

# Agenda Report

September 26, 2016

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department  
**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 1211 WELLINGTON 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 property at 1211 Wellington Avenue meets Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.040) because it is a locally significant example of a Neoclassical style house and retains integrity;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1211 Wellington Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1211 Wellington 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 21, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 1211 Wellington Avenue as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Pegfair estate is a distinctive example of Neoclassical architecture in Pasadena and retains its most significant character-defining features. Therefore, the property at 1211 Wellington Avenue qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion "C" as a locally significant example of Neoclassical architecture.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On April 21, 2016, Wen Hua Sun, the property owner, submitted an application for landmark designation of the property. The staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the structure qualifies for landmark designation.

### Property Data

- Historical Name: Pegfair
- Address: 1211 Wellington Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103
- Location: West side of Wellington Avenue between Wicks Road and Afton Street
- Date of Construction: 1930 (documented by building permit)
- Original Architect: John P. Pedersen
- Original / Present Use: Single family residence
- Original / Present Owner: Robert J. & Arabella G. Richards / Wen Hua Sun
- Lot size: 230,115 square feet (5.28 acres)
- Building size: 8,407 square feet

### Setting & Site Description

The site is a rectangular 5.28 acre lot, 500 feet in width and 455 feet in depth, in a hillside residential neighborhood. The property, at the west side of Wellington Avenue, is bounded by Wicks Road on the north side, Afton Street on the south side, and residential properties on the west side. The property slopes upward from the street on all three street sides. The house is at the center of the property, at the crest of a hill. A gate at Wellington Avenue provides access to the property via a driveway that circles north of the house and terminates at a central circular turnaround, west of the house. West of the turnaround is the original four-car garage, with apartment above, set in to the hillside.

### Building Features

Built in 1930, this two-story Neoclassical style house has a T-shaped plan. It has a gabled composition shingle roof, boxed eaves with moderate overhangs, and a modillioned cornice. The gable ends have quarter-circular and semi-circular fan vents. The exterior walls and chimneys are coated with concrete plaster. A two-story front

porch, attached to the north front elevation, terminates at the inside corner of the "T." The porch is sheltered by a shed roof supported by round unfluted Doric columns with square capitals and bases. A solid wood front door, beneath a flat pediment and transom, and flanked by sidelights, is at the end of the front porch. A secondary exterior door within an inset paneled entry is centered at the north front elevation. The east elevation consists of a patio terminating at a single story addition at the south end, below a balcony with decorative wrought iron railing that runs the length of the elevation. A flat-roofed porch, supported by Doric columns and accessed by a pair of French doors, is at the south end of the house. Windows are primarily individual double-hung sashes (six-light over one-light or four-light over one-light) with shutters, but also include arched openings, Palladian windows (including the west-facing front elevation), transomed windows, and French doors on the first floor.

### Accessory Structures & Site Features

An original four-car garage, with apartment above, was built at the time of the house. It has features that reference the house, including double-hung windows, an arched opening, and side gabled roof with fan vents. It also has a trellis supported by Doric columns in the front. This garage is a contributing feature of the property.

A board form concrete retaining wall topped by a hedge runs along the street property lines. A wrought iron gate, which provides access to the property via a concrete driveway, is attached to a pair of board form concrete pilasters, topped by lamps. These are original contributing features of the property.

A large carved wood "Pegfair" sign, hanging by chains from a wood trellis, faces the "T" intersection of Wellington Avenue and Afton Street. It was installed after 1939 by the second owners, Wesley & Margaret Dumm. The sign gave the property its present historical name.

A 1941 swimming pool with pool house, presently drained and in poor repair, is southwest of the house, down the hill. At the southwest corner of the property is a concrete tennis court with chain link fencing built in 1954. These features are not original and do not contribute to the architectural significance of the property.

A new swimming pool and deck, built on caissons, is at the south side of the house. To the east of the pool is a pool house, gym, and covered patio.

A central circular turnaround of pebble textured concrete, which is recent, is located between the house and the garage. Above and west of the turnaround is a terraced picnic area with an iron railing and a retaining wall of Arroyo stones and an additional retaining wall of other types of stones. The Arroyo stone retaining wall may be an early feature but other walls appear more recent. These features do not contribute to the architectural significance of the property.

