



Agenda Report

January 23, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX AT 305-339
SOUTH ORANGE GROVE 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 property at 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard meets Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P M C §17 62 040) because it is a locally significant example of Modern Ranch architecture applied to a garden apartment complex and retains integrity,
- 3 Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard, Pasadena, California,
- 4 Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard, 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 November 17, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17 62 040

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

“The Orange Grove” garden apartment complex is a distinctive example of Modern Ranch architecture in Pasadena and retains its most significant character-defining features. Therefore, the property at 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion “C” as a locally significant example of Modern Ranch architecture applied to a garden apartment complex.

BACKGROUND:

On September 8, 2016, Phyllis Mueller, on behalf of the board of the Pasadena Orange Grove Homeowners Association, with the signed consent of a majority of the property owners, 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 structure qualifies for landmark designation.

Property Data

- Historical Name The Orange Grove
- Address 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91105
- Location Northwest corner of Orange Grove Boulevard and Arbor Street
- Date of Construction 1958 (documented by building permit)
- Original Architect J G Resh
- Original / Present Use Condominium apartment complex
- Original / Present Owner Multiple owners (condominium)
- Property size 67,890 square feet (1.56 acres)

Setting & Site Description

The site is an irregular 1.56-acre lot at the northwest corner of South Orange Grove Boulevard and Arbor Street in a residential neighborhood. Single-family residences, including a historic house (Mary E. Denham House, 1890, Frederick L. Roehrig, listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places) at the north side, border the interior lot lines of the property. Across Arbor Street to the south is the Wrigley mansion (Tournament of Roses headquarters), and across Orange Grove Boulevard to the east are other apartment buildings constructed in the mid-twentieth century. The site consists of four sprawling L-shaped two-story residential buildings in a landscaped setting, driveway access from Arbor Street at the west property line, and in the northwest portion of the site, three garage buildings and a swimming pool with changing room.

Building Features

Built in 1958, "The Orange Grove" garden apartment complex was designed in the Modern Ranch style. Each of the four main residential buildings has an L-shaped plan, and is situated to create semi-private courtyards and common areas on the property. Roofs are hipped with shallow, vented gables at the apex and covered with simulated shake shingles. Chimneys sheathed in rock veneer pierce the roof near the edges. Exterior surfaces are a mixture of medium smooth stucco, wood board-and-batten cladding, and rock veneer accent panels. Windows are aluminum-framed sliders, fixed, or jalousie. Elevations are complex with projecting, squared bays, recessed stairwells, and cantilevered balconies. Projecting wooden grids are suggestive of pergolas. Painted, steel posts decorated with squared spiral elements support various porch roofs and balconies. Many original sconces and hanging light fixtures are brass-plated starburst designs. Flat, projecting porch roofs shelter the entries. Concrete paths lead to porches with tiled floors. Exterior stairs covered in thick magnesite with iron railings lead to the second floor apartments.

Accessory Structures & Site Features

In the northwest portion of the building are three garage buildings with stucco walls, overhanging flat roofs, and aluminum swing-up garage doors. Narrow planting areas soften the ends of these buildings. The garages are original to the property.

Between two of the garage buildings is a swimming pool with changing room. Access to the landscaped pool area is provided by an ornamental iron gate. The changing room has an asymmetric gabled projecting roof, creating a small lanai. The pool area and changing room building are original to the property.

A rectilinear network of concrete pathways allows circulation through the garden areas to the public sidewalk. Rock veneer planters adjoin the pathways. Perforated block walls with ornamental iron gates screen the vehicle circulation areas from the garden areas. Mature, subtropical landscaping consists of many varieties of palms, ferns, shrubs, flowering bushes, and trees. The pathways, planters, perforated block walls, and ornamental iron gates contribute to the architectural significance of the property.

Documented Changes to the Property

Over the years, a few minor alterations were made to the buildings. These include glass enclosures of balconies (leaving the ironwork visible), replacement aluminum windows (dual pane, with matching sliding operation and matching aluminum finish), brown composition shingle roof in place of the original wood shake roof, and tiles at the first floor landings.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is in good condition and is well-maintained. Minor alterations, such as replacement of windows with new windows of matching materials, and enclosure of balconies facing the interior of the property, have been contemplated by resident owners. These projects would require review of an application for Certificate of Appropriateness to ensure their compatibility once the property is designated.

Historical Overview

Mid-Century Modern Period

“The Orange Grove” garden condominium apartment complex represents the theme “Multi-Family Residential Development” identified in the City’s 2007 historic context report, “Cultural Resources of the Recent Past.” This theme is described in the context report as follows:

In the years immediately preceding and following the Second World War, local trends in residential development and design began to shift dramatically. While the overwhelming majority of residential development in Pasadena prior to 1935 was in the form of the detached single family house, the postwar period is marked by a proliferation of multiple family dwellings. This was largely in response to the overall housing shortage that created a need for higher density to accommodate the influx of new residents.

