

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: APRIL 6, 2009

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 60 EL CIRCULO DRIVE (THE KING RESIDENCE) AS A HISTORIC MONUMENT

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 under Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment (CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, §15308);
2. Find that the property (including main house with attached garage, pavilion, gazebo and site features) at 60 El Circulo Drive is significant under Criterion C for designation as a historic monument (P.M.C. §17.62.040 B) because they are exceptional examples of Contemporary residential architecture that are significant at the state-wide level and are important representations of the work of the local architectural firm of Buff & Hensman;
3. Approve the designation of the property at 60 El Circulo Drive as a historic monument;
4. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Historic Monument Designation for 60 El Circulo Drive, Pasadena, California;
5. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Historic Monument Designation for 60 El Circulo Drive, Pasadena, California; and
6. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

On March 2, 2009, at a noticed public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the designation of 60 El Circulo Drive as a historic monument under criterion C of PMC §17.62.040 A.

BACKGROUND

On January 19, 2009, property owners Richard and Carol King submitted an application for designation of 60 El Circulo Drive as a historic monument. The

staff determined that the house is eligible for designation and scheduled a public hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission for March 2, 2009.

DESCRIPTION

The 1.2-acre property is at the northeast corner of El Circulo Drive and Las Palmas Road, at the foot of the SR134 bridge over the Arroyo Seco. In contrast to Rapor, another of Buff & Hensman's works from this period which was recently designated as a historic monument, and which sits at the top of a hill with an extensive view, the setting of 60 El Circulo Drive is secluded, natural and rustic. The Arroyo Seco, which at this location is a small creek, flows along the rear and eastern side of the property, and the buildings on the site are developed within extensive landscaping and mature tree canopy coverage.

The property has three buildings: the main residence and garage were completed in 1979, a pavilion, which functions as a guest house and writing studio, were completed in the mid-1980's and a gazebo, designed by Donald Hensman, was completed in 1993. The buildings were built in an easterly progression on the site, with the main house at the westernmost end of the property and the gazebo at the northeast corner.

The buildings all have boxy, symmetric forms with flat roofs and utilize a minimal palette of materials including medium-dash stucco, redwood, teak, clear glass and art glass, quarry tile, boulders found on-site and pebble-aggregate paving. They have open plans and interior furnishings and built-ins designed by the architects, including handcrafted wood pieces by Conrad Buff.

A detailed architectural description of the property is attached (Attachment C)

Buff & Hensman, Architects.

Conrad Buff III (1926-1988) and Donald Hensman (1924-2002) formed the firm of Buff & Hensman in Pasadena in 1952. This collaboration, which lasted nearly 40 years between the two USC-trained architects, produced designs for numerous residential, commercial and institutional projects throughout Southern California. The firm's office was responsible for a total of 44 projects in Pasadena (three condominium projects, one office building—for the firm's offices—six remodels/additions, and 34 single-family residences).

The firm was heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and their reinterpretation of this tradition achieved its highest level of expression in the King Residence. According to the National Register nomination of five Buff & Hensman Houses, the firm in 1987 was issued the first "Gamble House Master Craftsman Award, which acknowledges 'contemporary artisans whose body of work in all areas of the arts represents the basic principles of the Arts and Crafts movement – the union of client, design, materials and craft.'"¹

¹ Lamprecht, Barbara & Daniel Paul. Cultural Resources of the Recent Past, City of Pasadena, 2009.

ANALYSIS

The property at 60 El Circulo Drive (“Rapor”) is eligible for historic monument designation under Criterion C, (§17.62.040 PMC):

(The property) is exceptional in the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or is an exceptional representation of the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is significant to the region, State or nation, or that possesses high artistic values that are of regional, statewide or national significance.

Under this criterion, the King Residence is significant as an intact and regionally significant example of the Contemporary residential style of Buff & Hensman. The building exhibits architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. In its original—and unique—location, it is an excellent and intact example of the high-style mature work of a distinguished architectural firm. The house expresses the influence of Modernism in its use of strong geometric forms, flat roofs and simple detailing. The subtle influence of traditional Japanese architecture is expressed in the use of wood, simplicity of form and integration of building with outdoor features. Craftsman influence is expressed in the rich use of wood on both the interior and exterior, earth-tone coloring, art-glass doors, Arroyo stone and high-level craftsmanship throughout.

Much of Buff & Hensman’s work from this period emphasizes symmetry, as does the King Residence. However, in this instance, the rustic setting and the landscape design work to soften this symmetry in response to the site. Upon first encountering the building, the easterly wing is hidden from view by plantings and is accessed by a narrow path of railroad ties, giving it the feeling of a more private space.

