



Agenda Report

February 5, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 580 ARBOR 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) pursuant to Section 15308 Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances;
2. Find that main residence, attached garage, exterior floating stairs, exterior lighting, pool and decking at 580 Arbor Street meet landmark designation criterion C in Pasadena Municipal Code (P.M.C) Section 17.62.040(C)(2)(c) because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period. They are, collectively, a locally significant example of a Mid-Century Modern style house and site features designed by locally significant architect John L. Pugsley, and retain integrity;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 580 Arbor Street, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 580 Arbor 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 November 7, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house and site features at 580 Arbor Street as a Landmark under Criterion "C" of PMC Section 17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house and specified site features at 580 Arbor Street qualify for designation as a Landmark under Criterion "C" because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period. The building and site features are locally significant, intact examples of a single-family residential property type built in the Mid-Century Modern style, designed by locally significant architect John L. Pugsley; and retain integrity.

BACKGROUND:

On August 28, 2017, Sarah Gavit and Andre de Salis, property owners, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the property at 580 Arbor Street. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the house, attached garage, exterior floating stairs, exterior lighting, pool and decking qualifies for designation as a landmark.

Property Data

- Address: 580 Arbor Street, Pasadena CA 91105
- Location: South side of Arbor Street, between California Terrace to the west and South Grand Avenue to the east.
- Date of Construction Completion: 1961 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Owner: Bro-Ke Inc. (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: John L. Pugsley (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Builder: Bro-Ke Inc. (Source: Original Building Permit)
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Property size: 14,830 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 2,874 square feet (source: County Assessor)

The Site

The 0.34-acre site, which slopes downward from Arbor Street to south, is located in the western portion of the City just east of the Arroyo Seco and south of the 134 Freeway (Ventura Fwy.). The lot is generally rectangular and measures 104 feet wide by 160 feet deep. The building is three stories overall, with a two-story residence over a two-car garage set into the descending slope. Additional site features include a rectangular concrete and tile swimming pool with spa in the front yard, a concrete patio with built in barbeque and wood panel storage units behind the main building, a long asphalt and

concrete driveway extending from Arbor Street to the garage at the rear of the residence, scored concrete block walls and planters, and extensive landscaping and hardscaping. A cast concrete bas-relief in the planter along the driveway is also visible from the street. The immediately surrounding properties contain mid-twentieth-century single-family residences, primarily with one-story massing, flat roofs, and horizontal emphasis designed in the Mid-Century Modern or Modern Ranch architectural styles.

Exterior Features of the Building

The two-story residence above a one-story garage has a T-shaped plan and a concrete foundation, and is of exposed wood post-and beam construction. It has multiple flat roofs with built-up roofing and wide overhanging eaves with plaster soffits and recessed light fixtures. Exterior walls are finished with sand-textured cement plaster, with scored concrete block walls along the foundation. The residence is oriented around a rectangular swimming pool, and large expanses of floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors overlook the pool and surrounding deck. Fenestration consists of flush-mounted wood and aluminum-frame windows of various types, including fixed, sliding, and jalousie. Floor-to-ceiling windows have wood fasciae at their heads and sills that continue the lines of the structural beams. Windows are often set in groups or spaced with alternating plaster panels, emphasizing the residence's overall horizontality. A cantilevered deck with concrete flooring and wood balustrade extends along the west and north facades. The deck is accessed by "floating" steel and concrete staircases. There is an exterior concrete block chimney with metal flue on the north façade. Additional features include projecting heavy wood beams set on wood or metal posts, and decorative globe light fixtures, including suspended pendants and wall mounted sconces. The garage has two side-by-side overhead sectional metal garage doors framed by scored concrete block piers. The northernmost portion of the garage, formerly an open carport, has been partially enclosed by a panel of glass block. A low metal balustrade encloses the swimming pool. The main entrance is a large floor-to-ceiling glass door on the west elevation near the pool and adjacent to the garage doors, and access is secured by a low metal gate and illuminated by a globe pole light.

