

Agenda Report

February 1, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 2480 OSWEGO STREET 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 2480 Oswego Street is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a Landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is a locally significant example of the "Airplane" subtype of California Arts and Crafts architectural style of the early twentieth century and retains integrity;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 2480 Oswego Street, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 2480 Oswego Street, 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 20, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house at 2480 Oswego Street as a Landmark under Criterion "C" of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 2480 Oswego Street qualifies for designation as a Landmark under Criterion “C” because it is a locally significant example of the “Airplane” subtype of California Arts and Crafts architectural style of the early twentieth century and retains integrity.

BACKGROUND:

On August 20, 2015, Villas on Oswego, LLC, the owner 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.

On February 10, 2015, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Concept Design Review for a new 33-unit multi-family residential project on this property and the adjoining properties at 2460 and 2470 Oswego Street, which contemplated retention of the existing house on the property. In order to ensure future protection of the house, particularly during construction of the new project, the owner agreed to a condition of approval requiring nomination of the house for designation as a landmark. This application has been submitted in response to that condition of approval. The house is proposed to be rehabilitated as part of this project; the detached garage is proposed to be demolished.

Property Data

- Historical Name: None
- Address: 2480 Oswego Street, Pasadena, CA 91107
- Location: South side of Oswego Street, one parcel west of South Altadena Drive
- Date of Construction: 1914 (source: County Assessor)
- Original Architect: Unknown
- Original Builder: Unknown
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Original / Present Owner: Unknown / Villas on Oswego, LLC
- Lot size: 12,326 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 1,890 square feet (source: County Assessor)

Site Features

The site, a 0.28-acre interior lot, is located on the south side of Oswego Street, one lot west of South Altadena Drive. The site is approximately 63 feet in width and 200 feet in depth. It has two buildings: the main house at roughly the north end of the site and a detached garage at the eastern edge of the site, south of the house. There is a concrete driveway at the eastern end of the property that provides vehicular access to the garage. Chain-link and metal security fencing encloses the front and side yards of the property.

Main House Features

Built in 1914, the one-to-two-story house is rectangular in plan and is divided into three volumes east-to-west: a central two-story volume flanked by one-story volumes. Each volume has a street-facing gabled roof covered in composition shingles and with extended eaves, wood tongue-and-groove sheathing, exposed rafters, outriggers and barge boards. Each gable-end has a vertical-wood-slat attic vent with wood trim and sills. The two one-story volumes extend closer to the street than the two story volume, with the intervening space being a front porch with a balcony above. The balcony likely had a railing, which is currently missing. The beams and rafters supporting the balcony are exposed and the porch walls are irregular split-face granite with raised grouting and concrete caps, steps and porch flooring.

The exterior walls of the house are clad in wood lap siding with mitered corners and the foundation is concrete. The front door is a solid-wood paneled door with a vertically oriented rectangular light and wood framing with an extended header with angled ends. There is also a French door accessing the porch from the easterly projecting one-story volume of the house and a nine-light Prairie-style door accessing the balcony above. Fenestration on the house is simple and symmetrical and consists of double-hung wood windows with no muntins in singles and pairs with wood framing, extended headers with angled ends, and projecting sills with a simple apron below.

Detached Garage Features

The property has a detached one-car garage at the east side of the property. It is a simple gable-roofed structure with wood lap siding and sliding solid-wood doors. It appears to be original to the house and, although it would be considered contributing to the landmark designation, it is proposed to be demolished to accommodate the new project proposed on the site.

Documented Changes to the Property

Permit records do not indicate any changes to the house other than re-roofing and addition of a screened porch at the rear. No other changes are visibly evident, although the presence of original balconies on the front and rear elevations requires further study as part of the rehabilitation of the house.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is in a state of disrepair and rehabilitation is proposed in conjunction with development of a 33-unit multi-family residential project on the remainder of the site and the adjacent two properties to the west. The house will be one of the 33 residential units on the site following its rehabilitation.

Historical Overview

The Arts and Crafts Period

The Arts & Crafts movement began in England around the year 1860 as a response to industrialization and mass production of goods. Its focus was one of promoting manual craftsmanship rather than machine production, which was believed to result in a harmonious society where producers and consumers could take pride in their work and, thereby, enhance their lives. Works were simple and designed to show evidence of construction methods. William Morris is widely cited as being the movement's primary proponent in England, with his Red House (1859 by Phillip Webb) being one of the earliest pieces of English Arts & Crafts architecture. The movement included many other forms of craft including printmaking, decorative objects, wallpaper, textiles, furniture and stained glass.

