

Agenda Report

October 30, 2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE RESIDENCE AT 701 W. HOLLY STREET 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 residence at 701 W. Holly Street 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 French Norman architectural style and represents the work of locally significant architectural firm Postle & Postle;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 701 W. Holly Street, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 701 W. Holly Street, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On September 5, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the residence at 701 W. Holly Street as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.D.2.

BACKGROUND:

The Site

The subject property is an irregularly shaped lot on the north side of West Holly Street, between Arroyo Drive and North Arroyo Boulevard, east of the Holly Street Bridge. The property is sloped and the site ascends in elevation to the north. There are no immediate neighboring houses on either side of the property. Across the street, there are residences that sit at a lower elevation than the street and are not fully visible from the subject property. On the eastern portion of the property are remnants of stone steps and wooden bridges leading up the hill. The steps historically connected the subject property to the adjacent property at 141 N. Grand Avenue, that is further uphill, but have since been removed in part due to deterioration or disconnection from the uphill property. The surrounding neighborhood contains other single-family homes as well as multi-family residences.

Exterior Features of the Building

The residence is irregular in plan and has an asymmetrical façade that remains largely untouched as it was originally designed. It is three stories high and has a tower feature at the center of the façade reflecting its French Norman style. Half of the building is recessed behind the central tower and the other projects in front of it. The house has a hipped roof with a steep pitch that is finished with dimensional fiberglass shingles, inset shed-roofed dormers, and a smooth stucco exterior cladding that is ornamented with half-timbering, dentils, and a wooden balcony supported by corbels. Most of the windows and doors appear to be original to the house. There is an attached one-car garage on the front façade of the house with original arched wood carriage-style doors. Along the front of the property, a stucco and stone retaining wall separates the elevated portions of the site from the sidewalk. The site formerly contained various walkways and stairs that connected to the property at 141 N. Grand Avenue. Remnants of the stairs and walkways exist at the south side of the site, which include partial concrete decorative stair walls and steps.

Documented Changes to the Property

The property has not undergone any major exterior changes since it was originally built in 1926. Various repairs and in-kind replacements have occurred, though minor in nature. The building underwent a re-roof in 2004, which changed the roofing materials to dimensional fiberglass shingles. Based on City records, the original roofing was wood

shingles. Historically, the subject property was an extension of the adjacent El Roble Estate (141 North Grand Avenue, a designated landmark), with walkways and stairways connecting the two properties, much of which have subsequently been removed or otherwise modified.

French Norman Architecture

The French Norman style is not extensively discussed in the City of Pasadena's "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942" Historic Context Report (the similar Chateausque and French Provincial styles are noted in the report), but it is outlined in detail in the SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement "Sub-Theme: French Norman, 1919-1940" thematic section, as follows:

French Norman was used primarily as a style in single-family residential neighborhoods of Los Angeles. The least decorative of the styles within the Period Revival theme, French Norman buildings were related to vernacular examples in Europe seen overseas by veterans of the First World War and reimagined in early films. The French Norman style usually involved one or two design elements on a relatively minimalist building. With only a few distinguishing features, such as a conical tower shaped entrance or steeply pitched roof, a simple, single-story L-shaped house with stucco cladding became French Norman in style...

For more information regarding the French Norman architectural style, including typical character-defining features of the style, please refer to Attachment A.

Character-Defining Features of 701 W. Holly Street

- Three-story configuration with attached garage
- Asymmetrical stepped back massing
- Central conical tower with recessed entry
- Stucco cladding
- Half-timbering
- Single and double punched window openings with wood multi-light windows
- Front-facing second story projecting balcony with French doors
- Original arched wood garage doors
- Steeply pitched hipped roof form

Postle & Postle:

Posle & Postle (nee the Postle Co.), the architect of the house, was a father and son architectural firm formed in the 1920s. David Postle, Sr. began his architecture career in Chicago in the 1860s and moved to the Los Angeles area in the 1920s before partnering with his son, David Postle, Jr. Together, they were a successful design and contracting firm that worked to meet the demand for luxury housing by the region's elite

and wealthy. The company specialized in interpreting and applying popular styles of the time, including but not limited to Chateausque, Beaux Arts, Spanish Colonial, Tudor Revival, Mission Revival, and Regency. Together, the firm designed numerous commissions throughout Pasadena and the larger Los Angeles area, many of which have been designated as historic resources. Pasadena commissions from the firm include: 529 S. El Molino Ave.; 545 S. Euclid Ave. (National Register Individual Property); 141 N. Grand Ave. (Individual Landmark); and 1133 N. Marengo Ave. (Landmark District).

ANALYSIS:

The residence at 701 W. Holly Street 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 building at 701 W. Holly Street is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a French Norman style single-family residence built in 1926 and designed by locally significant architectural firm Postle & Postle. 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 the majority of its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its complex massing, exterior stucco cladding, original fenestration and exterior materials, roof form, and entryway.
- **Setting:** The single-family neighborhood, including the El Roble estate built 24 years prior to the subject property but converted into a Tudor Revival style three years prior, are intact, though the construction dates in the vicinity range from 1902 to 1986.
- **Materials:** The building retains a majority of its original exterior materials. The roofing material has been replaced with fiberglass shingles, which are dimensional and therefore a compatible replacement for the original wood shingles. This change in materials alone does not diminish the building's ability to convey its significance because the residence retains a majority of its original exterior materials and the replacement roof materials are similar to the original materials.
- **Workmanship:** The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of early-20th century single-family design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- **Feeling:** The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the French Norman architectural style and evokes the feeling of period revival single-family residential development Pasadena.

- Association: The property at 701 West Holly Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with early-20th century single-family residential development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C as a prime example of the French Norman architectural style. The building retains a majority of its original character-defining features. The period of significance for the residence is 1926, the year of its construction. The contributing features to this designation include the residential building and its exterior French Norman features, stucco and arroyo stone retaining walls along the front of the site, and extant remnants of pathways, bridges and stairways that previously connected the property to El Roble 141 N. Grand Avenue.

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
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:




STEPHANIE CISNEROS
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



KEVIN JOHNSON
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MIGUEL MARQUEZ
City Manager

Attachments (5):

- A. September 5, 2023 Historic Preservation Staff Report without Attachments
- B. Application & Supplemental Research
- C. Vicinity Aerial Map
- D. Current and Historic Photographs
- E. Effects of Historic Designation