Documented Changes to the Property

The house is largely intact on the exterior. The original plans for the house, which are in the current owner's possession (see excerpts in Attachment A), also show a covered entry way on the east elevation. This entrance was a small foyer located at the end of a long narrow exterior walkway, not publicly visible due to its location below the level of the street. Due to its location on the opposite side of the house as the parking area it was not consistently used and was enclosed and is now used as a bar area. A small, architecturally sensitive bedroom addition was constructed in 1995 at the rear of the house and the existing carport was enclosed with garage doors. These alterations were done in such a manner that the house retains all significant original design features. Additional minor exterior alterations include the replacement of some jalousie windows with fixed or sliding units, the installation of greenhouse windows on the rear elevation

not visible from the street, a small deck extension over the garage doors, and the addition of several flat skylights on the flat roofs.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The exterior of the house is currently in good condition and it is used as a single-family residence. No significant additional changes to the property are proposed at this time.

Historical Overview

Mid-Century Modern Style

Mid-Century Modern describes the postwar iteration of the International Style in both residential and commercial design. The International Style was characterized by geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an absence of exterior decoration. Mid-Century Modern represents the adaptation of these elements to the local climate and topography, as well as to the postwar need for efficiently built, moderately-priced homes. In Pasadena, this often meant the use of wood post-and-beam construction. The Mid-Century Modern house or office is characterized by its clear expression of structure and materials, large expanses of glass, and open interior plan. Local practitioners of the style included prewar International Style architects like Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra, Gregory Ain and Harwell Hamilton Harris, as well as second generation Modernists like Ray Kappe, Buff & Hensman, Ladd & Kelsey, Carl Maston, A. Quincy Jones, Whitney Smith, and Wayne Williams. Architects such as John Lautner incorporated geometric and sculptural forms, embracing a more expressionistic or organic version of the style. Richard Neutra's Perkins House at 1540 Poppy Peak Drive (1955) and Buff & Hensman's Dubnoff Residence at 1150 La Loma Road (1965) are both excellent residential examples of Mid-Century Modernism in Pasadena.

The City's 2007 Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report identify the character-defining features of Mid Century Modern Houses as:

- One or two-story configuration
- Simple geometric forms
- Exposed post-and-beam construction, in wood or steel
- Flat roof with wide overhanging eaves and cantilevered canopies
- Unadorned wall surfaces
- Exterior panels of wood, stucco, brick or stone
- Flush-mounted metal frame full-height and clerestory windows

- Exterior staircases, decks, patios and balconies
- Little or no exterior decorative detailing

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements constructed during the property's period of significance that give the building its character. In general, a property that retains its character defining features continues to convey its significance and therefore retains integrity as an historic resource. Removal or alteration of one character-defining feature does not necessarily alter the integrity of an historic resource. Impacts to historic integrity can result from a single major change or from many incremental changes over time.

Pasadena Style & the USC School of Architecture

The 2007 Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report addresses the impact of the USC School of Architecture on Pasadena. The term "Pasadena" or "USC style" Modernism was coined by architectural historian Esther McCoy, and reflects the profound impact that graduates of the University of Southern California School of Architecture, many of whom lived and worked in Pasadena, had on the architectural landscape of the region. However, the majority of the architects working in Pasadena during the postwar period are not well known outside of the city. Probably the most successful in reaching some level of acclaim were the firms of Buff, Straub & Hensman; Smith & Williams; and Ladd & Kelsey. These were just some of the cadre of innovative Modernist architects who came out of the USC School of Architecture and designed thoughtful and original designs in Pasadena during the postwar period. Pasadena's Mid-century Modern residential architecture, therefore, is characterized not by individual genius, but by the collective excellence of the architects who worked there after the War.

