

Agenda Report

October 2, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 1500 NORMANDY DRIVE AS A HISTORIC MONUMENT

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 Clark Blanchard Millikan House at 1500 Normandy Drive meets Historic Monument designation Criteria B and C in P.M.C. §17.62.040(B)(1)(b) and (c) because it is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation; is exceptional in the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period and architectural style and is an exceptional representation of the work of an architect whose work is significant to the nation. The house is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Spanish Colonial Revival single-family residence designed by nationally significant architect Wallace Neff and is associated with the productive life of Clark Blanchard Millikan, a nationally significant figure in the field of aerospace research and development;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Historic Monument Designation for 1500 Normandy Drive, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Historic Monument Designation for 1500 Normandy Drive, 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 August 15, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 1500 Normandy Drive as a Historic Monument under Criteria B and C of PMC §17.62.040.B.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 1500 Normandy Drive qualifies for designation as a Historic Monument because it is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Spanish Colonial Revival single-family residence designed by nationally significant architect Wallace Neff and is associated with the productive life of Clark Blanchard Millikan, a nationally significant figure in the field of aerospace research and development.

BACKGROUND:

On April 11, 2017 property owners Ken Shaw and Stacy Gamble submitted an application for designation of the property as a historic monument. 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 historic monument.

Property Data

- Address: 1500 Normandy Drive, Pasadena, CA 91103
- Location: right side of Normandy Drive, on a hill top above Linda Vista Avenue.
- Date of Construction: 1932 (source: County Assessor)
- Original Owner: Clark Blanchard Millikan (source: building permit)
- Architect: Wallace Neff (source: building permit, Huntington Library collections – architectural drawings)
- Original/Present Use: Single Family Residence
- Property Size: 93,851 square feet / 2.15 acres (source: County Assessor)
- Building Size: 9,101 square feet (source: 2002 approval letter for 359-square-foot addition)

The Site (Existing Conditions)

The property is a hillside lot in the Linda Vista neighborhood and includes the two-story house with an attached garage and a swimming pool to the west of the house. The large, roughly square plan residence with central courtyard has been called “Mexican” in style for its use of courtyards and representation of the feeling of a traditional hacienda. The layout of the house follows the surface of the hill, so that many rooms are half story above or below adjoining ones. The remainder of the site consists of landscape and hardscape features with a portion of the lot being natural hillside. The original landscape was reportedly designed by famed landscape architect Florence Yoch, although definitive documentation of this has not been discovered.

Exterior Features of the Building

Character-defining features of the residence include its plan orientation embracing site topography and outdoor courtyards and patios/terraces, exterior stucco walls, clay tile roof, widespread use of Spanish style detailing including wood beamed ceilings, chimneys capped with both single and double bishops shrouds, “rake” eaves, rojas (turned wood grills) in front of the window, wood-casement windows, and original tiled floors and exterior paving. The central open courtyard anchors the residence, with enclosed spaces organized around the courtyard.

The house has an irregular plan which generally forms a U-shape with a west-east orientation, covered main entry to the central courtyard and projecting wings at either end. Along three sides of the central courtyard is a shed-roofed covered arcade supported by wood posts with corbels and covered in terra cotta barrel tiles. The northerly wing accommodates an attached garage and the southerly wing is prolonged with a guest bedroom added by Neff seven years after the house was finished and leads to the swimming pool (added in 1980). The formal rooms of the house all face east to consider the pass of the sun and the direction of the wind.

The house has gabled roofs covered in terra cotta barrel tiles; the wall enclosing the western edge at the entry to the main courtyard has a shallow arch at the top. A small area at the northeast corner of the house has a flat roof with a castellated parapet. A large rectangular opening, currently with wrought iron gates and recently restored wooden shutters, provides access to the main courtyard; adjacent to this is a smaller arched opening with a canted base within which a Mission-style iron bell hangs from a wooden beam. Historically, the entry opening had a pair of wood shutters and two projecting wood shelves for potted plants.

Exterior walls of the house are coated in sand-finish stucco; historical photographs appear to depict a more rustic Santa Barbara-style stucco finish. The courtyard area is paved with rustic terra cotta tiles and has an eight-pointed tile fountain at its center. A pair of glazed doors lead into the house to a gallery; opposite the entry are two glazed doors in the living room that allow for immediate views to an open semi-circular porch and hills beyond. All of the glazed doors are doubled by dark wood-paneled doors of a geometric design with secret panels for ventilation. The house has wood-framed fixed and casement windows and French doors with divided lights in rectangular openings and deep recesses in a balanced asymmetrical fenestration pattern. An exterior stair provides access to the south side yard area; at the southwest corner of the house is a unique gabled dovecote feature.

Interior Features of the Building

Significant semi-public interior spaces that are proposed to be included in this designation are the Entry Hall, Living Room, Dining Room and Office. Interior spaces

are characterized by high exposed wood-beamed ceilings, smooth plaster walls, and fireplaces.

