

TO: CITY ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: The Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee

PREPARED BY: Tim Hetherton, Library Services Director
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TITLE: Commemorative Marker for Blue Sky

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Review information provided in this memorandum; and
- 2) Recommend to the City Council the reclassification of the former Rex Brandt and Joan Irving residence, school, and studio known as “Blue Sky” from to Structure of Historic Interest (Class 4) to a Point of Historic Interest (Class 5); and
- 3) Recommend to the City Council the placement of a commemorative marker for Blue Sky.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

This project will be funded by contributions from individual donors.

INTRODUCTION:

On August 14th, 2014, the City Arts Commission adopted a Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee recommendation to direct staff to proceed with a project to place a commemorative marker for the former Rex Brandt and Joan Irving residence, school and studio Blue Sky in Corona del Mar. The marker, adjacent to the Goldenrod Footbridge, would memorialize Brandt and Irving, as well as the significance of the site.

BACKGROUND:

Born on September 12, 1914, Rex Brandt was renowned for his contributions to California Scene Painting in general and his depictions of Newport Beach and Balboa Bay in particular. Mr. Brandt served on the Newport Beach Public Library Board of Trustees in the 1940s and 1950s, helped establish the Newport Harbor Art Museum, and designed the iconic Newport Beach City seal. He is a significant figure in both California arts and the cultural heritage of Newport Beach.

In the Spring of 1940, artists Rex Brandt and Joan Irving purchased a lot in Corona Del Mar for \$250. The Brandts ultimately built an estate spanning four lots which they named “Blue Sky.” The Brandts established the Summer School of Painting in 1947. At the school, the Brandts would teach their students the plein air method of painting outdoors. Many students passed through the school, and it was at Blue Sky where Brandt and Irving were able to create elegant, naturalistic paintings that captured the feel of mid-century California for which they are renowned.

The Blue Sky structure no longer exists, but the site is listed in the *Newport Beach Historic Resource Inventory*, which was presented to City Council on June 8, 1992 (see attachment A). The inventory categorizes historical properties in five hierarchical “classes” of significance:

- **Class 1 - Major Historic Landmark:** A building, structure, object, site, or natural feature of major historical significance. The property exemplifies historic/architectural themes of local and statewide importance and serves as a significant part of the heritage of Newport Beach.
- **Class 2 - Historic Landmark:** A building, structure, object, site, or natural feature of historical significance. The property is representative of historic/architectural themes of local and statewide importance and serves as a physical link to the historical past of Newport Beach.
- **Class 3 - Local Historic Site:** A building, structure, object, site, or natural feature of local significance only. The property is representative of historic/architectural themes of local importance.
- **Class 4 - Structure of Historic Interest:** A building, structure, object, site, or natural feature that has been altered to the extent that the historic/architectural integrity has been substantially compromised, but is still worthy of recognition.
- **Class 5 - Point of Historic Interest:** A site of a building, structure, or object that no longer exists, but is associated with historic events or persons, or architecturally significant structures.

In the *Historic Resource Inventory*, Blue Sky is designated as Class 4, a Structure of Historic Interest. A Structure of Historic Interest is a building, structure, object, site, or natural feature that has been altered to the extent that the historic/architectural integrity has been substantially compromised, but is still worthy of recognition. The Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee asserts that the site is better classified as Class 5, since it is the site of a building that no longer exists, but is associated with historic persons.

DISCUSSION:

A marker would commemorate both the former location of Blue Sky and the contributions that Brandt and Irving made to the artistic and cultural heritage of Newport Beach. Since the structure no longer exists, a marker would serve to inform residents and guests of the site’s historic importance.

The Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee proposes that a sunken boulder be used as the marker (see Attachments B, C, and D). The boulder would feature 2 plaques. The first plaque (Attachment E) would memorialize the significance of the Brandts and the Blue Sky site, and would include iconic representations of Brandt’s work. The second plaque (Attachment F) would feature the City Seal and explain the elements that comprise it.

