



Agenda Report

December 5, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH AT 1118 N. ALLEN 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) pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances;
2. Find that the Mount Olive Lutheran Church at 1118 N. Allen Avenue meets Criterion C as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2.c because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Mission Revival architectural style and represents the work of local notable architect Frederick Kennedy, Jr., whose work is of significance to the City;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1118 N. Allen Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1118 N. Allen Avenue, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 4, 2022, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the Mount Olive Lutheran Church at 1118 N. Allen Avenue as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.

BACKGROUND:

The Site

The property is located on a rectangular shaped lot oriented north-south on the east side of North Allen Avenue at the corner of Queensberry Road. The property contains a one-story, L-shaped building that includes a cruciform-plan church structure, covered walkway, and a rectangular parish hall. The building sits along the north and east sides of the lot and the west side consists of a landscaped area including grass and trees, a standalone changeable text sign installed in the 1960s, and a standalone square structure containing utilities. A brick walkway runs west-east from Allen Avenue to the main entrance of the church, which opens up to the main entrance area of the church and is semi-enclosed by low concrete block walls that outline an entry patio area at the west and south sides.

Exterior Features of the Church Building

The cruciform-plan main church building has a cross-gabled roof form finished in red clay tiles. The exterior walls are coated entirely in troweled stucco. The building maintains mostly a Medieval Cathedral plan with a central nave including a sanctuary and two transepts or wings at the north and south of the nave, at the far east side of the building. At the far west side of the central nave are two additional projecting volumes, which sit short of the main transepts or wings at the east side. The church building is connected to a 1951 addition by way of a covered walkway capped with a continuation of the gable roof of the south-most wing, also finished in red clay tiles. The addition is rectangular in shape and is finished in a similar troweled stucco to match the church building. Similar rectangular punched openings with steel frame multi-light windows are scattered throughout the addition. The 1951 building contains a Parish Hall at the street-level and also has stairs at the west and north sides of the addition that lead to a basement/secondary hall.

The church building's main entrance is located on the west facing elevation of the southern wing. Above the main entrance of the church is a wood sign with "Mount Olive Lutheran Church" painted. The sign is generally rectangular with applied rounded side facing corbels below. The entry doors consist of solid wood doors with vertically oriented panels and punched rectangular openings filled with stained glass lights at the tops. Adjacent to the main entry (south side) is a square punched opening with a multi-light steel sash window encased with a metal open grate screen that projects from the face of the building.

The church building has various deeply recessed punched window openings throughout, containing multi-light steel framed fixed windows, some of which contain a combination of rectangular and arched stained-glass windows. The church building was also designed with a Mission style bell tower which remains extant today and projects above and near the primary entrance of the church. The bell tower is topped with a simple crucifix and maintains a single bell within an elongated arched opening within the tower. The west elevation of the church building also includes a carved sign at the bottom that reads "Mount Olive Lutheran Church 1930." A circular steeple accents the west facing elevation of the church building and is topped with a similar crucifix to that found above the bell tower.

Documented Changes to the Property

The property has undergone few major exterior changes since it was originally built in 1930. A 1,920 square-foot addition, described above, was constructed at the south end of the church building in 1951 and a freestanding street-facing utility structure was added at the southwest corner of the property at a later date. The existing standalone changeable text sign was added in the 1960s. Apart from the outlined additions and changes, the original building does not appear to have been substantially altered from its original appearance.

Mission Revival Style¹:

The Mission Revival architectural style is rooted in the development of the California missions, which were established throughout the state beginning in the 1880s. The style evolved from an interest in newcomers to the state wanting to develop an idyllic setting that combined the local native history with architecture, mostly to tout California's exoticism to tourists and potential permanent residents. Charles Fletcher Lummis and Helen Hunt Jackson were both prominent advocates for preserving historic architecture and promoting the idyllic nature of living in California through their writings and advocacy efforts in the late 1800s. Specifically, Lummis spearheaded many efforts to appreciate and preserve mission architecture in California. This helped to spur local efforts to incorporate mission style materials and features into new buildings being constructed throughout Pasadena, including residences, institutional buildings and public buildings.

