CITY OF CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

Historic Resources Board

December 16, 2013

To:	Chair Dyar and Board Members
From:	Rob Mullane, AICP, Community Planning and Building Director
Submitted by:	Marc Wiener, Senior Planner
Subject:	Consideration of a comment letter to Monterey County on the proposed demolition of the Connell House (designed by Richard Neutra) located in Pebble Beach

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Recommendation:

Review the draft comment letter regarding the Connell House, and authorize the Chair to finalize and sign on behalf of the Board

Background and Summary:

The Connell House was built in 1958 and is located in Pebble Beach. The Connell House was designed by architect Richard Neutra. In a letter drafted by Historic Resources Board Chair, Erik Dyar, it is noted that Richard Neutra is recognized as one of the greatest architects of the Twentieth Century.

An application was submitted to Monterey County for the demolition of the Connell House to allow for the construction of a new residence on the property. The County is currently reviewing the project proposal and evaluating whether the Connell House should be eligible for listing on the County Historic Inventory and State Register of Historic Resources. The County is also reviewing whether an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) should be required for the project.

Chair Dyar has drafted a letter, on behalf of the Historic Resources Board, requesting that the County deny the application for the demolition of the Connell House. The letter also recommends that the County conduct an EIR for the environmental review of the project. The

Board should discuss the content of the letter and note any provide recommendations or necessary revisions.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Letter drafted by Chair Dyar
- Attachment B – Connell House Information

December 16, 2013

Ms. Delinda Robinson
Senior Planner
Monterey County Planning Department
168 West Alisal Street, 2nd Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Connell House by Richard Neutra: PLN100338

Dear Ms. Robinson,

I, Erik Dyar, am writing this letter in my capacity as Chair of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea's Historic Resources Board and on behalf of all the members of our Board, including former California State Historic Preservation Officer, Kathryn Gualtieri.

We felt the urgent need to write this letter in support of the 1958 Connell House by Richard Neutra, located at 1170 Signal Hill Road in Pebble Beach (APN: 008-262-007). Although, the house is not within the confines of Carmel-by-the-Sea, we feel it is of such importance that its loss through demolition would significantly negatively impact our community on the Monterey Peninsula.

We, as a Board, support the original historic evaluation (DPR) done by Anthony Kirk, PhD., dated Oct. 11, 2010 and find the home is significant under Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources for its architecture as one of the few excellent examples of the American International style in Monterey County and the only remaining work in our County by the master architect, Richard Neutra. In addition, we strongly support the home's eligibility for the California Register. In any event, we also feel strongly that the County conduct an Environmental Impact Report for the environmental review.

It is our Board's opinion that Richard Neutra ranks among the greatest architects of the Twentieth Century. He was, of course, included in THE seminal book on 20th Century California architecture, *'Five California Architects'* by Esther McCoy, along with Greene and Greene, Bernard Maybeck, Irving Gill and Rudolf Schindler. Our area is lucky to have a few excellent examples of the work of Charles Greene and Bernard Maybeck, but again the Connell house is the only remaining example of Neutra and we have no works of Gill and Schindler. Internationally, Neutra is universally considered one of the Modern Masters of Twentieth Century architecture, a very exclusive group limited to the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, and Mies Van Der Rohe.

The Connell House, as the architectural historian, Neutra scholar and author of *Richard Neutra: Complete Works* (printed by the world-renowned art and architecture publisher, Taschen), Barbara Lamprecht, wrote in her letter of support for the home, is a "superb example" of the master's work. We feel it is especially significant in his oeuvre for its

exceptionally beautiful site overlooking Monterey bay and Cypress Point Club and how the great architect was able to so sensitively integrate his structure with the landscape. It is a wonderful example for the architects and designers working today on how the architecture of the Modern Tradition can be carefully woven into the extraordinary landscape of our area.

We urge Monterey County to join with us and so many other concerned citizens and organizations to recognize the major historic significance of this building and prevent its demolition, including demolition by neglect.