The King Residence exhibits the culmination of the firm’s craftsmanship, including site, landscape, building and furniture design. In addition, the house has furniture and hardware hand-crafted by Conrad Buff himself. This emphasis on “total architecture” was also seen earlier in the Prairie School and the Arts and Crafts movements, where architects strove to create holistic environments integrating buildings with their surroundings.

Also remarkable on this property is the progression of phased development over time, all designed by Buff & Hensman in response to the owners’ desire for “a sense of being hidden away in nature; a place more rustic and wild than refined and manicured...”² The master plan for the site was conceived at the outset of the design process and developed over a period of 14 years, first with the house in 1979, the pavilion and tennis court in the mid-1980’s and, finally, the gazebo in 1993 (designed by Hensman after Buff’s death). Although unusual for a structure

² Hensman, Donald, James Steele (ed.); Buff & Hensman; Architectural Guild Press, 2004.


built in 1993 to be recognized in a nomination for a historic monument, it is contributing because it was conceptually included in the original site design and ultimately designed by Donald Hensman in the same style and materials as the house and pavilion.

If designated, this property would be the third designated historic monument designed by Buff & Hensman. Nine other Buff & Hensman works are currently in the process of being listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

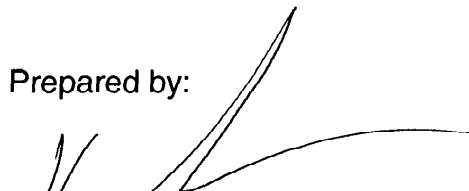
FISCAL IMPACT

Designation of this 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,


MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Prepared by:


Kevin Johnson, Acting Senior Planner

Approved by:


Richard Bruckner, Director of Planning & Development

- ATTACHMENT A: Application Form
- ATTACHMENT B: Excerpt from Buff & Hensman (Architectural Guild Press, 2004)
- ATTACHMENT C: Detailed Architectural Description of Property
- ATTACHMENT D: Photographs
- ATTACHMENT E: Effects of Historic Designation

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
ADOPTING A DECLARATION OF HISTORIC MONUMENT DESIGNATION
FOR 60 EL CIRCULO DRIVE, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission has found that 60 El Circulo Drive ("The King Residence") meets criterion C, as set forth in Section 17.62.040(B) of the Pasadena Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the property at 60 El Circulo Drive is significant because the property is architecturally intact, is exceptional in the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of Contemporary residential architecture and is an important representation of the work of the regionally significant architectural firm of Buff & Hensman;

WHEREAS, the application for Historic Monument designation is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15331;

WHEREAS, the owners of the property, Richard and Carol King, nominated the property for Historic Monument designation; and

WHEREAS, the City Council may approve a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission to designate a Historic Monument 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 Historic Monument designation for 60 El Circulo Drive ("The King Residence") is hereby adopted.

Adopted at the _____ meeting of the City Council on the _____ day of _____, 2009 by the following vote:

AYES:

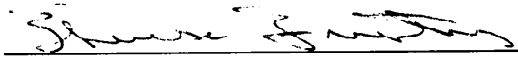
NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

MARK JOMSKY, CMC, City Clerk

Approved as to form:



Theresa E. Fuentes
Assistant City Attorney

DECLARATION OF HISTORIC MONUMENT DESIGNATION FOR:

**60 EL CIRCULO DRIVE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 17.62.050 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, the City Council of the City of Pasadena by this declaration hereby designates as a Historic Monument certain real property described as:

(See attached Exhibit "A")

Under Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.62.090, all work affecting designated Historic Monuments, 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.

DATED: _____

ATTEST:

CITY OF PASADENA
A municipal corporation

Mark Jomsky, City Clerk

By: _____
Bill Bogaard, Mayor

EXHIBIT A

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF REAL PROPERTY
AT 60 EL CIRCULO DRIVE, PASADENA CALIFORNIA

LOTS 17 AND 18 OF TRACT NO. 8601, IN THE CITY OF PASADENA, IN THE
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AS PER MAP
RECORDED IN BOOK 116 PAGE 43 OF MAPS, IN THE OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY RECORDER OF SAID COUNTY.

EXCEPT THEREFROM THAT PORTION OF SAID LAND, LYING SOUTHERLY
OF THE NORTHERLY LINE OF THE LAND, DESCRIBED IN THE DEED TO
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, RECORDER ON APRIL 10, 1969, AS
INSTRUMENT NO. 358 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS IN THE OFFICE OF SAID
COUNTY RECORDER.