The City has used boulders as commemorative markers at other locations in the City. These locations include Buck Gully (Attachment G) and Inspiration Point (Attachment H). The Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee feels that the rustic and naturalistic look of boulders, are both aesthetically pleasing and an appropriate medium for the Brandt’s marker due to their appreciation and celebration of the natural world.

Pending approval by the City Arts Commission, the Fine Arts Ad Hoc Subcommittee will approach the City Council for approval as well the appropriate City agencies necessary to complete the project, as the

Arts Commission's powers and duties are limited to the approval of the aesthetic and cultural impact of the marker.

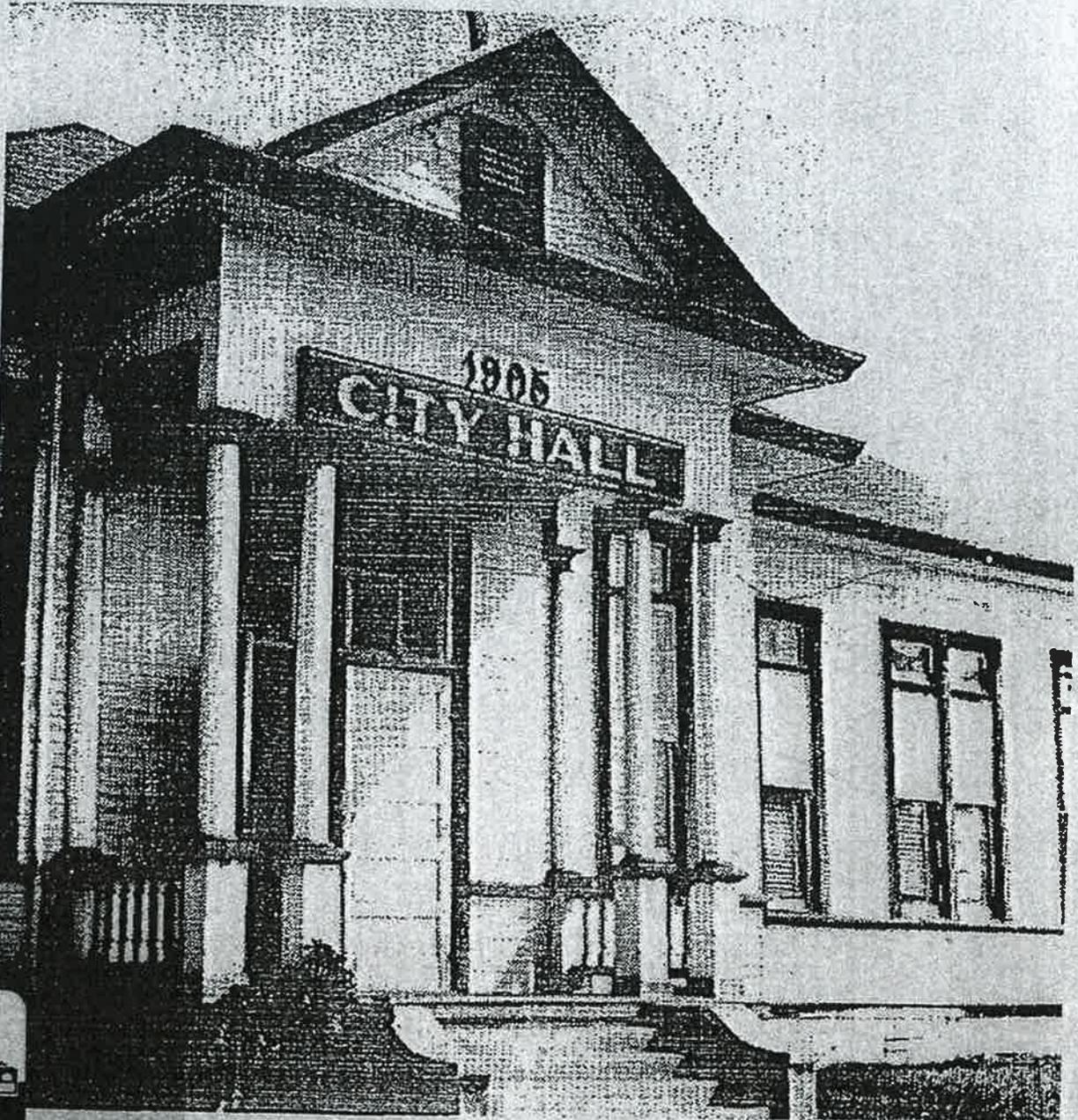
NOTICING:

This agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Arts Commission considers the item).

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|---------------|--|
| ATTACHMENT A: | Excerpt from <u>Newport Beach Historic Resource Inventory</u> |
| ATTACHMENT B: | Photographic mock up of marker |
| ATTACHMENT C: | Photographic mock up of marker |
| ATTACHMENT D: | Photographic mock up of marker |
| ATTACHMENT E: | Plaque text, the Brandts and Blue Sky |
| ATTACHMENT F: | Plaque text, Newport Beach City Seal |
| ATTACHMENT G: | Buck Gully marker |
| ATTACHMENT H: | Inspiration Point marker |

B.2.
Attachment
A pg.1

AD HOC HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE



LOCAL
HISTORY
720.9794
NEWPORT
LOCKED
CASE

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY

Historic/Common Name: BLUE SKY (BRANDT HOUSE)

Area: CORONA DEL MAR

Address: 405 GOLDENROD **Accessor Parcel Number:**

B.2.
Attachment
A PG.2

Resource Type: BUILDING
Status: OCCUPIED
Existing Land Use: RESIDENTIAL
Use Code: 8811
General Plan Designation: TFR

Ownership: PRIVATE
Original Location? YES
Date Moved:
Location of Original Site: N/A

Owner: REX BRANDT
Address: 405 GOLDENROD
CORONA DEL MAR, CA 92625
Telephone Number: (714) 675-0093

Available Documentation: HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

Historical Period: SHIPYARD

Historical Significance: SITE OF PAINTING CLASSES SINCE 1947.