The house has original fixtures and high-quality finishes on the interior. The primary semi-public rooms of the house listed above have the highest quality design features and the owner proposes to include these rooms in the historic monument designation. The flooring in the entry hall, living room and dining room is a continuation of the outdoor terra cotta tiles. The stairs leading from the entry hall to the living room has terra cotta tile treads and hand painted tiles on the risers. The living room has dark-wood built-in cabinetry and shelving. There is a stucco fireplace with glazed brick base in the living room and a conical corner fireplace in the office.

Documented Changes to the Property

The most significant documented changes since the earliest phase of construction are:

- Addition of a bedroom and bathroom (1937, designed by Wallace Neff)
- Subdivision of the lot into three separate lots (1964 – see documentation in Attachment B)
- Addition of a swimming pool to the west of the residence (1980).
- Remodel kitchen and convert a service porch into a family room (1987).
- Enclosure of the covered terrace on the south east corner of the house and addition of den to rear of garage (2002)

Other observed alterations, based on comparison of original and historical photographs, include removal of two wood shelves at the main courtyard entry and replacement of a formerly wood balcony railing with a metal railing.

Current Condition, Use, and Proposed Plans

The historic integrity of the Clark Blanchard Millikan House is largely intact, with the house amply able to convey its historic significance. There are some localized signs of deterioration, wear and water damage. The owner has submitted an application for Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) to assist with rehabilitation work that is needed on the house, including re-opening the terrace that was enclosed in 2002 and restoration of the wood balcony railing mentioned above.

Historical Overview

Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture

Spanish Colonial architecture in California originated with the construction of the Spanish missions along El Camino Real in the 18th century, beginning with San Diego de Alcalá in 1769.

The 20th century revival of Spanish Colonial architecture is generally attributed to the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego, the principal architect of which was Bertram Goodhue. The 2004 historic context report, “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942” (Teresa Grimes & Mary Jo Winder) states:

The Panama-California Exposition helped to promulgate Spanish architecture as the appropriate California tradition, and soon Spanish forms were adopted as the leitmotif for building types and whole urban districts to which the style had not been previously applied.

This report also indicates that, rather than interpreting Spanish Colonial buildings from 18th century America, Spanish Colonial Revival buildings generally referenced buildings from Spain and other Mediterranean countries.

Buildings with elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style are ubiquitous throughout Pasadena and Southern California, with the majority being one-story bungalows. The city also has an impressive collection of high-style Spanish Colonial Revival buildings designed by architects who mastered the style, including, among others, Wallace Neff, Sylvanus Marson, Garrett Van Pelt, Reginald Johnson, Everett Phipps Babcock and George Washington Smith.

Character-defining features of the style that are evident in the Clark Blanchard Millikan House include:

- Courtyards
- Tiled roofs
- Slightly rustic exterior plaster finish
- Wrought iron details such as door and window grilles
- Pierced stucco screens
- Fountains
- Decorative glazed tile

Wallace Neff (1895-1982)

Wallace Neff, FAIA was a celebrated architect who designed houses for many of the most significant celebrities of the 1920's and 1930's. He traveled extensively throughout Europe in his early life and attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a time, where he later received an honorary degree. He joined the office of George Washington Smith, one of the pioneers of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, in 1919 and opened his practice soon thereafter. While he worked extensively in traditional Mediterranean architectural style languages, he also designed in French and English styles. The Millikan House is mentioned in the City's historic context report, Residential Period Revival Architecture Development in Pasadena 1915-1942, which states that

Neff believed it to be his most authentic Mexican design. Later in his career, Neff pioneered the idea of the airform or “bubble” house, a reinforced concrete structure formed over an inflated balloon. According to the period revival historic context report cited above, the technique was “used for mass housing projects in West Africa, Egypt and Brazil during the 1940s and 1950s.” One of these houses was built in Pasadena and remains intact at 1097 S. Los Robles Avenue.

Clark Blanchard Millikan (1904-1966)

The house has a long history and connection with the Aerospace industry – namely Caltech and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It was designed and built for Clark Blanchard Millikan who was the son of Nobel-prize winner and President of Caltech Robert A. Millikan. Clark Millikan followed in his father’s footsteps and was also a recognized pioneer in the aerospace field. A graduate of Yale and Caltech, Dr. Millikan was appointed to Caltech’s faculty in 1928 and became internationally famous for his work in aerodynamics. Among his professional accomplishments: he served as chairman of the board of directors of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, headed the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory at Caltech, and was a founder of the Aerojet-General Corporation. Over 1,000 people attended his memorial service in 1966. Millikan lived in the house at 1500 Normandy Drive from its construction through 1960 during the most productive years of his distinguished career.

