

Agenda Report

February 22, 2010

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Development Department
SUBJECT: **Appeal of Decision by Design Commission: Evaluation of Architectural/Historic Significance of 499, 501, 503 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that assigning California Historical Resource Status Codes for two properties at 501 South Arroyo Parkway & 523 South Arroyo Parkway is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Article 19 Section 15308 (Action by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Acknowledge the evaluations of 501 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway in the adopted 2004 historic resources survey for the Central District Specific Plan (ATTACHMENT C) and an updated evaluation of these two properties in a recent report from an architectural historian (ATTACHMENT A);
3. Find that 501 South Arroyo Parkway is individually eligible for designation as a landmark because it retains its historic integrity and meets Criterion C (Sec. 17.62.040 – P.M.C. Criteria for Designation of Historic Resources) and that 523 South Arroyo Parkway is ineligible for designation as a landmark because it no longer retains its historic integrity (Sec. 17.62.040 P.M.C.- Criteria for Designation of Historic Resources), and;
4. Assign a California Historical Resource Status Code of 5S3 (appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation) to 501 South Arroyo Parkway and retain the existing California Historical Resource Status Code of 6L (determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in the local planning process) for 523 South Arroyo Parkway in the historic resources survey for the Central District Specific Plan.

DESIGN COMMISSION DECISION:

1. On October 26, 2009 found that both 501 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway are eligible for designation as landmarks because they retain historic integrity and

meet Criterion C (Sec. 17.62.040 – P.M.C. Criteria for Designation of Historic Resources); and

2. Assigned a California Historical Resource Status Code of 5S3 (Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation) for 501 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway in the historic resources survey for the Central District Specific Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During four meetings held between June and October of last year, the Design Commission reviewed the status of four buildings on South Arroyo Parkway: 499, 501, 503, and 523. The Commission found that both 501 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway qualify for landmark designation and changed the California Historical Resource Status Codes (evaluations) for these buildings in the Central District historic resources survey (originally adopted in 2004). After contracting with an architectural historian, staff agreed with the change for 501 South Arroyo Parkway and disagreed with the change in status code for 523 South Arroyo Parkway. The owner contends that both buildings are ineligible for landmark designation, and for this reason he has appealed the decision of the Design Commission to the City Council.

Building Address	California Historical Resources Status Code adopted by Design Commission in 2004	California Historical Resources Status Code adopted by Design Commission October 26, 2009
501 South Arroyo Parkway	6L (determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in the local planning process)	5S3 (appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation)
523 South Arroyo Parkway	6L (determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in the local planning process)	5S3 (appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation)

BACKGROUND:

The four buildings are a grouping on the west side of South Arroyo Parkway. 499 and 503 South Arroyo Parkway are one-story, unreinforced masonry buildings that have been extensively altered and are not associated with any architect. 501 South Arroyo Parkway is a two-story, poured-in-place concrete building designed in the Moderne Style by architects Garrett Van Pelt and George Lind and built in 1940. It has restrained ornament, steel-factory sash, and a symmetrical plan. It appears to be unchanged from its original design. 523 South Arroyo Parkway is a one-story, unreinforced masonry building designed by architects Sylvanus Marston and Garrett Van Pelt and built in 1922. A modest, brick vernacular building, it formerly housed a number of commercial

and industrial uses. It has red-brick walls with a large portal facing South Arroyo Parkway. The masonry has been sandblasted, and the original parapet has been removed. Window sashes on the street-facing elevation have also been replaced.

On May 13, 2009, staff issued a letter responding to an inquiry by the property owner's agent seeking the demolition of the four buildings (see ATTACHMENT F). These buildings are subject to the City's Earthquake Hazard Reduction in Existing Unreinforced Masonry Buildings ordinance¹ (§14.06.020 P.M.C.) requiring either their seismic retrofit or their demolition. At that time, none of the buildings were identified as eligible for landmark designation in the Central District historic resources survey.

