

# Agenda Report

March 17, 2014

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department  
**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 760 SOUTH ARROYO BOULEVARD AS A LANDMARK**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends 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 760 South Arroyo Boulevard is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is an intact example of 1920's-era French Provincial style residential architecture designed by architects Witmer & Watson;
3. Approve the designation of the house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard as a landmark;
4. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 760 South Arroyo Boulevard, Pasadena, California;
5. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 760 South Arroyo Boulevard, Pasadena, California; and
6. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On Monday, December 16, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17.62.040. The Commission also requested that staff further research the construction date of site features, particularly freestanding pilasters and gates in the front yard area, to determine whether they are historical features that contribute to the landmark designation of the house.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion “C” because it is an intact example of a 1920’s-era French Provincial style residential architecture designed by architects Witmer & Watson.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On October 24, 2013, property owner Bradley Hanson submitted an application for landmark designation of the property. The staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the property qualifies for landmark designation. The owner/applicant was notified of staff’s eligibility determination on November 20, 2013.

### **Property Data**

- Historical Name: Lansing Beach House
- Address: 760 South Arroyo Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91105
- Location: East side of South Arroyo Boulevard between Bradford and Bellefontaine Streets
- Date of Construction: 1927, documented by building permit
- Original Architect: Witmer & Watson, documented by building permit
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence.
- Original / Present Owner: Mr. & Mrs. Lansing Beach / Bradley Hanson
- Lot size: 12,292 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- House size: 2,648 square feet (source: County Assessor)

### **Site Features**

The site, a 12,292-square-foot interior lot, is located at the east side of South Arroyo Boulevard between Bradford and Bellefontaine Streets. The site is approximately 76 feet in width and 170 feet in depth and the house is located at roughly the center of the site behind a formal garden (a newer feature of the property). Located behind the house is a detached garage, which is larger than the original garage and, as such, no longer retains integrity and is a non-contributing feature. A gravel driveway located on the south side of the lot leads to the detached garage. The Arroyo Stone walls that define the front property line are original and contribute to the property’s historic significance.

As requested by the Historic Preservation Commission, staff conducted further research to determine whether existing freestanding pilasters and gates in the front yard are historical features of the property. After reviewing historical documentation in City records and from the applicant, staff has been unable to determine the construction date of these features. Historical photographs submitted by the applicant depict an open front yard without the freestanding pilasters and gates that currently exist.

Substantial documentation exists indicating that the existing gardens were created in 2000 and, although the pilasters and gates appear to be older, they may have been constructed at that time. Based on this information, it cannot be substantiated that the freestanding pilasters and gates are historical features of the property and, unless documentation of their age is provided in the future, they would be considered non-contributing features at this time.

### House Features

Built in 1927, the house is two stories and has an L-shaped plan and a steeply pitched hipped roof covered in non-original slate tiles with terracotta tiles on the ridges (the original roof was wood shingles). Two shed dormers punctuate the roofline on the west (front) elevation. The paneled wood front door (outside of which is a newer pair of wrought iron doors) has a cast stone surround with a dentilled cornice, newer metal scrollwork and a centered window above. The door is roughly in the center of the west elevation, flanked by two vertically stacked wood casement windows roughly mid-way between the door and the northern and southern edges of the elevation. The southerly ground floor window is a projecting three-sided bay with a hipped roof covered in copper with a frieze of framed diagonal-herringbone brick panels. North of the door is a plaster grille with a window behind it. Exterior walls are coated in unpainted smooth stucco. On the rear of the house is a conical half-tower at the junction of the two wings of the house as well as an original brick patio.

### Garage

A detached garage was built at the same time of the house; however, the current garage and attached studio are substantially larger than the original garage and no historic materials remain evident on the exterior. As such, the garage is a non-contributing feature to the property.

### Documented Changes to the Property

The gardens on the property were designed and built in 2000. As mentioned, the garage has been substantially altered and expanded. Three windows on the rear have non-original leaded and stained glass and a plaster grille has been replaced with a window. The slate roof with terracotta ridges is also not original. These changes do not substantially impact the integrity of the house. Slate tile roofs are common on houses of this style therefore, although not original to this house, the material is a compatible alteration.

### Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is currently in good condition, although some maintenance is needed to arrest further deterioration of exterior finishes. No significant changes to the property are proposed.

### Historical Overview

The Period Revival era in Pasadena occurred between 1915 and 1942. During this period, architectural designs were first influenced by regional American styles (including those exhibited at the 1915 California-Panama Exposition in San Diego), then, in the second half of that period (1925 – 1942), by European Styles from England, Spain, Italy and France. The French Provincial style is based on the French country house and features steeply pitched hipped roofs, masonry or stucco exteriors, symmetrical fenestration and tall second-floor windows that break through the roofline. According to the City's historic context report, Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development, 1915-1942," the French Provincial style became popular with the rise of pattern books after World War I that featured "modest homes inspired by French building tradition."

### Witmer & Watson

The architectural partnership of David Julius Witmer and Loyall F. Watson began in 1919 and lasted for almost 40 years. They designed many residential and public structures throughout the region; Witmer was heavily involved in the military and eventually became co-chief architect of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. He was also very active in architecture and design organizations. Less is known or published specifically about Watson. The application submitted for this landmark designation includes an article on the Ramona School, which Witmer & Watson designed, containing biographical information about the architects and an incomplete list of their work.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The Lansing Beach House at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard 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.

The house exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the French Provincial style, as described in the City's historic context report, "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development, 1915-1942" (Teresa Grimes and Mary Jo Winder, 2004). The building has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building is in its original location.

- Design: The building retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above.
- Setting: The residential neighborhood is intact.
- Materials: The building has most of the original materials used in its construction. The roof material has been changed from wood to slate with terracotta ridges. The slate material is compatible with the style of the house and does not diminish its integrity. The minor window alterations on the rear of the house also do not affect its integrity.
- Workmanship: The building demonstrates the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement and the design quality of the architect's work.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of 1920's Period Revival era, specifically the French Provincial style, residential architecture in Pasadena.

### **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:**

In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), 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 the local Mills Act ordinance. As a result of this program, the reduced property tax amount which comes out of the City's local share amount from the State, is a small percentage of the City's overall property tax revenue.

Respectfully submitted,



VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP  
Director of Planning & Community  
Development Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson  
Senior Planner

Concurred by:



Leon E. White  
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK  
City Manager

Attachments (4):

- A. Vicinity Map & Historical Documentation (Sanborn Maps, Assessor Records, Building Permits)
- B. Application & Supporting Documentation
- C. Photographs
- D. Effects of Landmark Designation

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA  
ADOPTING A DECLARATION OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF THE  
HOUSE AT 760 SOUTH ARROYO BOULEVARD, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**

WHEREAS, the City Council has found that the house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard meets criterion "C", as set forth in Section 17.62.040(C) of the Pasadena Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard is significant because 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;

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

WHEREAS, the property owner, Bradley Hanson, submitted the application for landmark designation; and

WHEREAS, the City Council may designate a 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 Landmark designation for the house at 760 South Arroyo Boulevard is hereby adopted.

Adopted at the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting of the City Council on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2014 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

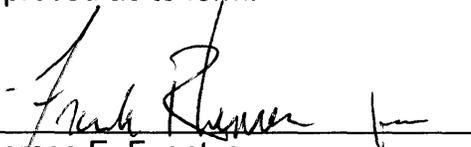
ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

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MARK JOMSKY, CMC, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Theresa E. Fuentes  
Assistant City Attorney

**DECLARATION OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION FOR:**

**760 SOUTH ARROYO BOULEVARD  
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 Landmark certain real property described as:

Lot 2 of Tract 5354, in the City of Pasadena, County of Los Angeles, State of California  
as per map recorded in Book 56, Page(s) 94 of Maps, in the office of the County  
Recorder of said County

Under Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.62.090, all work affecting designated 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