

Agenda Report

October 17, 2011

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 1125 MESITA ROAD AS A LANDMARK

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines §15308: Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Find that the house at 1125 Mesita Road meets landmark designation criterion B & C in P.M.C. §17.62.040(C) because it is a locally significant representation of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture and design and is an important representation of the work of architect Harold B. Zook. Zook designed the house for himself and lived there for 12 years; and it retains a high level of integrity;
3. Approve the designation of the property at 1125 Mesita Road as a landmark;
4. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1125 Mesita Road, Pasadena, California;
5. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1125 Mesita Road, Pasadena, California; and
6. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On Monday, September 19, 2011, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 1125 Mesita Road as a landmark under criterion B and C of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The building at 1125 Mesita Road is significant as an intact example of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture and design and as an important representation of the work of architect Harold B. Zook; it is also significant because it is associated with Zook's productive life, reflecting the time period when he achieved significance as an architect. Zook designed and lived in the house from its construction in 1950 until 1962.

BACKGROUND:

A new application for landmark status was received on April 27, 2011. The property owner also submitted an application to enter into an historic property contract (Mills Act). The staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the Pasadena Municipal Code and determined that the structure qualifies for landmark designation under Criterion's B and C.

DESCRIPTION:

The Site

The site includes the one-story main house with attached two car garage and a swimming pool. It is accessed via a sloping private road from North Sierra Madre Villa Avenue (which, similar to the eligible Old House Road landmark district to the north, is marked by a brick monument sign with metal script lettering). The properties in the district are relatively flat and landscaped with expansive lawns. The lots in the district are large and most are developed with virtually unaltered single-story sprawling houses in Mid-century Modern and Modern Ranch styles. Almost all of the houses have a freestanding lamp with a hanging address plaque in the front yard.

Exterior Features of the Building

The one-story house is roughly T-shaped in plan with the primary elevation facing north, highlighting a view of the San Gabriel Mountains, with two wings extending to the south and east. The structure embodies the fundamental elements of the Mid-Century Modern style, including: a horizontal emphasis with wide facades; low pitched gable roof with wide overhanging boxed eaves and gravel roof; simple geometric forms (rectangles and trapezoids) expressed in the fenestration; an unadorned exterior and large metal framed windows. Exterior materials consist of stucco with large areas of vertical wood siding as well as brick veneer. The west facing wing is almost completely transparent except for a wide brick chimney. Large panels of glass held in place by metal frames blur the distinction between the interior and exterior spaces and offer a stunning view of Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles beyond. The exterior walls of the south and east facing wings are clad in a combination of plaster with a medium sand float finish and vertical wood siding. The fenestration on these elevations is characterized by both operable and fixed metal window sashes and by both reeded and clear glass. The east facing wall is totally clad in vertical wood siding, and extends south beyond the building envelope to enclose a paved and landscaped area.

Site Features

The east-facing exterior wall becomes a solid fence that extends past the building envelope to the southern edge of the property, stepping down as it extends south to create a private outdoor area. The wall is clad in vertical wood siding and has a decorative cap. The existing driveway gate is new, and the landscaping around the

building has been recently installed. A series of integrated planters with masonry veneers that match material on the house are also spread around the site.

Documented Changes to the Property

A permit was issued for an 88-square-foot bedroom addition in 2010. There are no other records of alterations.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is currently in excellent condition. An application for Historic Property Contract is being processed concurrently with this application for landmark designation.

Harold Barnard Zook

Harold Barnard Zook was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1920. He was the son of Roscoe H. Zook, a noted architect who worked throughout the Midwest and specialized in period revival architecture from the 1920's to the 1940's. The junior Zook attended Cornell University and received his Bachelor's Degree in Architecture in 1941. In 1946, Zook moved to Palm Springs where he worked for two Modernist Architects, John Porter Clark and Albert Frey. He moved to Pasadena in 1947 and partnered with Harold J. Bissner, before starting his own firm in 1948.

Zook was a prolific architect. Including the subject property at 1125 Mesita Road, he designed six of the surrounding structures along Mesita Road (Attachment D), and numerous other residential projects. He also designed some prominent commercial properties including the Saga Hotel and Lowe's Furniture Store both on East Colorado Boulevard. Zook's designs have been the subject of articles in *Architectural Record* and *Arts and Architecture*. In 1950, Whitney Smith of the University of Southern California, organized a contemporary architecture and furniture exhibit at Scripps College. Zook was among the architects that participated, exhibiting a plan for a home that was being constructed in North Pasadena. Other architects exhibiting were the likes of Richard Nuetra and Rudolph M. Schindler.

ANALYSIS:

The property at 1125 Mesita Road is eligible for designation under Criterion C, (PMC §17.62.040(C)(2)), which states:

[The property] embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or, to the region or possesses artistic values of significance to the City or to the region.

Under criterion C, the house at 1125 Mesita Drive is significant as an intact example of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture and design and as an important

representation of the work of architect Harold B. Zook. It is fully intact and exhibits all of the character-defining features of its style.

The property is also eligible for designation under Criterion B, which states:

[The property] is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the city.