The effect of the May 13, 2009 decision was to exclude these buildings from consideration as "qualified historic buildings" under the City's Earthquake Hazard Reduction in Existing Unreinforced Masonry Buildings ordinance (§14.06.020 P.M.C.) and thus permitted the owner the option to demolish the buildings instead of retrofitting them.

On June 22, 2009, the Design Commission, in its role as the historic preservation review authority in the Central District, called for review the staff decision. It questioned the evaluations of the buildings in the Central District historic resources survey. To address this question, staff asked for independent analysis from an architectural historian. The consultant determined that the survey evaluation for one of the buildings, 501 South Arroyo Parkway was incorrect, and that this building is eligible for landmark designation. She also confirmed that the other three buildings, including 523 South Arroyo Parkway, are ineligible for landmark designation (as documented in the Central District Survey). The consultant confirmed that 523 South Arroyo Parkway was ineligible because of a loss of integrity (damage to exterior brick from abrasive grit-blasting, removal of parapet, changes to original window sash).

Staff concurred with the recommendations from the consultant and presented them to the Design Commission on October 26, 2009. After receiving public comment in support of elevating the status of 523 South Arroyo Parkway, the Design Commission found both that both 501 & 523 South Arroyo Parkway qualify for landmark designation and modified the status codes for from 6L (*determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in local planning*) to 5S3 (*Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation*).

Staff's recommendation to maintain the 6L status code for 523 South Arroyo Parkway is based on a loss of historic integrity from: abrasive-grit blasting of its exterior, the removal of its parapet, and the replacement of some original window sashes. According to the National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for

¹ Later investigation confirmed that 501 S. Arroyo Parkway is not of unreinforced masonry and, therefore, not subject to the U.R.M. ordinance.

Evaluation, Section XIII.: How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property, page 44, "To be listed in the National Register of Historic Places (or California Register or locally) a property must not only be shown to be significant under National Register (or State or local) criteria but it also must have integrity." A resource that has lost its integrity is ineligible for landmark designation. The Design Commission believed that these alterations did not substantially affect the integrity of the building and that enough historic material remained to warrant a landmark eligible status (5S3). Members of the Commission also noted that buildings with sand-blasted exterior brickwork are present and contributors to the Old Pasadena Historic District.

Even though the buildings are currently undergoing renovation for new tenants, the owner is concerned that the change in status codes will complicate future proposals for new development on the site. The change in status from ineligible for designation to eligible for landmark designation, for example, will require additional environmental review.

Historic resources surveys are used to evaluate and document the architectural and/or historic significance of buildings. An intensive-level survey employs the use of visual inspections to identify architectural features, alterations, and property types associated with potential resources as well as archival research to identify architects, builders, and previous owners. Surveyed properties are assigned a California Historical Resource Status Codes by their surveyors (qualified consultants or city staff). These codes are abbreviated notations that represent a resource's level of significance (see ATTACHMENT B). Historic resources surveys have been a component of every specific plan area adopted in the City of Pasadena. The Central District historic resources survey was the survey associated with the adoption of the Central District Specific Plan. It was reviewed and approved by both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Design Commission in 2004.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION

The General Plan – Objective 6: Promote preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings and revitalization of traditional neighborhoods and commercial areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

Assigning California Historical Resource Status Codes in historic resource surveys is categorically exempt under Article 19 Section 15308 (Action by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment). Changes to the status codes from ineligible to eligible for both of these buildings may affect environmental studies and land-use entitlements for future development of the properties. According to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), demolition of buildings identified as cultural resources (i.e., eligible for landmark designation) cannot be mitigated, and demolition may occur only with a statement of overriding considerations.

FISCAL IMPACT:


This case is not associated with a formal application or any fees. Proposal for new development on the site will require land-use entitlements and any applicable fees.

Respectfully submitted,



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Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Report from architectural historian Teresa Grimes (July 9, 2009)
- Attachment B – Definition of preservation terms used in this report
- Attachment C – Central District Historic Resources Survey Forms (2004)
- Attachment D – Photographs (2009)
- Attachment E – California Historical Resource Status Codes
- Attachment F – Original letter from staff to applicant (May 13, 2010)