Historic Classification: CLASS 4

Year Constructed: 1941
Architect: REX BRANDT
Architectural Style: CHICKEN COOP

Distinguishing Features: N/S

Associated Structures: ARTIST STUDIO

Condition of Feature: EXCELLENT

Exterior Alterations: N/S

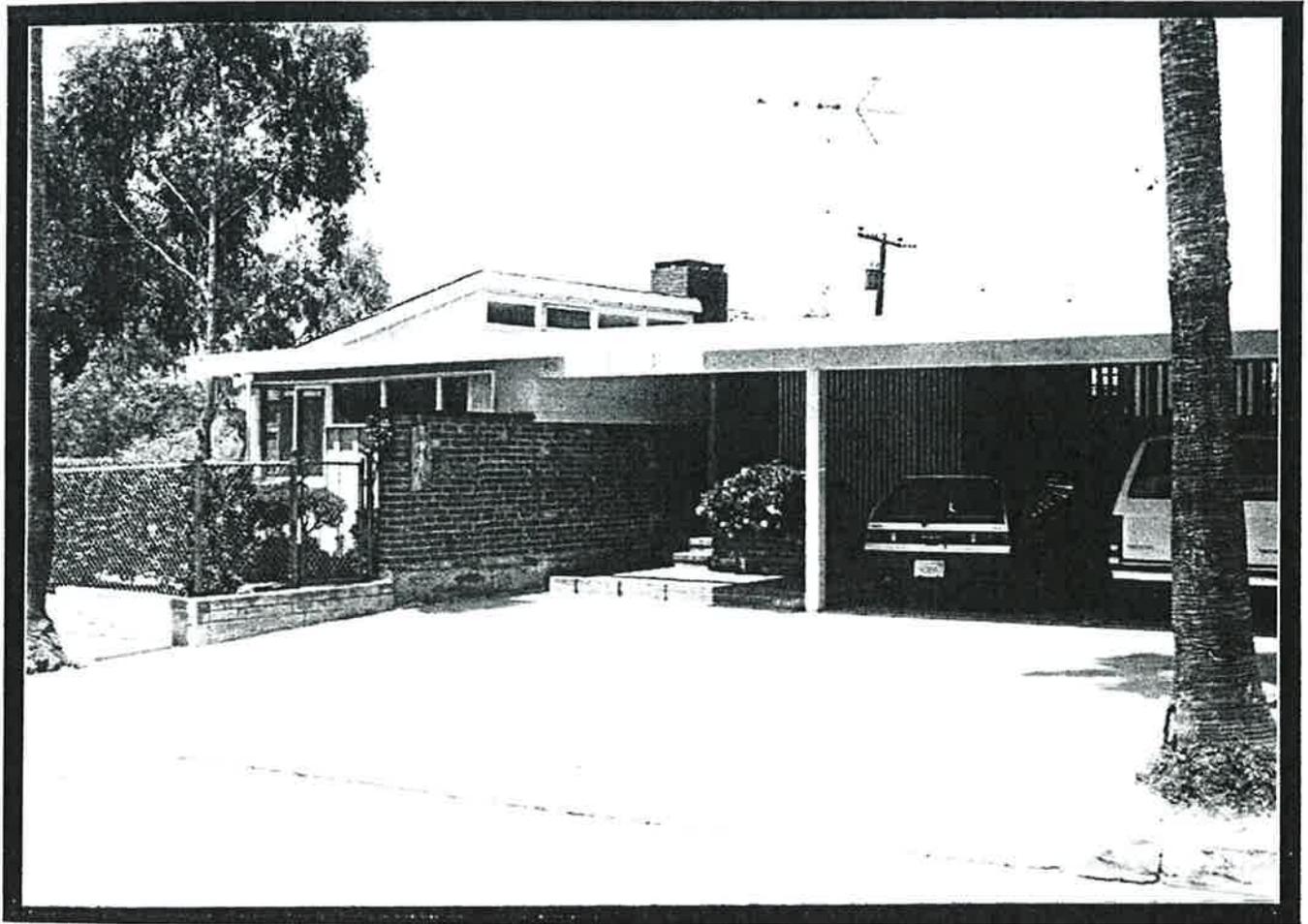
Interior Alterations: N/S

Comments:

