

Agenda Report

August 31, 2015

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 999 SOUTH SAN RAFAEL AVENUE 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 house at 999 South San Rafael Avenue is significant under Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is a locally significant, intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed by Elmer Grey;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 999 South San Rafael Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 999 South San Rafael Avenue, 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 June 16, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house at 999 South San Rafael Avenue as a landmark under Criterion "C" of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 999 South San Rafael Avenue qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion “C” because it is a locally significant, intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed by Elmer Grey.

BACKGROUND:

On April 13, 2015 property owner Michael Dooling submitted an application for designation of the property as a landmark. The staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the building qualifies for designation as a landmark.

Property Data

- Historic Name: None
- Address: 999 South San Rafael Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105
- Location: West side of South San Rafael Avenue between Hillside Terrace and Laguna Road
- Date of Construction: 1912 (source: County Assessor)
- Original Owner: Clifford W. Barnes (source: November 14, 1912 issue of Los Angeles Builder and Contractor cited in Pasadena Houses of the Craftsman Era by John Ripley)
- Architect: Elmer Grey (source: November 14, 1912 issue of Los Angeles Builder and Contractor cited in Pasadena Houses of the Craftsman Era by John Ripley.)
- Original/Present Use: Single Family Residence
- Property Size: 1.64 acres (source: County Assessor)
- Building Size: 6,689 square feet (source: County Assessor)

The Site

The property is a hilly lot and includes the two-story house at roughly the center and a recently constructed detached garage northwest of it. The remainder of the site consists of lawn and other landscape and hardscape features with a lap pool and two small accessory structures south of the house. A long, tree-lined curving driveway provides access to the house from South San Rafael Avenue; the rear of the house is visible from the street further south from the driveway access point.

Exterior Features of the Building

The house has a roughly L-shaped plan and a primary cross-gabled roof with projecting two-story volumes, also with gabled roofs. Most of the gables are clipped at the peak and the entire roof is sheathed in composition shingles. Exterior walls are coated in heavy-dash coat stucco on the first floor and wood shingles on the second floor and the house has groupings of wood casement windows with divided lights. The house has

two rear porches with shallowly arched headers cut into the first floor at the northeast and southwest corners of the house. The window openings of the second floor above the porches have a corresponding shallowly arched configuration. Architectural details include exposed beams and rafters, brackets, decorative barge boards and an articulated stucco wall chimney. The unclipped gables have finials at the peak.

Garage & Site Features

A new detached three-car garage with design features matching the house was built on the property, northwest of the house, in 2003. A lap pool was built southeast of the house in 2010. Two small accessory structures, a studio and a shed, are south of the house. These structures have gabled roofs with extended eaves and exposed rafters and walls of horizontal tongue-and-groove siding with vertical battens. The construction date of these structures is unknown; neither is shown on Sanborn Maps or permit records. The surrounding landscaping consists of a number of mature trees, lawn and native shrubs. Portions of the site are terraced with Arroyo stone retaining walls and steps, and broken concrete and decomposed granite pathways. Some of the stone work may be original to the site; however, it is difficult to discern which features may be original and which may be newer. The driveway entrance is marked by two freestanding battered Arroyo stone pilasters with concrete caps and Craftsman-style lanterns. The concrete caps have the words “Oak Ridge” carved into the sides facing the street. An arched metal gate has been added between the pilasters.

Documented Changes to the Property

As indicated above, the garage and lap pool are modern features of the property. Significant site work has also been undertaken, including installation of rock walls, pathways and conversion of lawn to drought-tolerant landscaping. Scarring at the perimeter of the rear porches indicates that there was once a railing or balustrade along the edges. Pieces of cast stone salvaged on the property appear to be remnants of the former balustrade. The applicant has submitted photographs of Grey’s own house at 1372 S. El Molino Avenue (1910), which has an intact balustrade that is likely the same as what once existed on this house.

Current Condition, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is intact and in good condition, although showing some localized signs of deterioration and wear. The owner has submitted an application for Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) to assist with rehabilitation work that is needed on the house, including a request for a special exception to the \$1.5 million valuation cap based on the owner’s intent to restore the balustrades on the house, a project estimated to cost \$30,000.

Historical Overview

The Arts and Crafts Period

The Arts & Crafts movement began in England around the year 1860 as a response to industrialization and mass production of goods. Its focus was one of promoting manual craftsmanship rather than machine production, which was believed to result in a harmonious society where producers and consumers could take pride in their work and, thereby, enhance their lives. Works were simple and designed to show evidence of construction methods. William Morris is widely cited as being the movement's primary proponent in England, with his Red House being one of the earliest pieces of English Arts & Crafts architecture. The movement included many other forms of craft including printmaking, decorative objects, wallpaper, textiles, furniture and stained glass.