As an architect myself, who has worked on numerous renovations of historic structures, it is important to understand that even buildings that have deteriorated significantly can be renovated to be very livable and delightful spaces for contemporary use. There can be no better case study for this than one of Neutra's other homes, the Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs. Just as with the Connell House, this exceptional building had severely deteriorated and could have been subject to possible demolition. However, when a respectful, knowledgeable buyer purchased the property and masterfully renovated it to its previous glory, it has now become an architectural icon for the area.

We believe when the Connell house is properly renovated, it will take its place next to such iconic homes as the James House by Charles Greene and the Walker House by Frank Lloyd Wright as one of the preeminent 20th Century homes in Monterey County. Please help insure this is possible by recognizing its obvious historic significance and denying the application for demolition.

Sincerely,

Erik D. Dyar
Chair, Historic Resources Board
City of Carmel-by-the-Sea

Historic Resources Board
City of Carmel-by-the-Sea
Members:

Erik Dyar, Chair
Kathryn Gualtieri
Julie Wendt
Sharon Seibert
Gregory Carper

State of California -- The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code ____
Other Listings ____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Connell House

P1. Other Identifier: 1170 Signal Hill Road

*P2. Location: ☐ Not for Publication ☒ Unrestricted *a. County Monterey
and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Monterey, Calif. Date 1983 T ; R ; ¼ of ¼ of Sec ; B.M.

c. Address 1170 Signal Hill Road City Pebble Beach Zip 93953

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone ; mE/ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)
Monterey County APN 008-262-007

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting and boundaries)

The single-family residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is a 3,299-square-foot two-story wood-frame American International-style house with an integral three-car garage that was constructed in 1957-58 and enlarged with a small studio addition at the southwest corner of the upper level in 1993 (DPR 523A photo and figures 1-3). Designed by the eminent southern California architect Richard Neutra for Arthur L. Connell, the house is set into a steep slope on the west side of Signal Hill Road. It is roughly U-shaped in plan, with a single, upper level on the east side, organized around a landscaped central courtyard, and two levels on the west side. It rests partly on a concrete slab foundation and partly on a concrete perimeter foundation. The exterior walls are clad with stucco except for the garage wall, on the south side of the upper floor, which is clad with v-groove-faced tongue-and-groove siding, as are the three swing-up overhead garage doors. The flat, slab roof is characterized by wide eave overhangs and finished with tar-and-gravel. Fenestration consists chiefly of ribbon windows—comprising various combinations of large fixed windows and small casement and double-hung windows—and floor-to-ceiling glass walls. Along the west side of the upper level a long (see Continuation Sheet)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2 - Single Family Property

*P4. Resources Present: ☒Building ☐Structure ☐Object ☐Site ☐District ☐Element of District ☐Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #) Looking southwest at north elevation, 10/5/10

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: ☒Historic ☐Prehistoric ☐Both
1957-58; Architectural plans, Residential Building Record

*P7. Owner and Address:
Massy Mehdipour
1170 Signal Hill Road
Pebble Beach, CA 93953

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)
Anthony Kirk, Ph.D.
134 McCornick Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

*P9. Date Recorded: 10/15/10

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)
CEQA Review

*P11. Report Citation: (cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") None

*Attachments: ☐NONE ☐Location Map ☐Sketch Map ☒Continuation Sheet ☒Building, Structure and Object Record ☐Archaeological Record ☐District Record ☐Linear Feature Record ☐Milling Station Record ☐Rock Art Record ☐Artifact Record ☐Photograph Record ☐Other (List)

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code**

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) Connell House

B1. Historic Name: None

B2. Common Name: None

B3. Original Use: Residence

B4. Present Use: Residence

***B5. Architectural Style:** American International

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alteration, and date of alterations) Constructed 1957-58; addition to southwest corner of upper level 1993; some new windows on west side and possible alteration of fenestration pattern, date unknown.

***B7. Moved?** ☒No ☐Yes ☐Unknown **Date:** **Original Location:**

***B8. Related Features:** None

B9a. Architect: Richard Neutra

b. Builder: Unknown

***B10. Significance: Theme** Architecture **Area** Pebble Beach

Period of Significance 1958 **Property Type** House **Applicable Criteria** CR 3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Address integrity.)