### Documented Changes to the Property

City records indicate that a swimming pool and pool house were built in 1941. In 1954, a concrete tennis court with chain link fencing was built. In 2009, permits were issued for a single-story addition of a family room/kitchen with deck above, the addition of 132 square feet of new deck, and replacement of an existing non-original deck at the east side of the house, with work also including the addition of at least one new opening. In 2009, permits were also issued for the removal of the shingle roof, and installation of composition shingles and photovoltaic arrays. In 2011, a permit was issued for a new swimming pool at the south side of the house. In 2012, permits were issued for a pool house, gym, and covered patio adjacent to the new pool. In 2013, permits were issued for a block wall enclosure for electrical panels, and in 2014, permits were issued for a water well.

Other changes, not traced to specific permits, include the installation of the “Pegfair” sign after 1939, the recent construction of a central circular turnaround, the early and more recent construction of retaining walls south of the garage, the alteration of the front door (replacement of the half-light front door with a solid door and the addition of a flat triangular pediment), the replacement of the south elevation porch roof and columns, the addition of hanging lighting at the front porch, and the addition of gray tiles to the porches.

### Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property, used as a single family residence, with the exception of a few deteriorating shutters, appears to be in good condition. In an application submitted on June 6, 2016, the owner is proposing to build a 1,825 square foot two-story addition to the secondary west elevation at the south side of the house. The proposed addition will not significantly diminish the integrity of the house because it will be added to a secondary elevation and is compatible with the house.

### Historical Overview

#### *The Neoclassical Style*

The Neoclassical style was common in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, but rare in Pasadena. The identifying features of the style are an imposing scale, a “full height porch with roof supported by classical columns; columns typically have Ionic or Corinthian capitals; façade shows symmetrically balanced windows and center door.” (A Field Guide to American Houses, Virginia & Lee McAlester, p.343.) Other typical features include an elaborate and/or pedimented front door, double-hung windows, boxed eave with moderate overhang or cornice with dentils or modillions, and arched or Palladian windows. Examples from the first phase of popularity from 1900-1920 typically had hipped roofs and elaborate columns with correct (usually prefabricated) capitals. Inspired by Mount Vernon, the full-façade porch subtype was

prevalent from 1925 through the 1950s, in which the colonnaded porch “occupies the full width and height of the façade.” In this subtype, the porch is covered by a hipped or side-gabled roof, or by a shed extension from the roof. These later examples usually have slender, usually square, columns with very simple capitals. In Pasadena, examples of the Neoclassical style may have an asymmetrical front elevation, and a stucco or wood sided exterior.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The property at 1211 Wellington Avenue is eligible for 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 this criterion, the Pegfair estate is significant as a distinctive example of a Neoclassical style house. The house has a high level of integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The house in its original location.
- Setting: The hilltop estate setting is intact.
- Design: The house retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above. The design of the house includes the character-defining features of the Neoclassical style, including the full height front porch with round unfluted Doric columns, double-hung windows, front door sidelights and transom, boxed eaves with modillioned cornice, and a prominent Palladian window.
- Materials: The property retains the original materials used in its construction, notably the original Doric columns, windows, French doors, fan vents, shutters, and cornice.
- Workmanship: The property’s workmanship is evident in the Doric columns, modillioned eave cornice, fan vents, secondary front door, wrought iron front gate, and the front door transoms and sidelights.
- Association: The house is associated with original owners, Robert & Arabella Richards, and the second owners, Wesley & Margaret Dumm, who gave the property its present name, “Pegfair.”

- Feeling: The property expresses the characteristics of a Neoclassical hilltop estate.

The house retains all of its original character-defining features. Exterior alterations to the house, including an east elevation patio, balcony, openings, and addition, wrought iron railings, photovoltaic panels, composition shingle roof, new front door and pediment, new lighting fixtures, and gray porch tiles, are compatible with the original structure.

#### **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The General Plan – GOAL 8. Historic Preservation. 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.

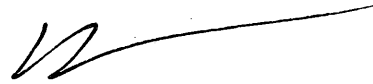
#### **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

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. 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,



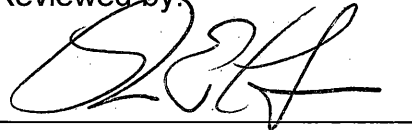
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Attachments: (4)

- Attachment A – Vicinity Map
- Attachment B – Application Materials
- Attachment C – Photographs
- Attachment D – Effects of Landmark Designation