Multiple family housing in Pasadena from this period tends to range from two to four-stories in height, with some integration of the indoor and outdoor spaces, and a remarkable quality of design. Postwar multiple family housing also included modern conveniences such as elevators, improved mechanical systems, up to date appliances, central air conditioning, outdoor balconies, and newly available prefabricated components such as steel frame windows and sliding glass doors.

Many apartments in Pasadena are noteworthy for their attempts at combining modern materials, techniques, and floor plans with various revival styles, Asian influences, or Ranch styles.

The report goes on to describe the large concentration of postwar multi-family housing developments along South Orange Grove Boulevard, which were built as a result of a

1948 rezoning of the area, following deterioration of turn-of-the-twentieth-century mansions along the former “Millionaire’s Row” during the Great Depression

Garden Apartment Building Sub-Type

Under the Multiple Family Residence property type, the 2007 historic context report identifies the “garden apartment building” subtype, which is described as follows

The garden apartment building was the dominant multi-family housing type in Southern California from the mid-1940s through the 1960s. A higher-density configuration, these properties contain multiple units within a two- or three-story structure, arranged around a common patio or landscaped courtyard. These buildings typically feature a central lobby and common stairwells and corridors. Larger buildings may have an L-shaped or U-shaped plan around a central patio, often with a swimming pool. Garden apartment buildings may be arranged in groups of two or more, creating a complex within a large green space. Garages are detached to the rear. In Pasadena, this property subtype is most often associated with the Minimal Traditional, Mid-Century Modern or Vernacular Modern styles.

Modern Ranch Style

Of the architectural styles identified in the 2007 historic context report, the buildings most closely represent the Modern Ranch Style, which is described as follows

The Modern Ranch style is characterized by large expanses of glass and minimal exterior detailing applied to Ranch house building form. Characterized by its low, horizontal emphasis and sprawling plan, the Ranch house enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the United States during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Character-defining features of the style that are evident in “The Orange Grove” include

- Sprawling plan, often with radiating wings (L-shaped, U-shaped)
- Low, horizontal massing and wide street façade
- Low-pitched hip roof
- Overhanging boxed eaves
- Asphalt shingle roof cladding
- Panels of wood and stucco, with accents of stone veneer
- Large metal-frame windows
- Recessed porches, wide masonry chimneys

ANALYSIS:

The multi-family residential development at 305-339 S Orange Grove Boulevard (“The Orange Grove”) 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 property exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Garden Apartment Building subtype of the Multiple Family Residence property type, as described in the City’s historic context report, “Cultural Resources of the Recent Past,” (Historic Resources Group & Pasadena Heritage, 2007) The registration requirements in the historic context report state

Multiple family residences that would qualify under this theme would include a multi-story structure that is a good example of a period architectural style and/or of the work of a significant architect or designer, or a single-story structure that is a good example of its period form These property subtypes would usually meet local or California Register registration requirements under Criterion C (3) as an individual resource

In order to qualify under Criterion C (3) as a good example of an architectural style and/or of the work of a significant designer, the property would display most of the character-defining features of its style It must 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 Garden Apartment Building sub-type of the Multiple Family Residence property type as described above, and is a significant example of this property type in the Modern Ranch architectural style The property has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows

- Location The buildings are in their original location
- Design The buildings retain their form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above The design of the property includes the character-defining features of the Modern Ranch style noted above, and other notable character-defining design features such as rock veneer planters, ornamental iron work

porch posts and gates, perforated block walls, asymmetric projecting roof at the pool area, and Asiatic-influenced gable-on-hip roofs

- Materials The property retains the original materials used in its construction. Minor alterations that have been made do not affect their integrity.
- Workmanship The property's workmanship is evident in the rock veneer accent panels, chimneys, and planters, the ornamental iron work at the balconies and gates, the ornamental entry door knob escutcheons and hanging lighting, the perforated block walls, and the projecting wood grids suggestive of pergolas.
- Feeling The property clearly expresses the characteristics of mid-twentieth-century multi-family residential architecture in Pasadena.

The property retains all of its original character-defining features. Exterior alterations to the property, including enclosures of balconies, replacement aluminum windows, composition shingle roof, and tiles at the first floor landings, are compatible with the original structure.

The property was previously evaluated in 2002 as part of a Citywide historic resources survey of multi-family residential buildings and was assigned a status code of 4S1, which indicated that the property may become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places once it reaches 50 years old. Although the criteria for City landmark designation does not specify a minimum age, the property is now over 50 years old.

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,



DAVID M REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by



Leon E White
Principal Planner

Approved by



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments (4)

- Attachment A – Vicinity Map
- Attachment B – Application Materials
- Attachment C – Photographs
- Attachment D – Effects of Landmark Designation