In America, Elbert Hubbard and Gustav Stickley, who both organized Arts & Crafts guilds, were the movement's primary proponents. Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman* was influential in spreading the ideals of the movement throughout the country. The American Arts & Crafts architectural movement was centered in three primary locations: Oak Park, Illinois; Berkeley and Pasadena, each drawing on local materials. In Pasadena, the primary architectural tenet of the movement was to enhance the connection between house and landscape. This was achieved through large roofed front porches, use of wood exterior cladding materials and other locally available materials such as stones from the Arroyo Seco, elimination of ornament, and planning of the house around natural features of the site (contours, trees, etc.). Architectural details were frequently handcrafted by local artisans.

The two-story Arts and Crafts period house has the following character-defining features, as described in "Residential Architecture in Pasadena 1895-1918: Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement" (1998):

- Rectangular or complex plan
- Larger than one- or one-and-one-half-story bungalow
- Horizontal lines
- Low-pitched gabled roofs with wood or composition shingles
- Wide eaves with exposed rafters
- Sometimes shed or gabled dormers
- Full-width front porches, sometimes limited to entry area only, supported by battered or straight-sided stone or wood piers
- Foundations, chimneys and retaining walls of Arroyo stone

Airplane Bungalows

The "airplane bungalow" is a distinct subtype of Arts & Crafts Period house which features a smaller, rectangular second story that "pops out" of a considerably larger first story. This subtype was not documented in the City's 1999 study of the Arts & Crafts

Period; however, it has been identified in other sources that document this period of architecture. According to Paul Duchscherer and Douglas Keister (The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Home, 1995), "The airplane bungalow is named for the cockpit feature of an attic room projecting above the wings of its roof, reflecting a popular fascination with the concept of air travel. The plan often accommodates access to its upper level by means of an enclosed staircase between the dining room and an adjacent bedroom." See Attachment D for images and captions of typical houses in this subtype.

ANALYSIS:

The house at 2480 Oswego Street 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.

Under this criterion, 2480 Oswego Street is significant as an intact example of Arts and Crafts Period architecture (Airplane Bungalow subtype). The rectangular second story, at the center of the considerably larger building footprint, with prominent front-facing gable roofs on each story, indicates the Airplane subtype. The low-pitch roof, multiple gables, large eaves, extended rafter tails, outriggers, flat-roofed porch with balcony supported by exposed beams and rafters, wood-lap siding, pergola, and groups of casement windows with extended lintels, are design elements that embody the philosophy, craftsmanship values and practice of the Arts and Crafts movement. The house exhibits the character-defining features of its style, with some unique variations such as a narrower than typical front porch without support posts and the use of granite rather than Arroyo stone, and retains nearly all of its original materials. 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 appears to have all of the original materials used in its construction other than the original roof material.
- 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 Arts & Crafts Period residential architecture in Pasadena.

The detached garage is contributing to this designation; however, its demolition in conjunction with the proposed multi-family residential project would not be a significant impact on the historic property.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The General Plan Land Use Element – Guiding Principle 2: “Pasadena’s historic resources will be preserved. Citywide, new development will be in harmony with and enhance Pasadena’s unique character and sense of place. New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will be compatible with, and differentiated from, the existing resource;” and Goal 8: “Preservation and enhancement of Pasadena’s cultural and historic buildings, landscapes, streets and districts as valued assets and important representations of its past and a source of community identity, and social, ecological, and economic vitality.”

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:

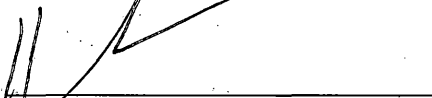
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted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



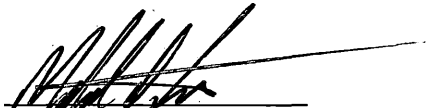
Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments (5):

- A. Vicinity Map & Historical Documentation (Building Description Blank; Sanborn Map)
- B. Application & Attachments
- C. Current Photographs
- D. Excerpts from The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Home, Duchscherer & Keister, 1995
- E. Effects of Historic Designation