Hans Wolfgang Liepmann (1914-2009)

Another important Caltech professor, Dr. Hans W. Liepmann purchased the property in 1969 and lived there until 1978. Liepmann was also a Caltech professor and was named the “Charles Lee Powell Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Thermodynamics” in 1976, after having been a faculty member for 37 years. At the time of this appointment, Liepmann was the director of the Graduate Aeronautical Laboratories at Caltech. According to a Pasadena Star-News article published at that time, “his work has had considerable influence on the designs of aircraft and rockets, and he is an authority on shock waves, plasmas, and the flow of rarefied gases.” The article also noted that by that time he had won many awards and was recognized as a fellow of several professional organizations in his field. Subsequent articles were published in 1993 when he received the National Medal of Technology from then-U.S. President Bill Clinton and information published on the internet indicates that he was recognized with several awards during the 1980’s. Although Dr. Liepmann was clearly a significant person in the history of the nation, there is insufficient information available to determine whether his residency at 1500 Normandy Drive is associated with the time period when he achieved significance. Other residences, office or laboratories may be more closely associated with Dr. Liepmann’s productive life and staff does not have sufficient information about these other properties, or more specific information about the timing of his significant achievements to make a definitive determination at this time that the house is significant for its association with him. Despite this, staff believes that the

house can be documented as significant for other reasons noted below and that Dr. Liepmann's residency should be noted for the record.

ANALYSIS:

The Clark Blanchard Millikan House at 1500 Normandy Drive is eligible for historic monument designation under Criteria B and C, (PMC §17.62.040(B)(1)(b) and(c)), which state:

Criterion B:

[The property] is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the region, State, or nation.

Criterion C:

[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 that 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, State-wide or national significance.

Under Criterion B, the Millikan House is significant because it was built for Clark Blanchard Millikan, a nationally significant figure in the field of aerospace research and development, who lived in the house until 1960, during the most productive years of his career.

Under Criterion C, the Millikan House is significant because it is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Spanish Colonial Revival style single-family residence from the period revival era in Pasadena designed by nationally significant architect Wallace Neff. The house has been recognized, including by its architect, as an exceptional representation of the influence of the Mexican hacienda property type and exhibits all of the character-defining features of its style. While there are many houses in this style in Pasadena, this house is a high style example that reflects its primary tenets and strongly represents the designer's ideology in incorporating the features of the historical Mexican hacienda in the design. In particular, the house has a sense of openness and indoor-outdoor connection to the central courtyard space and rear patio that is clearly represented in every room of the house, while maintaining a sense of privacy and responding to the views of the Arroyo Seco that are available from the site.

The exterior treatment reflects the character of adobe construction in the incorporation of thick walls with deeply inset openings, rustic stucco finish, simple and elegant detailing and extensive and intricately detailed wood and tile work. The interior semi-

public rooms included in the nomination also reflect the idea of the Mexican hacienda in the use of terra cotta flooring, plaster walls, and the exposed wood roof beams and sheathing while also incorporating large glass windows and doors with carved-wood interior shutters for visibility and access to the outdoors. The house has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, as follows:

- Location: The building is in its original location.
- Design: The building retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above. The slight changes in the enclosure of a previously open patio and small addition behind the garage do not affect the house's integrity of design because these features are clearly identifiable and the windows installed within them are differentiated from the historical windows on the house by virtue of their large, arched configuration.
- Setting: The setting of the property has changed very little since its original construction. The subdivision of the larger site into three lots and the addition of a swimming pool and spa at the outer edge of the site does not affect the overall integrity of setting. Although the site is smaller than it was originally, it remains a substantially large site that is not overshadowed by the development of the two new lots that were created. The property retains its original north and west property lines and was narrowed at the southeast corner to create two lots with access to Devon Road. The houses that were built on those lots are at a lower elevation than the house at 1500 Normandy Drive.
- Materials: The building retains virtually all of the original materials used in its construction. The slight change in exterior stucco finish does not affect the house's overall integrity of materials.
- Workmanship: The building demonstrates the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement and the craft of the designer, Wallace Neff, in its unique and intricate detailing, which is shown in the original drawings in Attachment B.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of high style Spanish Colonial Revival houses from the early-twentieth century period, as detailed above.
- Association: The property is the place where Clark Millikan lived for much of his distinguished career and, as noted above, is remarkably intact from the period of his residency.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a Historic Monument under Criteria B and C.

The only contributing structure to this designation is the main house (including attached garage; original interior fixtures and materials in the Entry Hall, Living Room, Dining Room, Office, and outdoor spaces (terrace, drying yard, motor court, and central patio)). The pool and spa are non-contributing to the designation.

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:

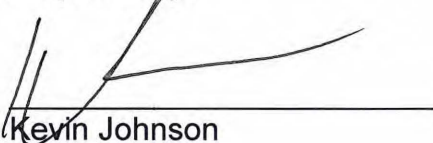
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted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



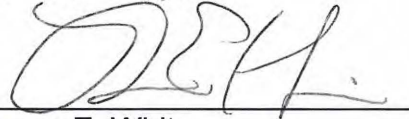
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Attachments: (4)

- Attachment A – Application & Attachments (including “Building Biography” by Tim Gregory and permit records)
- Attachment B – Historical Documentation (Sanborn Map; Subdivision Map; original plans; historical photograph)
- Attachment C – Current Photographs
- Attachment D – Effects of Historic Designation