

# **ATTACHMENT D**



## **PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

### **STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** APRIL 15, 2025

**TO:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** CALL FOR REVIEW: LANDMARK DESIGNATION ELIGIBILITY REVIEW – 315 NORTH PASADENA AVENUE (ROOSEVELT SCHOOL)

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff recommends that the Commission:

1. Find that the proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8, 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 subject property is not eligible for landmark designation under any criteria; and
3. Uphold the Director's November 8, 2024 decision to disapprove the application to designate the Roosevelt School 315 N. Pasadena Avenue as a landmark.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Constructed in 1953, the Roosevelt School was originally comprised of three buildings – the Main Wing (east), South Wing, and Center Wing – separated by covered, open-air walkways and integrated, programmed open spaces. The school originally incorporated a number of features indicative of the Mid-Century Modern style, as described in the Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, including one-story massing, brick veneer exterior, long axial classroom wings with a roughly L-shaped footprint, little applied ornament, generous expanses of glazing, low pitched or flat roof forms, and wide eaves and cantilevered canopies supported by pipe columns. It also originally exhibited character-defining features of the modern, functionalist school plant property type, including single-loaded classrooms arranged in finger-like wings arranged along a central axis, classrooms opening directly onto patios/play areas, a unified and nonhierarchical site plan, unified campus design of buildings and landscaped courtyards, patios and terraces adjacent to

classroom wings, and outdoor corridors. Numerous alterations have occurred since the school's initial construction, which have compromised its overall integrity. Most significantly, between 1964 and 1972, an addition was constructed that expanded the Center Wing to the west and to the south, joining it to the South Wing. This addition interrupted the original finger/cluster-plan arrangement of buildings and removed an original programmed outdoor courtyard between the two original wings.

A landmark designation application was originally filed by Rene Gonzalez, a Pasadena resident, with a report completed by PADRES (501c3) with the assistance of Debi Howell-Ardila on February 7, 2024 stating that the property was eligible for landmark designation under Criterion A. Staff issued an eligibility determination on April 1, 2024 which found that the property was not eligible for landmark designation under any criterion (Attachment A). A call for review was requested by Commissioner Carol Potter and heard by the Historic Preservation Commission on July 16, 2024. The commission voted not to formally call the application for review.

A revised landmark designation application was filed on September 10, 2024 by the same applicant with an updated report stating that the property was eligible for landmark designation under Criterion C (with no new arguments or analysis provided under the other three landmark criteria). On November 8, 2024, staff issued an eligibility determination that found that the property was not eligible for landmark designation under any criteria (Attachment B). On November 12, 2024, Commissioner Juan de la Cruz requested a call for review of the staff's decision and on February 18, 2025 the Historic Preservation Commission voted to formally call the application for review.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.72.070.B, when reviewing an appeal or a call for review for a landmark designation application, the Commission may:

1. Consider any issues associated with the decision being appealed or called for review, in addition to the specific grounds for the appeal or call for review; and
2. Reverse, modify, or affirm, in whole or in part, the determination, decision, or action that is the subject of the appeal or call for review.

When reviewing an appeal or a call for review, the Commission shall adopt findings in support of the intended action on the application. These findings are the same findings as required for the original decision.

In this case, pursuant to PMC Section 17.62.040.D.2, the findings for designation of a landmark are as follows: a landmark may be the best representation in the City of a type of historic resource or it may be one of several historic resources in the City that have common architectural attributes that represent a particular type of historic resource. A landmark shall meet one or more of the following criteria:

- A. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the City.
- B. It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the City.

- C. It 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 significant to the City or possesses artistic values of significance to the City.
- D. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important locally in prehistory of history.

In addition, pursuant to PMC Section 17.62.040.A, these criteria must be applied according to applicable National Register of Historic Places Bulletins for evaluating historic properties, including the seven aspects of integrity.

At the February 18, 2025 Historic Preservation Commission hearing, questions were raised regarding the possibility of the original school building on the property being eligible for landmark designation as an example of the work of the architects who designed the building, Eugene Weston, Jr. and Keith Marston, who were both sons of master architects. Weston and Marston completed commissions separately and together throughout the greater Los Angeles region.

Per the AIA Historical Directory, Keith Marston was born in Pasadena in 1914 and obtained a degree from the University of Southern California in 1936. He worked for Marston & Maybury (a partnership between his father, Sylvanus Marston and Edgar Maybury) from 1936 to 1941 and then worked as an associate to his father, Sylvanus Marston, from 1941 to 1946 after which he formed his own firm. Works associated with Keith Marston include La Canada Junior High School (1951), Roosevelt School (1953) in Pasadena, and Madison Elementary School (1953) and John Marshall Junior High School (1955) both in Pomona.

The AIA Historical Directory did not provide information regarding Eugene Weston, Jr. beyond his office location at 963 W. Colorado Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Based on research, Staff has determined that there is not sufficient evidence to classify Eugene Weston, Jr. and Keith Marston as master architects such that the subject property would qualify as an exemplary design that is eligible for landmark designation as an example of their work. While Sylvanus Marston and Eugene Weston, Sr. may be considered master architects, simply being the sons of master architects does not convey historical significance to the architects and no evidence was found to indicate that their body of work is historically significant to the City or the region.

Staff consulted the City's draft Historic Context Statement (HCS) for further assistance in evaluating the property, as it is nearly complete and will soon be released for public review. The HCS discusses institutional development trends in the City and provides evaluation guidelines and integrity considerations for properties that fall under the theme of Public and Private Education. The HCS indicates that the development of public education in Pasadena followed national trends overall and outlines guidelines and considerations for public education facilities to qualify for designation. The draft report states, "A public school building or campus that is significant under this theme may be eligible... as a post-World War II school reflecting the expansion and growth of the school district after the war." It goes on to state that "Most post-World War II public educational facilities reflect the Mid-Century Modern design and planning concepts, which emphasizes horizontal features and clustered plans with integrated open space and walkways, primarily in "finger" formations and layouts." The 1953 construction of the Roosevelt School was originally based on a finger/cluster plan and Mid-Century Modern design features.

The HCS further indicates that, “post-World War II public schools are most likely to be eligible as landmark or historic districts, for representing a uniform campus-wide design that adheres to a unified plan for the school and reflects postwar planning principles” but that a property may rise to individual eligibility if it retains enough physical features and required aspects of integrity to convey historic significance as an exemplary post-1933 Mid-Century Modern facility. Completing some alterations on a building does not necessarily preclude it from being individually eligible, provided the existing features are able to continue to convey its historic significance.

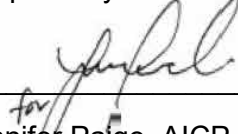
The Roosevelt School has undergone a number of additions that have enclosed originally open walkways and outdoor spaces such that the original school is no longer comprised of separate buildings that reflect a finger/cluster plan. In addition, features relating to its Mid-Century Modern design have been removed and/or modified such as the original entry design at the front and louvers at roof edges that have been removed throughout.

Based on this additional analysis, staff continues to find that the Roosevelt School does not meet the criteria for landmark designation and recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission uphold the November 8, 2024 staff decision to disapprove the application.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission uphold the Directors’ November 8, 2024 decision that the subject property does not meet any of the criteria to be eligible for landmark designation and disapprove the application.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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#### **Attachments:**

- A. April 1, 2024 Eligibility determination letter (Criterion A application)
- B. November 8, 2024 Eligibility determination letter (Criterion C application)
- C. Application report