Architect Designed Houses

The 2007 Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report discusses architect designed houses in this style from the time period. The term "architect-designed" is used to distinguish high-style, site specific single-family residences from the simpler tract houses that proliferated primarily in large-scale residential developments during this period. The major defining architect-designed residential architecture in postwar Pasadena include those residences inspired by the tenets of the Case Study House Program; the post-and-beam architecture practiced by the teachers and graduates of the University of Southern California School of Architecture; and the Modernist variation of the ranch house.

There are concentrations of architect-designed residential properties from the period, which occur primarily along the Pasadena's western and southern edges, where the subject property is located. These areas, composed largely of single family residences, occupy hilly terrain that had not been previously developed; this resulted in site-specific designs that responded to the unique circumstances of hillside development and were

made possible by new technologies developed during and after the War. The area west of the 210 and 710 Freeways on both sides of the Arroyo also contain substantial numbers of houses from the period, particularly in the southwest corner of the city. Many of these are infill properties in previously developed neighborhoods. In some cases, these lots were created by subdividing large estates, for example in the Hillcrest Neighborhood as well as along the Arroyo on lots previously occupied by the Adolphus Busch estate and Busch Gardens.

John L. Pugsley, AIA (1927-2009)

John L. Pugsley was a Canadian born architect from the mid-century modern period who designed a number of buildings in Pasadena. He became an American citizen in 1952 and received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Southern California in 1953. Prior to establishing his own practice in 1960, he worked for several Pasadena based architectural firms, including Bennett & Bennett, Breo Freeman, and John F. Galbraith. During the late 1950s and early 1960's Pugsley designed a number of custom-built single-family homes in or near Pasadena in the Modernistic style. Three of the homes are located in the immediate vicinity of 580 Arbor Street, at 603 Arbor Street, 641 Arbor Street and 360 California Terrace. Additional Pasadena examples designed by John L. Pugsley include 160 Linda Vista Avenue, 1241 Encino Drive, 1451 South El Molino Avenue, and 1450 Capinero Drive.

ANALYSIS:

The house at 580 Arbor Street is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 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 580 Arbor Street is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of the Mid-Century Modern property type, designed by John L. Pugsley. The registration requirements in the City's 2007 Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report state:

In order to qualify under Criterion C (3), this property type would display most of the character-defining features of its style. It must retain high integrity of design, materials and workmanship 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 building has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building and other site features are in their original locations.
- Design: The building retains the majority of its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its simple massing and horizontal emphasis, exposed post-and-beam construction, flat roof with overhanging eaves, cement plaster cladding with unadorned wall surfaces, cantilevered deck, flush mounted windows and sliding glass doors, scored concrete block accents, floating stairways and globe light fixtures. The design of the house embodies the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement and the prior alterations of the single story bedroom/bath at the rear of the house and the carport alteration below the house, and the entry way alteration have minimal visual impact on significant original design features.
- Setting: The residential neighborhood and lush vegetation are intact.
- Materials: The building retains a majority of its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of mid-20th century Mid-Century Modern residential design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern architectural style.
- Association: The property at 580 Arbor Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with mid-20th century residential development and design in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The house retains all of its original character-defining features, including two-story configuration, simple geometric forms, expressed post and beam construction, flat roof with wide overhanging eaves, unadorned wall surfaces of sand-textured cement plaster, scored concrete block accents and floating steps. All alterations to the house, including the enclosure of a non-publicly visible entryway and construction of an addition at the rear are compatible with the original structure.

Contributing features to this designation include the main house, attached garage, and site features including the exterior floating steps, lighting, pool, spa, and decking.

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 and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

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,



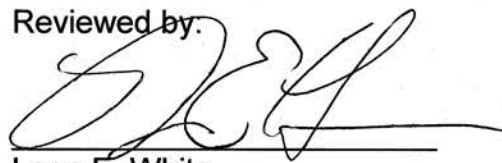
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Attachments: (4)

- Attachment A - Application & Historical Documentation (Building Description Blank; Sanborn Map)
- Attachment B - Vicinity Map
- Attachment C - Current Photographs
- Attachment D - Effects of Landmark Designation