

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**DATE:** JUNE 13, 2005

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** DESIGNATION OF 1160 CHATEAU ROAD AS A LANDMARK (COUNCIL DISTRICT 6)

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Acknowledge that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (§15308);
2. As recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission, find that 1160 Chateau Road meets designation criterion C in P.M.C. §17.62.040 (B) because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Modern/International Style residential architecture and is an important representation the work of architect John Kelsey.
3. Find that the detached studio is a non-contributing feature because of its later construction date (1973—ten years after the main house) and because it was not designed by John Kelsey.
4. Approve the designation of the main house with the forecourt and pool and related landscaping as a landmark.
5. Approve the attached resolution designating 1160 Chateau Road as a landmark (ATTACHMENT A);
6. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached declaration of designation (ATTACHMENT B); and
7. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

## **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

On April 4, 2005, at a noticed public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the designation of 1160 Chateau Road as a landmark.

## **BACKGROUND**

On March 1, 2005, property owners, Patricia Moritz and Christopher J. Bonura, submitted the application to nominate their home, the John Kelsey residence, for designation as a landmark. The staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the house with its landscaping qualifies for designation. The house was one of seven residences included in Pasadena Heritage's "Pasadena Modern" tour in March 2005.

## **DESCRIPTION**

Designed in 1962 and constructed in 1963, the one-story, 2,600 square-foot house is a high-style example of mid-century Modern design. Set on a hillside lot of slightly more than one-half acre, the post-and-beam house is flat-roofed and H-shape in plan. The primary elevation, facing Chateau Road, is symmetrically organized and set behind a paved forecourt of poured concrete accented with panels of beach-pebble aggregate. An attached garage,<sup>1</sup> encloses the parking court to the north; the south side of the parking court is open. Screening the glazed façade of the main house from public view is a high wall with centered wooden doors.

In its composition, the house relies on precedents from three historical sources. Its plan closely follows the layout of one-story houses from the era of the early Roman empire. The doors in the outer wall open to an enclosed interior court (atrium), which is open to the sky (compluvium). The atrium opens to a glazed "reception" room (oecus) inside the house, which joins the two elongated wings of the H-shape plan. To the west of the center room and on axis with the main entrance is a rectangular open-air pool (impluvium). Overlaying the Roman plan is a Japanese-influenced aesthetic of austerity and simplicity expressed in horizontality, exposed wood framing, teak paneling and cabinetry, sliding doors, and full-height windows. The landscaping, including the red maple trees at the outer entrance, further emphasizes a Japanese theme. The modernity of the design, clearly evoking the International Style, is evident in the exterior walls finished in plaster, the extended canopies, the large expanses of glass, the intermingling of the exterior and the interior, and the rectilinear form of the house.

The heavily landscaped surrounding, the sharp curve of Chateau Road, the canopy of nearby trees, and the views to the south across the Annandale Golf Course further dramatize the setting of the house. The house presents itself as a luminous white pavilion against a backdrop of tall trees and greenery.

The house was featured in the September 1963 issue of *House & Garden*. The article on the house was "House Divided by a Glimmering Pool." Copies of the photographs accompanying this article by the noted photographer Ezra Stoller are attached to this report (ATTACHMENT C).

John Field Kelsey (b. 1925) is best known for his collaboration with Thornton Ladd (b. 1924) in the Pasadena-based firm of Ladd & Kelsey. Organized in 1959, this

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<sup>1</sup> Described as a carport in the original building permit on file with the City of Pasadena.

collaboration between two USC-trained architects produced designs for numerous commercial projects during the 1960s, including the Pasadena Museum of Art (1969—now the Norton Simon Museum) and the First City Bank building at 123 S. Lake Avenue (now Fidelity Investments), as well as a smaller number of institutional projects (e.g., the Herrick Memorial Chapel at Occidental College, 1964). They produced fewer designs for residences, but with the passing of time these designs now appear to be their most celebrated work. On several occasions, their designs were featured in architectural journals with a national and international readership. During the 1970s, however, the firm was unable to sustain the high profile and acclaim of its earlier years and never recaptured the brilliance of its first decade. Ladd and Kelsey designed at least four houses in Pasadena. Kelsey designed the house at 1160 Chateau Road for his family. He later designed another Polynesian-Tiki style residence at 110 Los Altos Drive, which is near 1160 Chateau Road.

### **Conclusion**

The property at 1160 Chateau Road qualifies for designation as a landmark under criterion C: *It [i.e., 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 significant to the City or to the region, or possesses artistic values of significance to the City or to the region.*

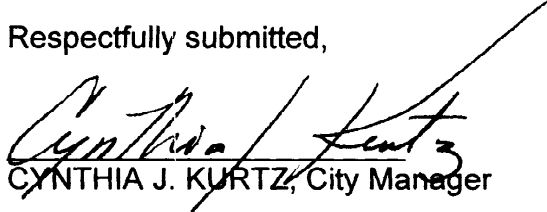
It is notable as an individual property in an excellent state of preservation. It is also notable as part of a small but outstanding inventory of Mid-century houses in Pasadena, mostly of them in the San Rafael hills, designed by distinguished architects. As a glass pavilion in a hillside setting, it captures the imaginative spirit of architectural design in southern California during the two decades following the Second World War.

If the Council designates the house as a landmark, it will be the City's third Mid-century house with this distinction. Landmark designation regulates exterior alterations, demolitions, and new construction. As recommended in this report, alterations to the studio (or demolition of the studio) would be exempt from design review because this structure, built in 1973, is a later feature on the property and does not qualify for landmark designation.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Designation of a property does not affect revenues to the City. In some instances, though, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, 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 a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,



CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, City Manager

Prepared by:



Jeff Cronin, Principal Planner

Approved by:



Richard Bruckner, Director of Planning & Development

**ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: Resolution

ATTACHMENT B: Declaration

ATTACHMENT C: Photographs (Ezra Stoller, September 1963)

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

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA ADOPTING A DECLARATION OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION FOR 1160 CHATEAU ROAD, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission has found that 494 Bradford Street meets criterion C, as set forth in Section 17.62.040(b) of the Pasadena Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the single-family residence, attached garage, forecourt, pool and related landscaping at 1160 Chateau Road are significant because the property is an outstanding local example of Mid-century residential design and a notable work of architect John Field Kelsey, who practiced in Pasadena in the firm of Ladd and Kelsey.

WHEREAS, the owners of the property, Patricia Moritz and Christopher J. Bonura, nominated the property for landmark designation; and

WHEREAS, the City Council may approve a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission to 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 main house—with the forecourt and pool and related landscaping—at 1160 Chateau Road is hereby adopted.

Adopted at the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting of the City Council on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2005 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jane Rodriguez, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michele Beal Bagneris, City Attorney

**DECLARATION OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION FOR:**

**1160 CHATEAU ROAD  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 17.62.070 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:

APN # 5708-023-002, Tract #21252, Lot 2, in the City of Pasadena, County of Los Angeles, State of California, 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 Historic Preservation Commission. The freestanding studio on this property is exempt from the landmark designation.

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

CITY OF PASADENA  
A municipal corporation

Jane Rodriguez, City Clerk

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Bogaard, Mayor