The Connell house at 1170 Signal Hill Road appears to be significant at the local level under Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) for its architecture, which embodies the distinctive characteristics of the American International, or Contemporary, style and reflects, as well, the design approach associated with the forward-looking second phase of the Bay Area Tradition.

The Viennese architect Richard Neutra arrived in Los Angeles in 1925 and established his reputation four years later with the completion of the Lovell house, a stunning expression of the International style, set high in the Hollywood Hills, and the first entirely steel-frame residence in the country. In the catalogue to the landmark 1932 "Modern Architecture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he was hailed as "the leading modern architect of the West Coast." Although chiefly associated with southern California, Neutra began working in the San Francisco Bay Area as early as 1935, building a clapboard house on Twin Peaks. Two years later he designed the boxy two-story redwood-clad Darling house on Woodland Avenue in San Francisco, which artfully adapted the minimalist architectural aesthetic that had arisen in Europe in the 1920s to regional conditions, placing it squarely (see Continuation Sheet)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes (List attributes and codes):

***B12. References:**

Residential Building Record: 1170 Signal Hill Road, Office of the Monterey County Assessor.

Thomas Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (2005).

Richard Janick, Laurie Boone, and Kent Seavey, *Architecture of the Monterey Peninsula* (1976).

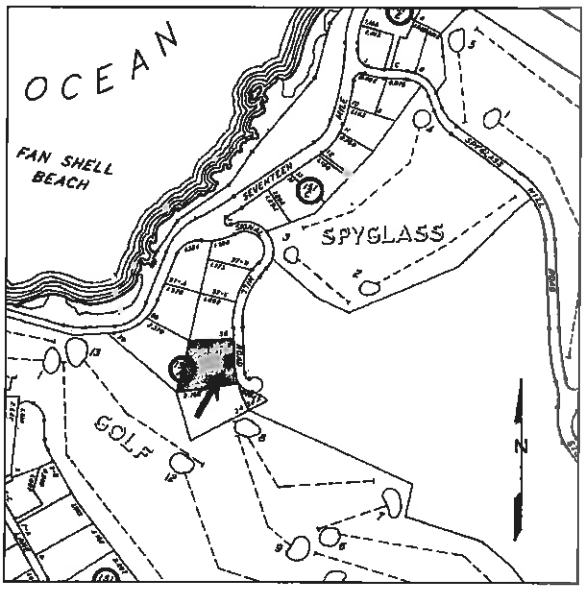
Sally Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses* (1976).

B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** Anthony Kirk, Ph.D.

***Date of Evaluation:** 10/15/10

(This space reserved for official comments.)



P3a. Description:

glass wall floods the living and dining rooms with light and provides dramatic sweeping views of the coastline and the Pacific Ocean. The six sections of the window wall are characterized by a large single sheet of glass set above a low transom bar, below which a small jalousie, flanked by a horizontal fixed light, can be opened for cross ventilation. A shorter glass wall, with large fixed sheets separated by louvered windows, runs along the north side of the central courtyard.

The main entrance to the house is located on the north side, at the end of a concrete walk reached by a short flight of stairs descending from Signal Hill Road. A tall double door, flanked by a wood panel that, like the door, is faced with mahogany veneer, opens onto a half-floor landing, which is illuminated by a band of clerestory windows. A secondary entrance, with an exposed-aggregate concrete floor and a flush door, is on the east side of the small addition at the southwest corner of the house. On the west side of the lower floor, sliding-glass doors open from two of the three bedrooms onto a patio. Above, a cantilevered balcony, shaded by a deep roof overhang, wraps around to a large roof deck on the north side that is reached by a sliding-glass door-wall that is continuous with the window wall extending along the west side. On the south side of the north wing, at the head of the broad staircase leading from the half-floor entry hall, a sliding-glass door opens onto a glazed-tile terrace set along the west side of the courtyard, which is enclosed on the east side by a wooden fence.

