

Agenda Report

September 19, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE NORMAN VILLA AT 73-87 ½ N. CATALINA 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 Norman Villa at 73-87 ½ N. Catalina Avenue meets Criterion C as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2 because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Tudor Revival architectural style and of a multi-family garden apartment development;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 73-87 ½ N. Catalina Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 73-87 ½ N. Catalina Avenue, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On June 7, 2022, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the Norman Villa at 73-87 ½ N. Catalina Avenue as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.D.

BACKGROUND:

The Site

The property is located on a rectangular lot on the west side of North Catalina Avenue, at the northern portion of the block bounded by East Union Street to the north and East Colorado Boulevard to the south. The property consists of two, two-story, multi-family residential buildings that sit at the north and south sides of the property, and a one-story garage structure to the west (rear) of the site.

Exterior Features of the Building

Both buildings are two-stories in height, are designed in the Tudor Revival architectural style and were constructed in 1928. The massing of both buildings is composed of two-story generally rectangular volumes with steeply sloping gabled-roof forms facing N. Catalina Avenue and the rear of the property. Steeply pitched cross gables are located at the eastern volumes of each building. The buildings are clad in stucco and half-timbering can be found at the second floors within the cross gabled area(s), some of which project slightly from the main building volume at the second floor and have a row of sculpted wood corbels beneath. The roof forms are finished in brown composition shingles.

The site also consists of a central linear courtyard that runs east to west. The courtyard is comprised of concrete pedestrian walkways along the fronts of the buildings which connect to the street. Grass makes up the majority of the courtyard and at the west (rear) end of the courtyard is structure that includes a water feature flanked by decorative archways with iron gates leading to the driveway and garages beyond, all of which are capped with sloped roofs finished in brown composition shingles. Additional landscaping, including shrubs, climbing vines and a pair of Italian Cypress trees, are incorporated into this structure, which was part of the original construction, as was the sign at the front of the property that reads “Norman Villa, 73-87 ½.”

Documented Changes to the Property

The exteriors of both residential buildings remain largely intact and retain significant character-defining features of the Tudor Revival style. However, the buildings have undergone some alterations including re-roofing using composition shingles at an unknown early date and again in 1956. Upon visual inspection, both buildings appear to have also undergone minor window replacements in original openings on secondary

facades, including the north façade of the north building and the south façade of the south building.

Multi-Family Residential Development¹

The introduction of multi-family residential development in Pasadena began in the early part of the twentieth century. Multi-family residential development allowed speculator-developers to construct denser residences to provide affordable housing options to those who were not otherwise able to afford to construct their own detached single-family homes. Developments such as the Bungalow/Cottage Courtyard, Garden Apartment, and larger multi-family apartment buildings provided affordable housing options and often incorporated features from high-style designs and various landscape and open space amenities to attract potential buyers or tenants. For more information regarding the Multi-Family Residential Development, please refer to Attachment F.

W. Sidney Orme²

The multi-unit residential buildings were designed by local Southern California architect Walter Sidney Orme (W. Sidney Orme), who was also the original owner of the property. Orme was born in Osage County, Kansas in 1887. Upon arriving to California in the late 1920s, Orme and his family settled in Pasadena and developed the subject property as his primary residence. Upon completion, Orme resided at 73 ½ N. Catalina Avenue. Orme established his own firm and was commissioned for various projects throughout the area, including the City of Hawthorne's City Hall #2 (1935), the Vernon Avenue Congregational Church in Los Angeles (1927), and a Streamline Moderne Duplex at 803 N. Mansfield in Los Angeles (1937). While Orme appears to have had a significant architectural presence in the larger Los Angeles area, the extent of his works in Pasadena is unknown beyond the subject property and he does not appear to have influenced local stylistic trends such that he would be considered a master architect.

