

Agenda Report

April 12, 2010

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Development Department

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 1661 LAS LUNAS STREET AS A LANDMARK

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 (CEQA Guidelines §15308: Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Find that the property at 1661 Las Lunas Street is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.52.40) because it is an locally significant example of the vernacular Chalet subtype of the California Arts and Crafts architectural style of the early twentieth century and retains a high level of integrity;
3. Approve the designation of the property at 1661 Las Lunas Street as a landmark;
4. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1661 Las Lunas Street, Pasadena, California;
5. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1661 Las Lunas Street, Pasadena, California; and
6. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On Tuesday, February 15, 2010, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 1661 Las Lunas Street as a landmark under criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.

BACKGROUND:

On November 30, 2009, the property owners Richard and Erin Buen submitted an application for designation of 1661 Las Lunas Street as a landmark. The staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the Pasadena Municipal Code and determined that the house qualifies for designation.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The General Plan – Objective 6: Promote preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings and revitalization of traditional neighborhoods and commercial areas.

DESCRIPTION:

Built in 1910, this two-story, 2,432 square-foot house is on the north side of Las Lunas Street, between N. Sierra Bonita Avenue and Sinaloa Avenue, on a slightly sloping 9,000 square foot interior lot. It is roughly rectangular in plan with a front porch and wide front-gable roof. A detached two-car garage is at the rear near the northwest corner of the property. This house was one of several in Pasadena constructed by builder Francis (Frank) E. Crawford. There is no known architect for the design of the house.

The house exhibits distinguishing features of the Arts and Crafts period architecture. It has a low-pitched front gable roof with wide overhanging eaves. A front porch extends from the front door to the driveway on the west side. The original concrete surface and red-brick foundation to the front porch remain. An “L”-shape balcony covers this front porch and extends over the driveway, forming a porte-cochere that extends back along part of the west side elevation. The balcony is supported by pairs of posts that support a cross-beam which extends across the front of the porch and porte-cochere. Joists supporting the deck extend from the house above and beyond the beams. The wood balcony railing consists of square posts connected by top and bottom rails and vertical wooden slats. The gables have lattice vents, and the siding consists of wood shingles. A red-brick chimney is on the east side elevation. Fenestration consists of groups of transomed casement windows. The flat-profile front door has a medium-sized oval glass panel.

There have been some minor alterations to the house. The original foundation was replaced with a concrete foundation.

The low brick retaining wall with concrete cap and concrete steps that is adjacent to the sidewalk is an original contributing site feature. The two-story garage at the rear was built in 1985 and is not a contributing feature. The wood fence and gate behind the porte-cochere appears to have been built at the time of the garage and is not a contributing feature.

ANALYSIS:

The property at 1661 Las Lunas Street is eligible for landmark designation under Criterion “C”, (§17.62.040 PMC):

(The property) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period, architectural style 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 that

possesses high artistic values that are significant to the City or to the region.

Under this criterion, 1661 Las Lunas Street is significant as an excellent example of Arts and Crafts style architecture (vernacular Chalet subtype). In Pasadena there are examples of Arts and Crafts houses of the “high-style” Chalet subtype, notably at 572 Prospect Boulevard (1906), 365 West Bellevue Drive (1906), 405 Mira Vista Terrace (1911), and 373 Mira Vista Terrace (1916). These high-style houses were designed to recreate features of Swiss chalets such as tapering stacked brackets of carved wood at the eaves, flat cut-out balcony pickets, and a partial third story. However, the term “Chalet” was also used for two-story Arts and Crafts houses that generally followed the chalet form. Typical characteristics of these chalets include stained wood shingles or siding, wide overhanging eaves, a broad, sweeping front-facing gable roof, wide front porch, and a second-story balcony with wooden slats or flat cut-out pickets. Chalet-style examples of Greene and Greene-designed houses in Pasadena include the Louise Bentz House (1905-1906) and the John Bakewell Phillips House (1906). References to chalets can also be found in the house catalogs and pattern books of the Arts and Crafts period, in which the chalet archetype was consciously invoked.¹

The house at 1661 Las Lunas Street has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its design, materials, and workmanship. The stained wood-shingle siding, the wide overhanging eaves, the broad sweeping front-facing gable roof, the broad second-story balcony with vertical wood slat railings, as well as the joined trim boards at the bottom of the second story indicate the vernacular Chalet subtype. These features, the joined front balcony crossbeams, and groupings of transomed windows are design elements that embody the philosophy and practice of the Arts and Crafts movement. The house exhibits the character-defining features of the vernacular Chalet subtype and retains nearly all of its original materials. Alterations to the house are minor.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

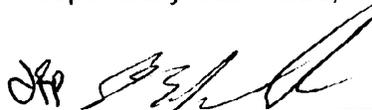
Class 8 exemptions consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment.

¹ Bruno Giberti. “The Chalet as Archetype: The Bungalow, the Picturesque Tradition and Vernacular Form” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 3.1 (1991): 54-64.

FISCAL IMPACT:

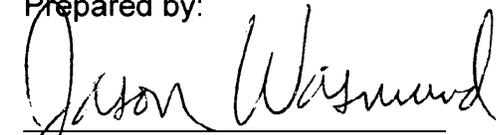
Designation of this property does not affect revenues to the City. In some instances, though, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,

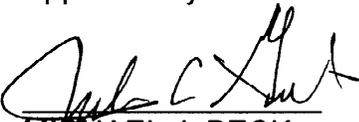


STEVE MERMELL
Assistant City Manager

Prepared by:


Jason Wasmund
Assistant Planner

Approved by:


MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Map and Site Plan
- Attachment B – Photograph