



Agenda Report

September 25, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 851 FAIRFIELD CIRCLE 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 and garage at 851 Fairfield Circle meet landmark designation criterion C in Pasadena Municipal Code (P.M.C) Section 17.62.040(C)(2)(c) because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period and represent the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City. They are intact examples of a two-story Arts and Crafts Period House and Garage designed by Reginald Johnson;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 851 Fairfield Circle, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 851 Fairfield Circle, 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 1, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 851 Fairfield Circle as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house at 851 Fairfield Circle is a distinctive example of Arts & Crafts Period residential design in Pasadena designed by significant architect Reginald Johnson and retains all of its significant character-defining features. Therefore, the property at 851 Fairfield Circle qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion “C” as a locally significant example of a two-story Arts and Crafts Period House and Garage designed by Reginald Johnson.

BACKGROUND:

On May 2, 2017 property owners Darren and Linda Edwards submitted an application for landmark designation of the property at 851 Fairfield Circle. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the house and garage qualify for designation as a landmark.

Property Data

- Address: 851 Fairfield Circle, Pasadena, 91106
- Location: North side of Fairfield Circle, an arcing street with beginning and end points extending from Oak Knoll Circle south of Arden Road
- Date of Construction Completion: 1914 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Owner: George D. Rumsey (source: Original Building Permit)
- Architect: Reginald Johnson (source: Original Building Permit)
- Builder: Billings & Whetstine (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original/Present Use: Single-Family Residence/Single-Family Residence
- Property Size: 23,480 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building Size: 5,026 square feet (source: County Assessor)

The Site (Existing Conditions)

The .53-acre parcel contains a two-story house and a detached two-car garage. The two buildings are sited at the southwest corner of the lot with their primary facades oriented northeast. Topography is mainly flat on this parcel and a circular driveway provides vehicular access to the property, with an extension providing access to the garage. The buildings are set back significantly from the street, approximately 75 feet, similar to several other buildings along Fairfield Circle, although street setbacks vary along the street. Substantial landscaping along the street edge limits public visibility of the house to a glimpse along the driveway.

Exterior Features of the Building

The house was originally built in 1914 and is generally rectangular in plan with small projecting volumes extending from the northwest and southeast elevations. It has a

steeply pitched hipped and gabled roof covered in composition shingles and exterior walls coated in sand-finish stucco. The primary façade has a half-width front porch recessed beneath a portion of the house's second floor with simple support posts, a cornice adorning the ceiling edge, and a projecting flat canopy with corbels extending beyond the façade of the house. A wide, stucco-coated chimney flanked by vertically oriented double-hung wood windows is a prominent feature of the primary façade. A horizontally oriented grouping of fixed and casement windows is above the entry porch; the entry door is a solid wood panel with an inset rectangular molding. The house has a soldier-course brick foundation, small dormers with clipped gables and groupings of wood windows. Above the rear patio is a former sleeping porch, since enclosed with wood windows.

Garage

Based on a listing of Craftsman-era building permits in the City's records, the garage was built at the same time as the house. It is northwest of the house with the wood-paneled garage door, within a shallow ogee-arched opening, facing northeast toward the street. The garage is clad in similarly textured plaster as the main residence and has a steeply sloping, front-facing, clipped-gable roof similar to the house, with a small dormer extending from the side-facing roof slope. Above the garage door is a grouping of three double-hung wood windows, a wood planter box and two gooseneck light fixtures.

Documented Changes to the Property

The application includes a historical photograph taken when the house was completed in 1914. Based on that photograph, the front façades of the house and garage are largely intact, with the only evident alteration being the removal of shutters. As previously indicated, a sleeping porch was enclosed with windows and a permit was issued for this change, as well as addition of two small dormers, in 1926. These changes are consistent with the design of the house.

Current Condition, Use, and Proposed Plans

The property is currently in good condition. The owners have applied for a Mills Act contract to pay for repairs and maintenance to the house.

Historical Overview

History of the Neighborhood & Site

The larger neighborhood surrounding the site was part of the 1887 Oak Knoll Subdivision of the Lake Vineyard Land & Water Company property, which was originally a portion of Rancho San Pasqual. In 1906 the area bound by Oak Knoll Avenue, Kewen Drive and Cañon Drive was divided into four parcels and in 1913, Fairfield Circle

was created and the four lots subdivided into ten. Further piecemeal subdivisions occurred in this area over time, although the records are unclear about the timing

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

The Arts and Crafts Period historic context report cited above does not contain a strong description of the English Arts & Crafts subtype, which includes features more directly associated with the description of English Revival Architecture in the City's historic

context report entitled “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942,” as follows:

Domestic English architecture was a source of inspiration for Period Revival architects during the 1920s and 30s. There were several versions of the English Revival style since both simple country cottages and grand Tudor manors were used as models. Distinguishing characteristics include multigabled roofs with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, slate roofing, diamond-paned leaded glass windows, chimneys and retaining walls with decorative brickwork and stonework.

Reginald Johnson (1882-1952)

The house was designed by architect Reginald Johnson soon after initiating his architectural practice in 1912. Johnson was born in 1882 in Westchester, New York and moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1886. He graduated from Williams College in 1903 and from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1910. In 1922, Johnson formed a new firm with Gordon Kaufmann and Roland Coate, which lasted only three years but produced many significant structures. Johnson retired from architectural practice in 1934. Many buildings he designed are designed individually or contributing to landmark or historic districts, the most significant of which include All Saints Church (1928), the Hale Solar Laboratory (1924) and the Kresge Seismic Laboratory (1926). Other designated English Arts and Crafts style houses designed by Johnson include 1150 S. Arroyo Boulevard (1912, contributing to the South Grand-Covington Place Landmark District), and 415 S. Hill Avenue (1913, on Caltech campus). The vast majority of Johnson’s work is in Period Revival-era architectural styles including English Cottage Revival, Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival styles.

ANALYSIS:

The house and garage on this property are intact examples of the English Arts and Crafts sub-type of the two-story Arts & Crafts Period House property type. It features many of the character-defining features of the property type including steep roof pitch, complex roof with extended eaves and exposed rafters, stucco exterior walls, brick foundation, groupings of wood windows and a prominent chimney.

This resource has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The house and garage are in their original locations.
- Design: The apartment building features many of the character defining features of the English Arts & Crafts Period house as described above.
- Setting: The original setting remains relatively unchanged since the development of the property and the district surrounding it. Setbacks with wide

lawns, the residential nature of the properties, and one or two story surrounding properties, many original to the period, are still intact.

- **Materials:** The house and garage retain virtually all of their original materials, with the exception of some shutters and the early enclosure of a sleeping porch with windows and addition of small dormers.
- **Workmanship:** Excellent workmanship is evident in the proportions and durability of the exterior façade details.
- **Feeling:** The property clearly expresses and evokes the same feeling that pervaded when it was developed.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under criteria C: an architecturally intact example that represents important historic context of Pasadena's Arts & Crafts Period.

Based on the historical photograph submitted, the detached garage is fully intact and is contributing to this designation, along with the house itself. There are no other original site features included in 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,



DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments: (4)

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