, the son of an immigrant delicatessen owner. Raised in San Diego, he matriculated at San Diego High School and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, earning his law degree. He returned to San Diego to practice law with his brother at Luce Forward Kunzel and Scripps until the beginning of WWII when he joined the Navy, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Commander. After the war, he returned to San Diego and civilian life, rejoining his law firm where he represented the Solar Aircraft Company. After being elected to that company's Board of Directors, he rose to Secretary, then Vice President and Manager of the San Diego plant, and in 1956, he became president of the Solar Aircraft Company. Under Mr. Kunzel's leadership, Solar was purchased by the International Harvester Company. Mr. Kunzel headed that company until his retirement in 1973. Also, as an attorney, he became well-known as a salvager of bankrupt companies, untangling two of the nation's most difficult bankruptcies, San Francisco's Itel Corporation and San Diego's Westgate California Corporation.

Mr. Kunzel was active in philanthropic foundations that helped provide scholarships to engineering students. His involvement in civic organizations included the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, the Red Cross, the Navy League and the Rotary Club. He served on the Board of Directors of the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation, was a member of the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Board of Overseers and was president of the Charles Lee Powell Foundation which financed programs in science and engineering at UCSD, Stanford, the University of Southern California and the California Institute of Technology.

In 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Kunzel purchased a portion of Lot 1 of Block 140, the southwest corner of the estate site owned by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hamilton, constructing the subject house in 1951. He and his wife resided in the subject residence for 44 years until 1995, when they sold the house to the Byram Family Trust, which sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Cohn in 2003. Mr. Kunzel died in 1999 in La Jolla. Mr. Herbert Kunzel's wife, Mrs. Minerva Kunzel is a community leader and an Asian art connoisseur.

For Mr. Herbert Kunzel's prominence in commerce and industry as well as his philanthropic work and contributions, staff recommends designation of the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House under HRB CRITERION B (Historical Person).

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 Modernism movement was a self-conscious break with the past and a search for new forms of expression, not only in architecture, but in artistic and literary philosophy and practice as well. Modernist architecture, a movement that evolved from the "art and industry" International style of Walter Gropius and Mies Van der Rohe and the warmth of the Humanistic nature-based style of Frank Lloyd Wright and Bernard Maybeck, embodies both the functional and humanistic tenets of both. The Modernism movement is defined as occurring primarily between 1940 and 1960, but has practitioners such as Neutra and Shindler who produced Modernist work before this period. In addition, the movement has many proponents today and can be considered to be enjoying a revival. Modernism in architecture employs the tenet "Form follows function", encourages simplicity, human scale, the straightforward use of natural materials and an indoor-outdoor aesthetic. Modernism avoids established stylistic traditional styles, formulas and mannerisms.

The Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House Modernist design came about through Minerva Kunzel's early involvement with Japanese culture through her family and a two-month visit to Japan in 1933. This experience influenced her desire to live in a house designed and based on Modern principles of clean lines, simplicity and respect for materials and setting that was influenced by the Craftsman/Japanese architecture. Upon seeing Mr. Mosher's design for his first new building in La Jolla's Green Dragon Colony, a specialty shop and an office built of redwood and brick that was an expression of the principles of Modernism influenced by traditional Japanese residential architecture, the Kunzels retained Mr. Mosher to design their home. The Kunzels explained their intentions to provide an environment that would not only serve the family's physical needs, but would also create a serene retreat where they and their

children could love and grow together in harmony. This blending of the nature with architecture is the essence of Japanese residential architecture and one of the tenets of Modernism.

The Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House is an architecturally significant example of the Modernist movement in that it responds to the orientation and microclimate of the site, utilizes natural materials in a straightforward manner and exudes simplicity. The exterior façade is constructed of perhaps the ideal indigenous wood for this region, clear all-heart redwood, in a vertical board pattern and finished with penetrating oil at the exterior façade and allowed to weather naturally. The house employs red cedar shingles with redwood ridge boards at the roof. All of the materials of the house are brought together in what Harwell Hamilton Harris called "clear carpentry", the traditional Craftsman/Japanese method of assembling wood members in a simple, straightforward, natural and obvious way. The plan of the residential structure is L-shaped and, together with the garage/utility structure, forms a U that encloses a large interior courtyard that was intended as a children's play yard. The entry walkway traverses the easterly portion of this court, leading to a recessed entrance. The house has a deck on the east side facing the view of the harbor and the site's lush landscaping. This continuous deck serves to expand the master bedroom as well as the living, dining, family room spaces. The gates are not part of the original design but are designed to blend with the home's architectural style. The Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House retains the integrity of its original design and materials, and all remodels of the structure have been designed by Mr. Mosher. In 1954, the house was published in House Beautiful magazine in an article titled "A Walk through a Good House". That article is included in the Appendix of the attached historical report.