The development and promotion of the Mission Revival style resulted in simplified building forms with little applied detailing. The intention of the simplified style was to reflect upon the native California history and to instill a picturesque image of California living with architecture relatable to the local climate. The Mission Revival style became popular in Pasadena beginning in the late 1890s, when elements of the style began to be incorporated into public buildings, hotels, schools, residences and churches. One of the first Mission Revival style buildings

¹ Information summarized from *Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942*, pages 28-30.

to be constructed in Pasadena is the W. C. Stuart Residence (1201 South Orange Grove Avenue), designed by Frederick Roehrig in 1897. In addition to numerous residences designed in Pasadena in this style, other developments wholly reflective of the style or in combination with other styles include the Hotel Green (1898) and Pasadena City Hall (1905).

Character-defining features of the Mission Revival style typically include the following:

- Smooth or troweled stucco
- Low-pitched gabled or hipped roof forms
- Red clay tile roofing
- Decorative parapets, sometimes in arched or scalloped shapes
- Rectangular or arched punched openings, usually with multi-light mullion patterns
- Lack of ornamentation or minimal use of plaster cast applied features
- Rounded arches and arcades
- Bell towers and domes (religious or institutional/public properties)

Frederick Kennedy, Jr. (1891 – unknown)²:

Frederick Hunt Kennedy, Jr. was born in 1891 in Fort Payne, Alabama. He received his education in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1914 and received his certification to practice architecture in California in 1916. He worked briefly for the California Institute of Technology from 1915 to 1917 as an instructor of drawing, lettering, and surveying and later as a draftsman for J. L. Stimson from 1917 to 1920.³ He established his own practice in 1921 with offices located on Green Street in Pasadena. Kennedy completed a number of local commissions in Pasadena including the Third Church of Christ Scientist (1951); the First Baptist Church in Pasadena (1927-1930); the Memorial Unitarian-Universalist Church #2 (otherwise known as Throop Memorial Church, 1922-1923); and the Pasadena University Club. He was a member of the AIA, Pasadena Chapter. The numerous commissions completed by Kennedy elevate him to a level of local significance to be considered a master architect locally in Pasadena.

ANALYSIS:

The building at 1118 North Allen Avenue is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.C.2, which states:

² Information taken from the American Architect's Historical Directory (1956). https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Bowker_1956_K.pdf. Accessed June 28, 2022

³ The 1956 AIA Historical Directory references that Frederick Hunt Kennedy, Jr. worked for J. L. Stimson. However, this is believed to be a typo, and was most likely G. L. Stimson.

[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 1118 North Allen Avenue is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Mission Revival style church building designed by Frederick Kennedy, Jr. 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: Despite the 1950s addition, the church retains the majority of its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its simple massing, exterior stucco cladding, original fenestration and exterior materials, and roof form.
- Setting: The surrounding neighborhood has generally been left unchanged since the subject property's original development. Some surrounding buildings have been replaced, but not substantially enough such that integrity of setting has been compromised.
- Materials: The building retains a majority of its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of early-20th century religious institutional design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Mission Revival architectural style and continues to evoke the feeling of an early Mission Revival religious institution in Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 1118 N. Allen Avenue retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its Mission Revival style and association with the work of Frederick Kennedy, Jr.

Based on the above, the Mount Olive Lutheran Church retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The period of significance for the church would be 1930, the year of construction. The church building retains all of its original character-defining features, including:

- One-story, cross-shaped plan church building
- Troweled stucco finish at the exterior
- Cross-gabled roof form with red clay tile finish

- Punched rectangular and arched openings with steel sash multi-light fixed and casement windows with stained glass glazing and some with transparent glazing
- Bell tower
- Wooden “Mount Olive Lutheran Church” signage above main church entry
- Wood entry double doors with stained glass punched openings at the top
- Ceramic tile flooring at the entry exterior

The church building itself is the only contributing feature to this designation. The 1951 one-story over basement addition (including the covered walkway), and standalone changeable text sign were constructed outside of the period of significance of the site and are non-contributing features.

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:

The proposed designation qualifies for a categorical exemption pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines. 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 (5):

- A. Application & Supplemental Research
- B. Vicinity and Aerial Maps
- C. Documentation
- D. Current Photographs
- E. Effects of Historic Designation