Tudor Revival Architecture³

Tudor Revival is the term used to describe residences that display half-timbering at exterior facades. The style draws influence from early 16th century English architecture, although most homes were inspired by building techniques from the Elizabethan era. The style began to appear in Pasadena in the 1910s and was typically used for single family residences and larger estates. However, by the 1920s, the style began to be utilized by developers wanting to incorporate more decorative styles into multi-family

¹ Architectural/Historical Development of the City of Pasadena, Historic Context/Property Type Report, page 56-57

² "W. Sidney Orme, Architect," Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD), accessed 16 March 2022.

³ Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915 – 1942, page 33.

residential development to attract buyers and tenants looking for affordable housing options. For more information regarding the Tudor Revival architectural style, please refer to Attachment F.

Character-Defining Features of 73-87 ½ North Catalina Avenue

- Orientation of buildings at the north and south sides of the property
- “Norman Villa” street-facing address sign
- Central landscaped and hardscaped courtyard
- Asymmetrical primary facades facing the central courtyard
- Fountain and archways at west end that connect the buildings
- Two-story massing
- Front-facing gables along N. Catalina Avenue
- Steeply sloped cross-gable roof at the north and south facades
- Multi-pane glazed wood sash windows in casement and/or fixed orientations facing the courtyards
- Single-pane wood sash double hung and casement windows on all other facades
- Decorative half-timbering
- Stucco finished exterior between the half-timbering
- Raised primary entries with original entry doors and pitched projecting awnings above
- Wrought iron railings at entries and gates
- Square bay windows at secondary facades

ANALYSIS:

The Norman Villa complex at 73-87 ½ N. Catalina Avenue is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.D.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 possesses artistic values of significance to the City.

Under Criterion C, the Norman Villa complex is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of the Tudor Revival architectural style and of a multi-family garden apartment development. The buildings retain a high level of architectural integrity (their ability to demonstrate why they are significant) through their location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as follows:

- Location: The buildings and other site features are in their original locations.
- Design: The buildings retain their original form, massing and exterior configuration. The building retains clearly discernable character-defining features of the Tudor Revival style, including half-timbering, steeply pitched roof forms, and multi-pane wood sash windows. Although the roof materials have

been replaced, the current materials do not detract from the original design intent of the buildings.

- Setting: At the time of the buildings' construction, the block of North Catalina Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and what is now Union Street was comprised of numerous single-family and multi-family residences, some of which remain, including a bungalow court apartment across the street at 48 N. Catalina Avenue. However, the majority of the setting has changed since the original development of the property. Many residences that were constructed around the same time as the property or shortly after have mostly been re-developed with modern in-fill multi-family complexes that do not maintain the historical setting. Therefore, the subject property does not retain integrity of setting. However, this does not preclude the property from maintaining or illustrating its historical significance as a Tudor Revival style garden apartment complex.
- Materials: The building is composed of finished stucco, wood sash windows, and half-timbering. These materials remain extant today.
- Workmanship: The buildings retain a significant amount of their original exterior finishes, and retain their overall form and high-level of design reflective of the Tudor Revival style. Minimal changes have occurred to the buildings that have impacted the original construction and unique architectural style. The building's workmanship remains intact.
- Feeling: The building retains significant integrity criteria, and therefore still evokes the feeling of a Tudor Revival residential complex.
- Association: The Norman Villa buildings retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, and therefore, continues to convey its association with garden apartment style multi-family development in Pasadena, which gained traction in the 1920s and 1930s.

Based on the above, the Norman Villa complex retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion "C." For further, more detailed information on the Norman Villa complex, please refer to the staff report for Historic Preservation Commission, dated June 7, 2022, in Attachment F.

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."

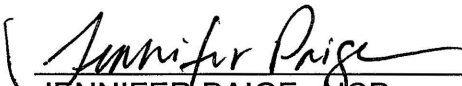
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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,



JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP
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Prepared by:



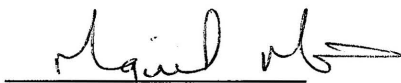
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Approved by:



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Attachments (6):

- A. Application & Supplemental Research
- B. Vicinity and Aerial Maps
- C. Historical Documentation
- D. Current Photographs
- E. Effects of Historic Designation
- F. Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report (June 7, 2022)