In America, Elbert Hubbard and Gustav Stickley, who both organized Arts & Crafts guilds, were the movement's primary proponents. Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman* was influential in spreading the ideals of the movement throughout the country. The American Arts & Crafts architectural movement was centered in three primary locations: Oak Park, Illinois; Berkeley and Pasadena, each drawing on local materials. In Pasadena, the primary architectural tenet of the movement was to enhance the connection between house and landscape. This was achieved through large roofed front porches, use of wood exterior cladding materials and other locally available materials such as stones from the Arroyo Seco, elimination of ornament, and planning of the house around natural features of the site (contours, trees, etc.). Architectural details were frequently handcrafted by local artisans.

The two-story Arts and Crafts period house has the following character-defining features, as described in "Residential Architecture in Pasadena 1895-1918: Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement" (1998):

- Rectangular or complex plan
- Larger than one- or one-and-one-half-story bungalow
- Horizontal lines
- Low-pitched gabled roofs with wood or composition shingles
- Wide eaves with exposed rafters
- Sometimes shed or gabled dormers
- Full-width front porches, sometimes limited to entry area only, supported by battered or straight-sided stone or wood piers
- Foundations, chimneys and retaining walls of Arroyo stone

Elmer Grey (1871-1963)

Elmer Grey was born in Chicago, Illinois and was not formally trained as an architect. He apprenticed at the Milwaukee, Wisconsin firms of Arthur C. Clas and Ferry & Clas and traveled extensively before starting his own architectural practice in 1898. He won his first architectural award at the age of 18. After suffering nervous breakdown, he

withdrew from architectural practice and moved to California. Upon regaining his mental health, he returned to architecture and partnered with prominent architect Myron Hunt from 1904 through 1910. Together, Hunt & Grey designed several prominent buildings in the area including the Huntington Estate, Polytechnic School and Gartz Court. Grey is best known for designing the Pasadena Playhouse in 1925 in addition to Throop Hall at CalTech. He was also a successful artist and writer.

Dr. Clifford Webster Barnes (1864-1944)

Dr. Clifford W. Barnes was a prominent Chicago leader who purchased the property for his parents and two sisters. He was a well-known national figure who “was described by biographers as an ‘educator, philanthropist, sociologist, civic leader, crime nemesis, clergyman, peace advocate, and Red Cross worker.’” See the “Building Biography” by Tim Gregory, included in Attachment A, for more information about Barnes. This document also indicates that “there is no reason to believe that Dr. Barnes ever lived in the house himself.”

ANALYSIS:

The house at 999 South San Rafael Avenue is eligible for landmark 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.

Under Criterion C, the Barnes House is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed by Elmer Grey. The registration requirements in the City’s 1998 study of the Arts & Crafts period state:

Since there are many Arts and Crafts period dwellings in Pasadena, to qualify [for designation] under criterion c, the eligible property must exemplify the values of design, craftsmanship, and materials which embody the philosophy and practice of the Arts and Crafts movement. The property should comprise the distinguishing features of the associated property type which includes the...California Arts & Crafts Period House...They must also have a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship and setting.

The house is a strong example of a two-story Arts & Crafts period house. It embodies all of the values of the movement and has all of the distinguishing features of the property type, as cited in the Historical Overview of the Arts & Crafts period beginning

on page four of this report. Influence of the English Arts & Crafts movement is evident in the detailing of the house, including the clipped gables, finials, barge boards and chimney. It has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building is in its original location.
- Design: The building retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above.
- Setting: The setting of the property has changed since its original construction. The configuration of lots in the vicinity, including the subject property, has changed considerably since the original subdivision and development of the property. The property continues to retain evidence of its original size and configuration.
- Materials: The building retains virtually all of the original materials used in its construction.
- Workmanship: The building demonstrates the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement and the craft of the architectural practitioner, Elmer Grey.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of Arts & Crafts period architecture, as detailed above.

Integrity of association does not apply to the house because it is not associated with a significant event or the life of a significant person. Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under criterion C.

As a work of Elmer Grey, the house is distinct in its representation of Grey's Arts & Crafts period work following dissolution of his partnership with Myron Hunt. The English Arts & Crafts detailing reflects the influence of Grey's world travels. As his career progressed, Grey would become a proponent of architecture that referenced Southern California's regional history, a thesis that was successfully realized in his design for the Pasadena Playhouse.

Contributing structures to this designation include the main house and entry pilasters. It is likely that some stonework in the garden area is original to the site; however, new stonework has obscured the original features from being precisely defined. The large, open setting and mature trees contribute to the feeling of the original setting of the house. The garage, studio and shed are non-contributing due to recent construction (garage) and indeterminate construction date and lack of architectural significance (studio and shed).

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

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

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:

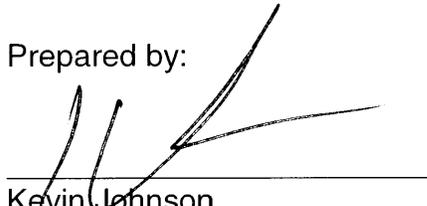
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted 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,



VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



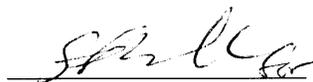
Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Concurred by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments (4):

- A. Application (Including "Building Biography" by Tim Gregory)
- B. Historical Documentation
- C. Current Photographs
- D. Effects of Historic Designation