

2015 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

Audrey Geisel University House



University of California San Diego's (UCSD) Audrey Geisel University House, formerly known as the Black Residence, was designed for Mr. and Mrs. William Black by noted Santa Fe architect, William Lumpkins. The residence is used as the university's official Chancellor's residence. The 12,000-square-foot Pueblo Revival style adobe residence with two-foot thick walls was built in 1950-51.

The site has coastal bluff subsidence and native habitat concerns, as well as a listed status as a Native American Sanctified Cemetery by the California Native American Heritage Commission. Through the efforts of local preservation groups, La Jolla Historical Society, the Kumeyaay Repatriation Committee, and Save Our Heritage Organization, the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008, and amended in 2009.

In early 2008, UCSD revised the prior proposal to demolish the residence and decided it would rehabilitate the historic Black House. The Executive Architect identified character defining features, assessed the condition of the building, and provided an evaluation of its significance and integrity using the Secretary of the Interior Standards. After years of planning and environmental review, the first phase coastal bluff stabilization started in late 2011. Rehabilitation of the house commenced in fall 2012 and was completed in December 2013.

The site contains a continuous six-foot deep Native American cultural layer deposit with numerous intact burials dating back at least 10,000 years, and millions of fragmented human remains. In consultation with the Kumeyaay Nation, a Kwaaymii Indian, and archaeologists, a design was created that could accommodate new subterranean utility lines with minimal disturbance in the cultural layer and then only in previously disturbed locations. The solution for bluff stabilization minimized the need for heavy equipment to travel across potential burial sites.

By referencing historic photos and original plans by William Lumpkins, examining existing conditions, and interviewing William Black Jr., efforts were taken to repair and preserve *all* exterior features of the house. The adobe walls were in good condition and needed repairs were done with great care. Exterior wood

corbels, posts and beams were replaced in-kind where damage was extensive. Significant interior features such as wood ceiling beams and windows were rehabilitated. Wood ceiling elements were all meticulously preserved and historic light fixtures were refurbished. Any historic windows that had been changed in a manner inconsistent with the original design were returned to their original appearance. No additions were added to the house, and two of the previous four additions were deemed not significant and were completely demolished.

The recently completed rehabilitation was extensive and thorough with the intent that no major work to the site be anticipated for another 40 years. The goal was to not only preserve and maintain the integrity of the house, but preserve the site itself as a place of cultural value to the Kumeyaay people.

Learn more about the [Audrey Geisel University House](#) and [the rehabilitation project](#).