As originally built, the house was characterized at the southwest edge of the upper level by a reentrant corner, the two corner walls and a wing wall extending south from the west side of the main building envelope forming a courtyard that was open on the south side. In 1992 the Carmel architect Edward M. Hicks designed a 220-square-foot addition that, constructed the following year, enclosed the space and extended the building five feet beyond the garage wall. In the course of the work, the secondary entry door to the house was moved from the west end of the garage to the east side of the addition.

It may have been about this time, if not earlier, that some of the windows in the house were replaced. In contrast to the present fenestration pattern on the west side of the lower level (figure 1), the original plans, drawn in July and August of 1947, show a long ribbon of glass composed of two sliding doors and seven large fixed windows, each of the glass sheets paired with a tall jalousie. The two one-over-one double-hung aluminum-sash windows currently in place are clearly newer windows, but the single-light aluminum-sash casements appear to be original to the house, as do the large direct-set wood-frame fixed windows. Although the matter remains open to interpretation, physical evidence suggests that either the plans were changed in the course of construction or, as seems more likely, the louvered windows were removed within a decade or two of the completion of the house. (Years after he had sold the property, Arthur Connell wrote to Neutra's biographer Thomas Hines that when the prevailing winds began to blow hard "the air flow through the house could be as much as 1 or 2 knots.") On the upper level of the west side, the large fixed windows are set in aluminum channels that are not original to the fenestration; and all but one of the casement combination windows to the south of the glass wall probably date to the 1990s.

The house, which appears to be in good condition, is set back moderately, and below street grade, from Signal Hill Road, a short, winding exurban street that extends south from 17 Mile Drive. The sandy, scrubby grounds, which suffer from a lack of maintenance, are characterized by a scattering of Monterey cypress and patches of ice plant.

B10. Significance:

within the Bay Area Tradition.

Although the history of modern architecture in Pebble Beach and adjoining communities on and about the Monterey Peninsula has yet to be written, the broad outline can be traced with some confidence. In Carmel in 1932 William Wurster built the Converse House, a simplified, abstracted interpretation of the Colonial Revival that brought him an Honor Award from the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Though far removed from the hard-edge International style brought to California by Neutra and his countryman Rudolph Schindler, it embodied a

new sensibility, a "gentle modernism," to use the felicitous phrase of the architectural historian David Gebhard. Other expressions of the design approach arose in Carmel prior to the war years, including the Sand and Sea complex, comprising five houses and a garage with a studio above, at the corner of San Antonio Avenue and 4th Street. Designed by Jon Konigshofer, the development was a splendid example of "everyday modernism," of the thoughtful mediation between modernism and regionalism that animated the work of not only Konigshofer but of other architects who played a role in introducing the second phase of the Bay Area Tradition to the area, including Gardener Dailey, Clarence Tantau, and Harwell Hamilton Harris. Neutra himself, it should be noted in this context, built a redwood-clad house outside Monterey in 1939 for William and Alice Davey that was elegantly integrated into the surrounding landscape.

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 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.

Within this context, the Connell house is significant as an important and relatively early example of modern architecture in Pebble Beach by a leading American architect. A few of Neutra's design decisions appear infelicitous, most notably the placement of the main entrance on the north side, where it is accessible only from on-street parking rather than the property itself, suggesting it was rarely used. But Neutra's grand concern was organizing the house to take advantage of the stunningly beautiful meeting of land and water below, and in this regard he succeeded admirably, with every room save one commanding sweeping views of land and sea from Cypress Point northward. Architecturally, the house draws more on the ideals of the International style than on the Bay Area Tradition, but the stark minimalism of the Bauhaus is softened by the complex massing, the use of wood, the broad expanses of glass, and the sensitivity with which it is set in the landscape. Strongly horizontal in form, lying long and low on the earth, open to light and nature, it exhibits the elements associated with Neutra's residential architecture, including post-and-beam construction, cantilevered roof slabs and projecting beams, ribbon windows and glass walls, and what his biographer Thomas Hines identified as the single most essential character of his work, "the interpenetration of inner and outer space." Despite the 1993 addition and alterations to some of the fenestration, the house retains its historic integrity.

