

Agenda Report

March 14, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 1587 NORTH LOS ROBLES 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 Section 15308: Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Find that the house at 1587 North Los Robles Avenue meets landmark designation Criterion C in Pasadena Municipal Code (P.M.C) Section 17.62.040(C)(2)(c) because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period as well as the work of a locally significant architect. The building is a locally significant, intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed by David M. Renton and retains integrity.
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1587 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1587 North Los Robles Avenue, 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 January 19, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house at 1587 North Los Robles Avenue as a Landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 1587 North Los Robles Avenue qualifies for designation as a Landmark under Criterion C because it is an intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed and built by D.M. Renton and retains integrity.

BACKGROUND:

On November 16, 2015 property owners William and Mary Doran 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

- Address: 1587 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91104
- Location: West side of North Los Robles Avenue, between Elizabeth Street and Howard Street.
- Date of Construction: 1912 (source: City of Pasadena)
- Original Owner: Alfred Hartford (source: Pasadena Houses of the Craftsman Era by John Ripley)
- Architect: David M. Renton (source: Pasadena Houses of the Craftsman Era by John Ripley.)
- Original/Present Use: Single Family Residence
- Property Size: 13,576 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building Size: 2,326 square feet (source: County Assessor)

Site Features

The 13,576 square-foot flat lot contains a two-story house and two detached accessory buildings, including a garage behind the main dwelling. The house is deeply set back from North Los Robles Avenue, with a large lawn facing the street. The remainder of the site consists of additional lawn areas and other landscape and hardscape. A walkway on the south side of the property leads to the front porch and a long driveway on the north side of the property leads from North Los Robles Avenue to the garage at the northwest of the main dwelling. The driveway appears to have originally been a "Hollywood" style driveway, but has since been filled in. A low Arroyo stone retaining wall borders the front yard along the sidewalk.

Main House Features

The two-story side-gabled Arts and Crafts period house with wood shingles features a $\frac{3}{4}$ -width, wrap-around gabled covered front porch. The front porch is off-center towards the north and features wide vertical venting and wide slat railings. The front porch also

has two piers coated in stucco, which support the porch roof. The oak front door has a fixed, rectangular pane and a large picture window is to the right of the front door. A prominent gabled front-facing dormer on the second floor is above the front door, centered on the main roof. The front dormer has a grouping of four casement windows within a shallow trapezoidal opening. The end windows are divided into four lights. Under the eaves of second story dormer are paired beam ends, which, according to the City of Pasadena 1984 Los Robles Corridor architectural and historical inventory, are a particular trademark of contractor David M. Renton. The dormer and gables also have extended purlins. The side-gables have exposed beams and casement windows with wide board trim. The house is clad in wood shingles, currently painted dark green.

Garage & Site Features

There are two accessory buildings on the property, including the original garage built in 1912 and a newer four-car garage constructed in 1945. The two structures are built in similar styles to the main dwelling. The original garage was moved to its current location and rehabilitated by the current owners.

Documented Changes to the Property

The house itself appears to be relatively intact. There are no permits in the city records for major changes to the exterior of the building aside from a chimney retrofit in 2007. A rear service porch may have been enclosed. No other changes are visibly evident.

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 been informed about the Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) program, which might be able to assist with future rehabilitation work that may be needed on the house.

Historical Overview

History of the Neighborhood & Site

Los Robles Avenue is a North-South residential street. It is lined with houses from the Victorian, Arts & Crafts and Period Revival eras. North of East Washington Boulevard, most of Los Robles Avenue is zoned for single-family residential land uses. The street is lined with mature trees consisting of camphor, oak, and some windmill palms. The street slopes up in elevation as it heads toward the north, which accounts for the numerous arroyo stone and concrete retaining walls. The street is lined with vintage cast-iron lamp posts that date from the 1920's. The Los Robles corridor is notable as an intact example of an early 20th Century neighborhood in Pasadena. It features large houses with generous setbacks, and lush landscaping. The corridor was part of the 1882 Painter and Ball Tract and was annexed to the city in 1906 as part of the North Pasadena Annexation. Most of the houses were built between 1900 and 1930. The street developed with large substantial houses because it was a main thoroughfare from

the downtown to Altadena. Early residents of North Los Robles Avenue included shopkeepers, businessmen, restaurant owners, and contractors. In addition to David M. Renton, several other notable architects and builders, such as Sylvanus Marston and Harold Martin, designed and built homes along North Los Robles Avenue.

D.M. Renton

David M. Renton was the General Manager of the Santa Catalina Island Company, owned by William Wrigley, from 1920 until 1936, and had significant influence on Catalina Island's development. In his early career he was a prominent Pasadena building contractor. He arrived in Pasadena in 1902, when the Pasadena interpretation of the Arts and Crafts architecture was just begging to emerge from the works of architects such as Frederick Roehrig and Greene & Greene. His early contracting work included work for both of these firms. He built at least seven homes for Greene & Greene, including 530 West California Boulevard, 210 North Grand Avenue and 1188 Hillcrest Avenue. Like many other contractors he absorbed the forms and details that were making Pasadena famous as a center of West Coast architecture. By 1909 he was producing designs of his own that blended these influences in an individual way. Among others, David M. Renton designed and built numerous houses in the Orange Heights Neighborhood, which borders Los Robles Avenue on the east, near Mountain Street. He also built two other homes at 1232 and 1311 North Los Robles Avenue.

Alfred Hartford

Little is known about the first owner of the house at 1587 North Los Robles Avenue, Alfred Hartford. Mr. Hartford occupied the house for two years before selling it. During that time, he operated a grocery store at 304 Franklin Avenue.

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

- Irregularly shaped plan
- Larger than one- or one-and-one-half-story bungalow
- Horizontal lines
- Low-pitched gabled roofs with wood or composition shingles
- Walls are covered with over-all wooden shingles. Wide eaves with exposed rafters
- Large single-gable or shed dormers may break the street oriented roof plane.
- Full-width front porches, sometimes limited to entry area only, supported by battered or straight-sided stone or wooden columns or piers
- Entrance porch may be recessed or may project from the dwelling
- Foundations, chimneys and retaining walls of Arroyo stone
- Painted or stained brown or dark green.

ANALYSIS:

The house at 1587 North Los Robles Avenue is eligible for Landmark designation under Criterion C, (PMC 17.62.040(C)(2)(c)), 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 1587 North Los Robles Avenue is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type, designed and built by D.M. Renton. 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 Arts & Crafts movement is evident in the detailing of the house, including the wood-shingle exterior cladding, large wrap-around front porch and second story dormer. 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 has changed somewhat since the original subdivision and development of the property. The property retains 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 builder, David M. Renton.
- 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 David M. Renton, the house is distinct in its representation of Renton's other work in Pasadena. The Arts & Crafts detailing reflects the influence of Renton's collaboration with other regionally significant architects such as Frederick Roehrig and Greene & Greene.

Contributing structures to this designation include the main house, original garage and Arroyo stone retaining wall at the street edge. The comparatively large lot and deep setback contribute to the feeling of the original setting of the house. The four-car garage is non-contributing due to its more recent construction (1945) and lack of architectural significance.

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.

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 and acknowledged that 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,



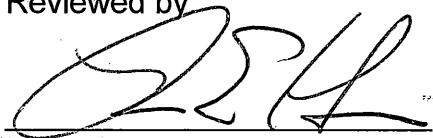
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Attachments (4):

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