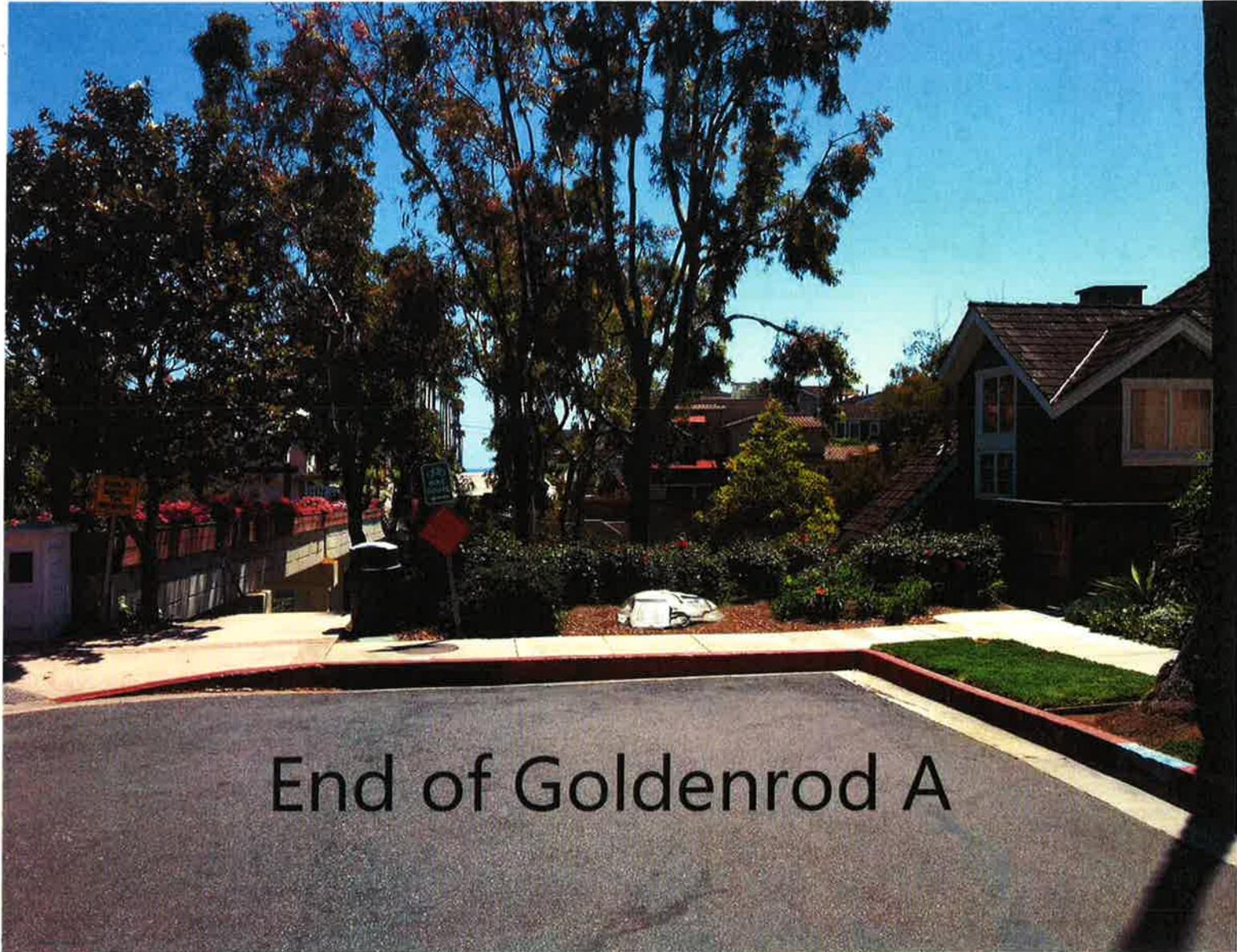
Preparer: I. HOWALD

Date: 1/06/92

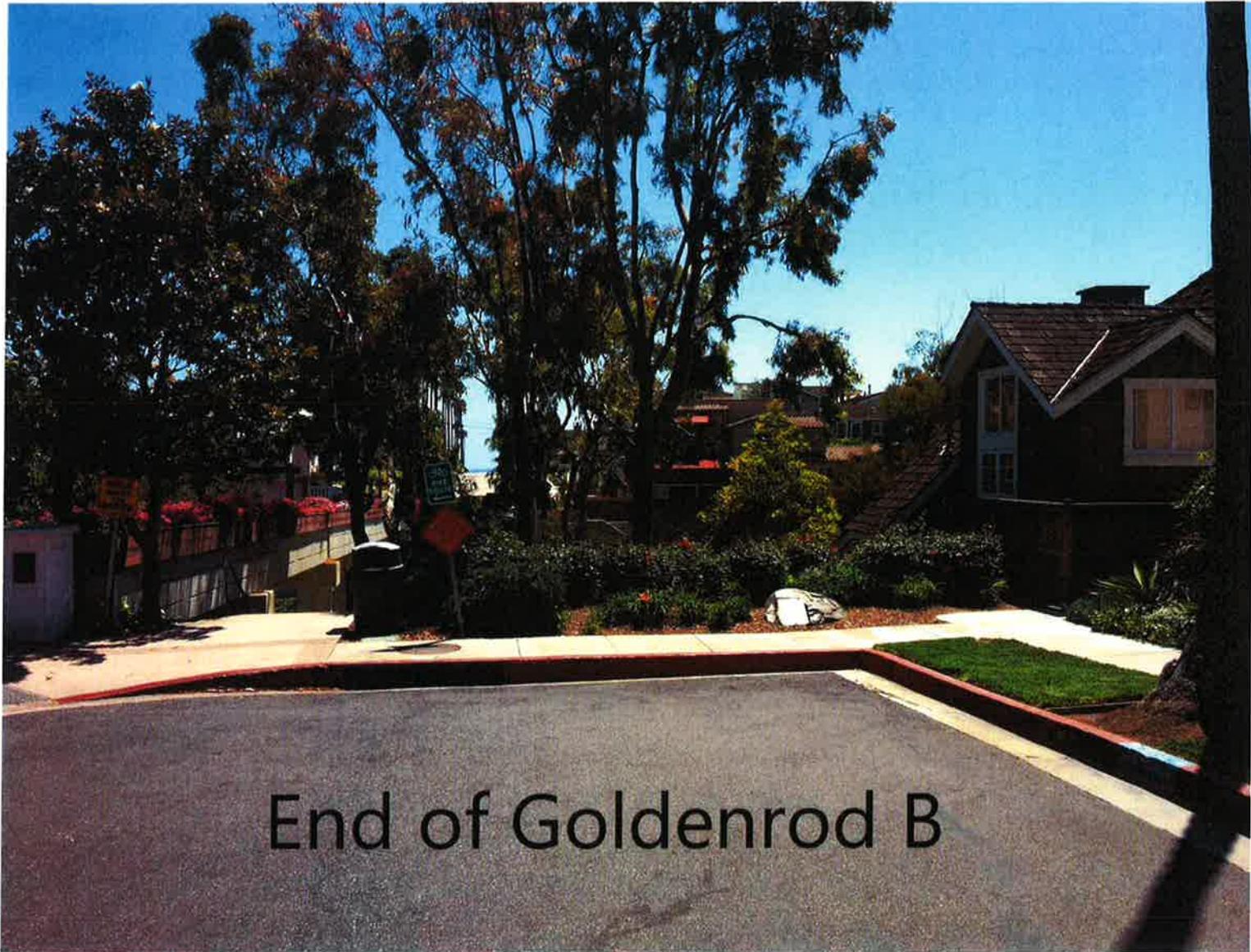
BLUE SKY (BRANDT HOUSE)



RECORD NO. 40



B.2.
Attachment
C



End of Goldenrod B

B.2,
Attachment
D





REX BRANDT
1914—2000
and his wife
JOAN IRVING



Blue Sky, once located to the right at the top of the bluff, was the home and studio of California Scene painters Rex Brandt and Joan Irving Brandt. For nearly 40 years, Blue Sky was the site of the Summer School of Painting, where Rex and Joan instructed countless students in the art of watercolor painting.

The Brandts and Blue Sky are a significant part of Newport Beach's artistic heritage. Rex was acclaimed as an artist, teacher, and writer. He is considered to be one of the central figures in California art during the mid-20th century. Joan is nationally recognized for her work depicting local scenes, and her sensitive portraits of women and children. Both Rex and Joan served on the Library Board of Trustees during the 1940s and 1950s, and were active in the founding of the Newport Harbor Art Museum. Rex also designed the City seal.

It was at Blue Sky where Brandt and Irving were able to create the elegant, naturalistic paintings that captured the feel and beauty of mid-century California for which they are renowned.



**The City Seal was designed by
REX BRANDT
and adopted by the
City Council in 1957.**

Ripples of water symbolize the ocean and bay. Sailboats glide through the waters of our recreational and yachting resort. Two albacore represent the city's origin as a fishing village. The surrounding circle with four cardinal compass points unites the nautical theme.

B.2.
Attachment
G



Buck Gulley Trail



Inspiration Point