The character-defining features of the Connell house include the original plan, form, fenestration, features, and finishes, together with the setting, which inspired the design.

Figure 1. Looking southeast at north and west elevations, 10/5/10.

Figure 2. Looking northeast at west and south elevations, 10/5/10.

Figure 3. Looking northwest at east and south sides of courtyard, 10/5/10.

Kent Seavey – HRRB Meeting – August 4, 2011

For your information, Mr. Neutra lectured here in 1936 as did Mr. Schindler in Carmel as people doing a series of lectures for the Denny-Watrous Gallery and was familiar with the area. In looking at Criterion C under Design Construction, I'm surprised. The building certainly embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. And that would be American International, which Neutra; along with Schindler were fathers of in this Country, particularly on the west coast, the implementing of it here. Under Example of Properties Associated with Design Construction, the house or commercial building representing a significant style of architecture, same thing, yes. That I think falls into it as well, it certainly meets that. The Pattern of Features Common to a Particular Class of Resources, all you have to do is look at this and you'll find this building certainly looks like a Richard Neutra, because it's illustrated in here as a Richard Neutra. It's a particularly nice example as far as I'm concerned, but specifically, for the way Neutra treated it in its setting. And if you look at the National Register, if you look at the California Register and our documentation, setting is one of the areas that we deal with. So Neutra addressed the setting, given the circumstance of the maritime environment as best he could within the context of his design vocabulary. The Individuality, which speaks to the individuality or variation of features that occur within a class and it's not just a secondary example; it's a good example of the individuality or variation of feature that occur within a class. Mr. Janick, my colleague at MPC and I have been teaching architectural history on the Peninsula since 1976, we've know the building since about 1980. Again, like Jerry (Lomax), have never been able to access it because of the privacy concerns of the owners. But it's certainly in the academic and architectural community not an unknown treasure, it's been known for a long period of time. I was surprised to see it come up in the context of this, particularly, with the idea that it might be demolished. Under CEQA we look at the first, best and last example. You're looking at the last best example of the work of Richard Neutra on the Monterey Peninsula. He did several properties in the San Francisco Peninsula that survived better in terms of its context (i.e. without the maritime environment). But Mr. Connell, if you read Neutra's publication and his quotes, although the breeze blew through the furnace was on all the time, he was happy with this house that he specifically asked to be designed by Neutra. So the original owner, although he realized the benefits of our environment, never said he was unhappy with the house or it was a bad house or anything else like that. Legorreta the new architect who's coming in on this project is a student of Luis Barragán. I'm very familiar with Barragán's work and I will tell you he is most known for small, intimate properties. 14,000 feet, which I saw here, in this, is just curious to me. That's a different kind of intimacy, I guess. The American International is a style we don't have much of on this Peninsula, it's a representative example of things we want to retain. Pebble Beach was built out primarily as a Spanish Eclectic community until the mid 30's Actually 1937, 1938 when Mr. Morris realized that no building had been built since 1930 and began to expand his parameters and by the end of WWII, especially, opened it up to most any style and we have some excellent examples of Modernism currently in Pebble Beach. But this is pretty much the oldest example of Modernism. We just lost a **Rydeon** house about four blocks

from this location, which was built by a student of Wright and that's unfortunate because that was the other one that was nice out there. And by "nice", I mean, an interesting and important example of mid-century architecture on the Monterey Peninsula. It is significant in that respect. I note with some concern, that Mrs. McElroy did not include in her mitigation proposals an opportunity to restore the Neutra portion of the house as a guest unit, and keep it as part of the new project because it's screened from the dune behind still facing outward to the sea. That would seem to me, given the opportunity to employ the Mills Act, which this County has, this jurisdiction has, to do good and still get the individual's project underway. We have a set of the original plans, you provided them for us, so it seems to me that is a failure on her part not to suggest that. For my part, I'd have to support retention of the property as a significant example of mid-century architecture by an internationally known architect that has some problems, but those problems can be alleviated.