

Agenda Report

January 12, 2015

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 817 SOUTH MADISON AVENUE
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 817 South Madison Avenue is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is an intact example of a Colonial Revival house designed by significant architect Sylvanus Marston;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 817 South Madison Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 817 South Madison Avenue, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

At its regular meeting of October 7, 2014, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house at 817 South Madison Avenue as a landmark under Criterion "C" of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 817 South Madison Avenue qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion "C" because it is an intact example of a Colonial Revival house designed by significant architect Sylvanus Marston.

BACKGROUND:

On August 13, 2014, Giancarlo DiMassa and Emily Dossett, the owners of the property, 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.

Property Data

- Historical Name: None
- Address: 817 South Madison Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91106
- Location: West side of South Madison Avenue between Fillmore and Alpine Streets
- Date of Construction: 1914 (documented on original building permit)
- Original Architect: Sylvanus Marston
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Original / Present Owner: Henry N. Anderson / Giancarlo P. Di Massa & Emily Dossett
- Lot size: 13,983 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 3,402 square feet

Site Features

The site, a 0.32-acre interior lot, is located on the west side of South Madison Avenue just south of Fillmore Street. The site is approximately 70 feet in width and 200 feet in depth. It has two buildings: the main house at roughly the center of the site and a detached garage at the northwest corner of the site. There is a concrete driveway at the northern end of the property that provides vehicular access to the garage. At the west side of the property is a newer swimming pool and pergola structure built in 1977; the rest of the property is lawn and other landscaping. The property is elevated above the street level and has a vine-covered concrete retaining wall along the street edge and driveway.

Building Features

Built in 1914, the two-story house is L-shaped in plan and has a simple hipped roof covered in composition shingles with extended eaves and exposed, sculpted rafters. The exterior walls of the house are coated in cement plaster. The main entry to the house is on the north (side) elevation sheltered by a one-story, flat-roofed porch supported by square wood posts and Tuscan columns. The front door is a solid wood door with a recessed central panel, ornate metal hardware, and full-height sidelights with divided lights. The entry is surrounded by heavy wood framing and topped with a cornice.

Fenestration on the house is simple and largely symmetrical. The street-facing elevation has three French doors providing access to an outdoor terrace with a pair of

rectangular casement windows with divided lights above each door. The center door/window composition includes engaged plaster pilasters, a triangular pediment above the door, and heavy framing with scrollwork base at the second-floor window above. The flanking door/window compositions have simpler pediments above the doors as well as shutters. The remainder of windows on the house are rectangular wood windows with divided lights and heavy wood framing.

There are two identical and symmetrically placed chimneys on the east end of the north and south exterior walls of the house. The chimneys are coated in stucco and have plaster scroll shoulder details near the roofline where the chimney narrows.

Detached Garage Features

The property has a detached two-car garage toward the rear of the property near the northerly property line. It is a simple structure with appearance similar to the house including a hipped roof with extended eaves and exposed rafters and engaged pilasters and heavy wood framing around the vehicular door opening. The door is not original.

Documented Changes to the Property

Permit records indicate that a porch was enclosed in 1964. The location of the porch enclosure is unclear in the records. All other elements of the house appear original and intact based on staff's review of permit and other historical records (Attachment A).

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is currently in a good state of preservation and appears to be in good condition. The owners have also applied for Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) concurrently with this application, including a Rehabilitation and Maintenance Plan for the property that will be evaluated by staff.

Historical Overview

Period Revival Era

The Period Revival era in Pasadena occurred generally 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 Colonial Revival style described in more detail below is based on Elizabethan English architecture and is identified as a historically significant architectural style in the City's historic context report "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942."

Colonial Revival Style

The Colonial Revival Style is a general term that refers to houses that exhibit characteristics of early American houses in Colonial New England. Typical features include a pedimented front door with pilasters or small porch, doors with fanlights or sidelights, symmetrical fenestration with a central door and grouped multi-pane double-hung windows. Many different subtypes are identified in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, including the “Hipped Roof without Full-Width Porch” subtype, which is the closest subtype to 817 South Madison Avenue. This subtype is described as “simple two-story rectangular blocks with hipped roofs; porches are usually absent or, if present, are small entry porches covering less than the full façade width.” Early examples of this subtype are highly detailed and exuberant; later examples are more refined. Detailing on Colonial Revival houses are typically focused at entries, cornices and windows.

Sylvanus Marston (1883-1946)

The architect of the house at 817 South Madison Avenue was Sylvanus Marston, a significant and prolific architect who designed many significant buildings in the City. Marston was born in Oakland, California and his family moved to Pasadena when he was two years old. He studied at Pomona College and graduated from Cornell University with a degree in architecture. Marston designed St. Francis Court, which is thought to be the first bungalow court ever built. He was a master of many disparate architectural styles and partnered separately during his career with Garrett Van Pelt and Edgar Maybury.

ANALYSIS:

The house at 817 South Madison Avenue is eligible for landmark 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 Colonial Revival style, as described in the City’s historic context report, “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942” (Teresa Grimes & Mary Jo Winder, 2004) and detailed further in *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Virginia McAlester, 2013). The context report does not include registration requirements; however, a house from this period would typically be eligible for historic designation if it is a good example of an identified period revival architectural style and/or of the work of a significant architect or designer. It would display most of the character-defining features of its style and would retain high integrity of design, materials and setting that convey its period of

construction. While most buildings undergo alteration over time, these alterations should not significantly change the historic appearance of the building.

The property exhibits the essential character-defining features of the Colonial Revival style as described above and was designed by significant architect Sylvanus Marston. The architect designed unique components for the house including a side-oriented main entry with a larger front porch than is typically seen on Colonial Revival houses. Despite having its main entry facing north, a detailed secondary entry is evident on the street-facing elevation, consistent with the style. The property 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.
- Materials: The building has all of the original materials used in its construction and appears wholly unaltered.
- Workmanship: The building demonstrates the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement in the City's history.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of period revival residential architecture in Pasadena.

The original detached garage and concrete retaining walls at the street edge are contributing to this designation.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

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

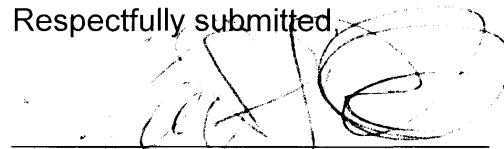
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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:

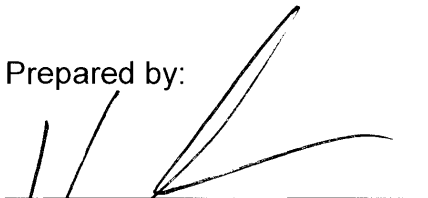
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted 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 fraction of the City's overall property tax revenue.

Respectfully submitted,



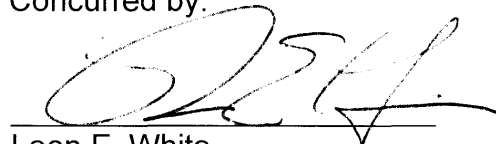
VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



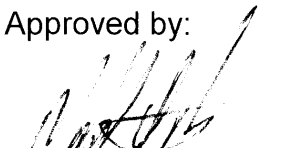
Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

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