

Agenda Report

November 5, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE PROPERTY AT 885 SOUTH MADISON 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 single-family residence, garage, and front yard retaining wall at 885 South Madison Avenue meet Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040 because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period to the City. They are a locally significant example of a two-story Mission Revival Arts & Crafts Period single-family residential structure and original accessory structures designed by significant local architect Louis B. Easton;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 885 South Madison Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 885 South Madison 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 August 21, 2018, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of 885 South Madison Avenue as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC §17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The single-family residence with a garage and a front yard retaining wall at 885 South Madison Avenue is a locally significant example of a two-story Mission Revival Arts & Crafts Period single-family residential structure designed by significant local architect Louis B. Easton and retains the majority of its significant character-defining features. Therefore, the property at 885 South Madison Avenue qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion "C."

BACKGROUND:

On May 7, 2018, Claire and Carmie Puckett Robinson, the owners of the property, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the building at 885 South Madison Avenue. City 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: 885 South Madison Avenue, Pasadena
- Location: West side of South Madison Avenue, between Fillmore Street and Alpine Street.
- Date of Construction Completion: 1911 (source: Original Building Permit, Builder & Contractor, September 1911)
- Original Owner: Charles Joannes
- Original Architect and Contractor: Louis B. Easton (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original / Present Use: Single-Family Residence
- Property size: 13,981 square feet (source: Los Angeles County Assessor)
- Building size: 3,522 square feet (source: Los Angeles County Assessor)

The Site

The property is located on a rectangular lot on the west side of South Madison Avenue between Fillmore Street and Alpine Street. The subject building is set back from the street and is located on an elevated site. A stucco-coated retaining wall with a curvilinear brick cap, currently covered with a climbing vine, aligns with the street property line. Another wall of similar but simpler design borders an open patio at the front of the house. The walkway from the street line to the main entrance is paved with red brick.

Exterior Features of the Building

The two-story house has a symmetrical front elevation with a smooth stucco finish and a side-gabled shallow red clay tile roof with curved parapets extending beyond the roofline at the gable-ends and overhanging eaves with exposed rafters on the sloping

ends. A massive projecting balcony on the second floor supported with large square pillars creates a stoop above the entrance portal, which consists of a wide solid wood door, divided side lights and a divided transom with curved corners. Two non-original stuccoed decorative spherical finials on pedestals crown the corners of the balcony. All windows on the house have elaborate wood frames with strictly rectilinear tripartite and four-partite pattern of divided lights reminiscent of the design work of Greene & Greene, Irving Gill, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Other design details of the house include paired quarter-circle attic openings with wood-louver vents and vigas in the parapetted gable-ends, a pattern of recessed stucco panels in the outer balcony walls, recessed areas in the stucco generally at large openings, stuccoed side chimneys, shed-roofed one-story projections covered in clay tiles and a large cross-gabled volume at the rear with a second-floor projection having curved brackets beneath.

Detached Garage Features:

The detached garage overlooking the rear alley was designed at the same time as the house in the compatible Mission Revival style. It has stuccoed walls, a clay tile roof with rounded parapetted gable ends and extended eaves with exposed rafters on the sloping ends, a wood pedestrian door, windows with divided rectangular lights and paired rectangular wood-louvered gable vents with a continuous header.

Documented Changes to the Property

The property has undergone minimal exterior alterations since it was originally built in 1911. Based on historical photographs of the house, two stuccoed decorative spherical finials on pedestals were added on the corners of the balcony and a series of vigas at each corner was removed. In addition, windows, eaves and rafters, and exterior walls have been painted.

Current Condition, Use, and Proposed Plans

The exterior of the building is in fairly good condition and retains nearly all of its original exterior materials. It also retains many original interior materials, including oak wood floors, stained pine and white cedar paneling, elegant wood stairs, and an elaborate fireplace. The current owner has filed a Mills Act contract application for maintenance and material restoration including scraping the window paint and staining the windows in order to bring them back to their original appearance.

Historical Overview

The Arts & 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.

Mission Revival Arts & Crafts Period Houses

The City's 1998 study of the Arts and Crafts period, "Residential Architecture in Pasadena 1895-1918: Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement" describes the characteristics of the many different types of houses that were built during this period and includes a discussion of the Mission Revival Arts and Crafts period house. It indicates that some proponents of the movement believed that "the Mission Revival represented values consistent with the Arts and Crafts movement – harmony with nature and a retreat from the reality of an economy of exploitation. Their mythologized view of California's Hispanic past created an idyllic view of the life that surrounded the Franciscan Missions and vernacular adobes of the ranchos."

The two-story Arts and Crafts period house has the following character-defining features, as described in the Arts and Crafts study:

- 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 study goes on to describe features of the Mission Revival Arts & Crafts Period House as including:

- Stuccoed walls
- Tile roofs
- Square towers or belvederes
- Arcaded porches
- Boxy character
- Arched windows, particularly near the entrance
- Decorative plasterwork surrounding window and door openings

These features were generally combined, with some being left out, to create a holistic design.

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements constructed during the property's period of significance that give the building its character. In general, a property that retains its character-defining features continues to convey its significance and therefore retains integrity as an historic resource. Removal or alteration of just one character-defining feature does not necessarily alter the integrity of an historic resource. Impacts to historic integrity can result from a single major change or from many incremental changes over time.

Louis B. Easton, (1864 – 1921)

Louis B. Easton was a prominent builder and architect known for his contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement in Southern California. He was born in Halfday Lake, Illinois, was trained and worked as a teacher there, and moved to Pasadena in 1902. He became a successful self-trained furniture maker and architectural designer. He designed and built over 25 houses in the Craftsman style in Pasadena and the Greater Los Angeles area between 1902 and 1914, including houses at 530 S. Arroyo Blvd., 380 W. Del Mar Blvd., 620 S. Grand Ave., 530 S. Marengo Ave., and 540 S. Marengo Ave. all which are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Joannes House is the only house designed and built by Louis B. Easton in the Mission Revival style. Easton moved his family to a ranch near Anaheim during World War I and was involved in farming there for the remainder of his life.

ANALYSIS:

The house and garage at 885 South Madison Avenue are eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 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.

Generally, in order to qualify under Criterion C, a property type would display most of the character-defining features of its style. It must retain high integrity of design, materials and workmanship that convey its period of construction. While most buildings undergo alteration over time, these alterations should not significantly change the historic appearance of the building.

Under Criterion C, the building at 885 South Madison Avenue is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Mission Revival Arts and Crafts Period House, designed by Louis B. Easton. The design combines the features of the two-story Arts and Crafts Period House with the Mission Revival style to create a harmonious design. The building has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building and other site features are in their original locations.
- Design: The building retains its original form, plan, structure, and style, including its exterior stucco cladding, original fenestration, roof form, and entryway.
- Setting: The surrounding single-family residential neighborhood remains largely intact.
- Materials: The building retains its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of early-20th century single-family residential design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Mission Revival Arts and Crafts Period House and evokes the feeling of the Arts and Crafts Period in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The building retains all of its original character-defining features, including a two-story configuration with a basement, simple geometric forms, shallowly pitched roof with red clay tile, exposed sculpted-wood rafters, stucco cladding, wood windows, second-story balcony, open patio, and elaborately detailed entryway. All alterations to the building, including exterior paint, and the addition of decorative finials are compatible with the original structure.

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:

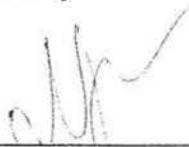
In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted 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
- Attachment B – Vicinity Map and Historical Documentation
- Attachment C – Photographs
- Attachment D – Effects of Landmark Designation