Due to the structure's excellent example of the Modernist style of architecture, staff recommends designation under HRB CRITERION C (Architecture).

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

The residence was designed by noted architect Robert Mosher, FAIAE (Fellow, American Institute of Architects, Emeritus) who was then a partner in the firm Architects Robert Mosher and Roy Drew. Born in Greeley Colorado on September 27, 1920, Mr. Mosher moved to Los Angeles in 1922, spending summers in La Jolla. He attended the Art Center School in Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, and received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Washington. He apprenticed with the distinguished Los Angeles architectural firms of Myron Hunt and H. C. Chambers, and Harwell Hamilton Harris. In 1947, he received his California architectural license and moved to La Jolla, where he joined the San Diego office of noted architect William Templeton Johnson became a partner. In 1948, he opened his own office in La Jolla and was soon joined by Roy Drew, forming a productive practice and close friendship that has lasted more than fifty-five years. The Mosher/Drew partnership is the longest continuous architectural partnership in San Diego.

In the years following World War II, there was a vacuum in the building industry and a demand for new talent and new ideas to fill that vacuum in order to meet the housing needs of the returning veterans and others. The firm of Mosher/Drew met this need for new talent and ideas with their disciplined Modernist style of architecture. In 1955, Moser took a sabbatical leave

from his firm to serve as Building Editor for House Beautiful magazine, where he wrote extensively about Frank Lloyd Wright and visited many of his sites in the Midwest. Wright was an ardent Modernist who espoused many oriental principles as well, and his work served to confirm and reinforce Mosher's own Modernist principles. In 1966, Mosher was commissioned by the California State Division of Bay Toll Crossing to serve as co-design consultant for the San Diego-Coronado Bridge and his influence on this bridge design led to the sinuous clean-lined modern structure that we have today. In 1969, William Watson of San Francisco joined the firm as a partner, and in 1979, William Ferguson was made a partner, creating the current firm Architects Mosher, Drew, Watson and Ferguson.

In addition to the Kunzel Residence, buildings for which Mosher was the principal designer include Aztec Center at San Diego State University, projects for the University of California San Diego, the (currently-named) NBC Tower located on Broadway Street between Second and Third Streets in San Diego, the Golden Door Health Spa in Escondido, the shops, his office and the Chart House restaurant at La Jolla's Green Dragon Colony and many other residences. In 1970, Mosher was elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA for his design expertise. Although he retired in 1998, Mosher continues to design projects of his choosing in his home studio.

Robert Mosher's body of work clearly exhibits that he is an early, prolific and superior proponent of the Modernist style of architecture, and that this residence is an excellent example of his work. For that reason, staff recommends designation of the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House under HRB CRITERION D (Master Architect).

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's own field check, it is recommended that the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House be designated under HRB CRITERIA A (Cultural Landscape), B (Historical Person), C (Architecture) and D (Master Architect). Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the U.S. 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.

Michael Tudury
Senior Planner/Architect

Teri Delcamp
Senior Planner/Historian

MT/ks

Attachments: 1. Cultural Landscape Map: Aerial Photograph of the site showing the four other houses

2. Letter by Robert L. Faucett, owner of the 1990 Leibhardt-designed house on San Fernando Street, dated June 27, 2003
3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 5 – HERBERT KUNZEL/ROBERT MOSHER HOUSE
(Continued from the October 23, 2003 Agenda)

Applicant: Robert Mosher, FAIAE, Interested Member of the Public
Location: 3250 McCall Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
Description: Consider the designation of the Herbert Kunzel/Robert Mosher House as a Historical Resource Site.
Today's Action: Designate under any established HRB Criteria (A through F) or "Note and File".
Staff Recommendation: Designate based on HRB CRITERIA A (Cultural Landscape), B (Historical Person), C (Architecture) and D (Master Architect).

Testimony Received:

In Support by:

Marie Lia, on behalf of applicant.
Scott A. Moomjian, on behalf of applicant.
Bruce Coons, on behalf of the Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO).
John Henderson, AIA, on behalf of applicant.

In Opposition by:

Donald Worley, on behalf of owner.
Ronald Cohn, owner.
Shirley Haimsohn, real estate agent
Trip Bennett, architect.
Tim Wilson, architect.

Public Testimony was closed.

BOARD ACTION:

MOTION BY BOARDMEMBER MARSHALL TO APPROVE PER STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO DESIGNATE UNDER HRB CRITERIA A (CULTURAL LANDSCAPE), B (HISTORICAL PERSON), C (ARCHITECTURE), AND D (MASTER ARCHITECT).

Seconded by Boardmember Delawie. Vote: 8-0-1(Chuang). Motion passes.

The following item was deferred until after the hearing on Item 7. Boardmember Schaefer left at 3:25 P.M.