Properties eligible under this criterion are usually associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance. (How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Park Service, Park Service Bulletin #15, 2002). Under this criterion, the Zook house is significant as the only house designed by Zook for himself. Zook lived in the house from its construction in 1950 until 1962, when he moved his practice to Corona Del Mar.

Contributing features to this designation include the house and attached garage, the extended eastern exterior wall which encloses an exterior courtyard and the integrated brick planters present around the property.

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:

Class 8 exemptions consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

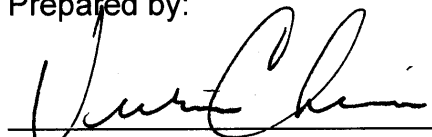
There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action and it will not have any indirect or support cost requirements. The anticipated impact to other operational programs or capital projects as a result of this action will be minimal. In some instances, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,



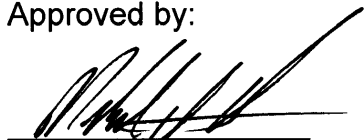
VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

Prepared by:



Vicrim Chima
Assistant Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Application Materials
- Attachment B – Photographs

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
ADOPTING A DECLARATION OF HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF
1125 MESITA ROAD AVENUE, PASADENA, CA**

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission has found that 1125 Mesita Road meets criterion "B" and "C", as set forth in Section 17.62.040(c) of the Pasadena Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the property at 1125 Mesita Road is significant because it is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the region, State, or nation; and it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is significant to the City or to the region, or that possesses high artistic values that are significant to the City or to the region; and

WHEREAS, the application for Historic Landmark designation is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15308; and

WHEREAS, Katja M. Guenther and Tuppet Yates, the property owners, submitted the application for landmark designation; and

WHEREAS, the City Council may approve a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission to designate a Historic Landmark and evidence such approval by adopting a declaration executed by the Mayor pursuant to Subsection 17.62.050 (C) of the Pasadena Municipal Code.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Pasadena that the attached declaration of Historic Landmark designation for 1125 Mesita Road is hereby adopted.

Adopted at the _____ meeting of the City Council on the _____ day of _____, 2011 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

MARK JOMSKY, CMC, City Clerk

Approved as to form:



Theresa E. Fuentes
Assistant City Attorney

DECLARATION OF HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION FOR:

1125 MESITA ROAD
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 17.62.050 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, the City Council of the City of Pasadena by this declaration hereby designates as a Historic Landmark certain real property described as:

That portion of the Rancho Santa Anita, in the City of Pasadena, County of Los Angeles, State of California, as per Patent, recorded in Book 1, Pages 97 and 98 of Patents, in the office of the county recorder of said county, described as follows:

Beginning at the center line intersection of Sierra Madre Villa Avenue and New York Drive, formerly New York Avenue, as shown on Highway Dedication Map No. H-29, Sheet 6 and Map No. B-846, Sheet 1, both on file in the office of the county surveyor of said county; thence North 5° 59' 40" East along said center line of Sierra Madre Villa Avenue, 667.93 feet; thence at right angles to said center line of Sierra Madre Villa Avenue, North 84° 00' 20" West 124.10 feet being the same line as the center line of the easement granted to the City of Pasadena for water mains in deed recorded in Book 26932 Page 276 of Official Records of said county on April 15, 1948 as Instrument No. 1956; thence continuing along the center line of said easement North 6° 22' 14" West 174.07 feet, North 0° 24' 26" West 79.83 feet and North 8° 46' 52" East 69.21 feet to the true point of beginning; thence North 84° 00' 20" West 147.82 feet; thence South 74° 58' 17" West 162.39 feet to a point in the Westerly line of the land described in Parcel 1 of the deed to Frank M. Darling and Harriet Brewster Darling, recorded May 3, 1949 as Instrument No. 529 in Book 29984 Page 323 of Official Records of said county, distant thereon South 9° 48' 25" West 120 feet from the Northwest corner of said land of Darling; thence North 9° 48' 25" East along said Westerly line of said land of Darling 120 feet to the said Northwest corner thereof; thence North 73° 48' 40" East along the Northerly line of the land of Darling 155 feet; thence South 84° 47' 20" East along the said Northerly line 72.87 feet to an angle point in said Northerly line being also an angle point in the center line of the easement to the City of Pasadena for water mains, recorded in Book 26932 Page 276 of Official Records, on April 15, 1948 as Instrument No. 1956 and in the deed to T. M. Calvert and wife, recorded April 27, 1948 as Instrument No. 212 in book 27019 page 349, Official Records; thence South 77° 44' 20" East along the center line of said easement and center line produced a distance of 96.01 feet to the Northeasterly corner of the land of Darling; thence South 8° 46' 52" West along the easterly line of Darling 110.65 feet to a line that bears South 84° 00' 20" East from the true point of beginning; thence North 84° 00' 20" West 15.02 feet to the true point of beginning.

Under Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.62.090, all work affecting designated Historic Landmarks, except ordinary maintenance and repair, such as but not limited to new construction and additions, exterior alterations, relocation, and demolition, is subject to review by the City of Pasadena.

DATED: _____

ATTEST:

CITY OF PASADENA
A municipal corporation

Mark Jomsky, City Clerk

By: _____
Bill Bogaard, Mayor