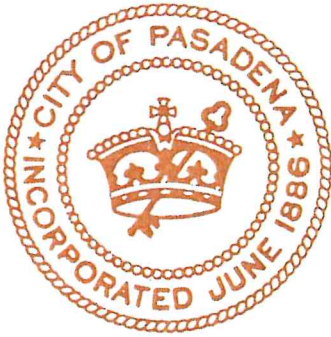




Agenda Report

November 17, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: APPROVE THE DESIGNATION OF THE HERNLY HOUSE AT 1475 SCENIC DRIVE 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 Hernly House at 1475 Scenic Drive 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 a locally significant property type, architectural style and period and represents the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City. It is a locally significant example of a Mid-Century Modern style single-family development designed by locally significant architect Lawrence Test;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1475 Scenic Drive, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 1475 Scenic Drive, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On September 2, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the Hernly House at 1475 Scenic Drive as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.

BACKGROUND:

On June 17, 2025, property owners Case Simmons and Kimberly Wu submitted an application for landmark designation of the building at 1475 Scenic Drive. City staff evaluated the property and determined that the building qualifies for designation as a landmark.

The Site

The property is located on a rectangular shaped, upward-sloping lot on the south side of Scenic Drive. The building maintains an average setback from the street and a landscaped front yard. The residence includes an attached/integrated one-car garage and adjoining one-car carport accessed by a driveway at the east side of the site. The surrounding context is comprised of other single-family residences in a variety of styles and construction dates.

Exterior Features of the Building

The Hernly House is characterized by an L-shaped asymmetrical plan; a distinctive low-pitched triple-offset shed roof with deep overhanging closed eaves; walls clad in plywood siding with applied battens integrated into window mullions; large, grouped picture windows with horizontal louvers below for air circulation throughout the house; and a garage incorporated under the home on the low side of the site slope and a carport extending beyond the main volume of the house. There is a detached pergola shade structure covering at the rear of the property that is also original to the house.

Documented Changes to the Property

The property has undergone few major exterior changes since it was originally built in 1949. A covered carport was added to the east side of the residence in 1951 and a rear porch was enclosed at the same time. A pool was added in 1950. Based on the historical photographs provided, it appears that the wood exterior of the house was originally unpainted, but is currently painted.

Mid-Century Modern Architecture

The “Sub-Theme: Mid-Century Modern, 1945-1968” section of the Architecture and Design Context of the City of Pasadena Historic Context Statement describes the context in which Mid-Century Modern Architecture gained in popularity:

The development of Mid-century Modern architecture was fostered in part by Arts & Architecture magazine’s pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966). The Case Study houses were a forward-looking series of built and unbuilt projects sponsored by the Los Angeles based magazine and the brainchild of its editor, John Entenza. The program was conceived as a forum for experimentation in

low-cost housing for middle-class families, in response to the post-war housing shortage. The houses used modular construction, industrial materials, rectilinear forms, glass curtain walls, open plans, and a blurring of the distinction between indoor and outdoor space. The demarcation between public and private spaces was clearly defined, with the living spaces oriented toward a central, private garden and shielded from the street.

Lawrence Test

Lawrence Test was a notable Pasadena architect. Born in 1891, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and later became the University Architect for the University of Southern California. He apprenticed under Reginald Johnson and was a member of the American Institute of Architects from 1930-1935 and 1945-1953. His notable projects in Pasadena include the subject property (1475 Scenic Drive, 1949) and the Dickinson House (1429 Bellmore Way, 1941).

Character-Defining Features of House

- One-story configuration with integrated garage
- Plywood siding with applied battens integrated into window mullions
- Large expanses of glass
- Integrated vents
- Projecting canopy eaves
- Sloped roof
- Detached patio structure at rear
- Carport

ANALYSIS:

The Hernly House at 1475 Scenic Drive 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 is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Mid-Century Modern style single-family residence, designed by Lawrence Test. 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 residence retains the majority of its original form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its simple massing, plywood exterior, large expanses of windows, roof form and entryway.

- Setting: The surrounding context includes other single-family residences that were constructed in the 1940s-1960s that remain intact.
- Materials: The building retains a majority of its original exterior materials including plywood siding, large expanses of glass, and rolled torch down roofing.
- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of Mid-Century Modern single-family design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern architectural style evokes the feeling of Mid-Century Modern residential architecture in Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 1475 Scenic Drive retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with Mid-Century Modern residential development 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 one-story configuration with integrated garage, plywood siding with applied battens integrated into window mullions, large expanses of glass, integrated vents, projecting canopy eaves, and sloped roof. All alterations to the building, including the addition of a covered carport adjacent to the garage, is compatible with the original structure. Contributing features to this designation include the main residential building and attached carport and the detached patio structure at the rear.

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.”

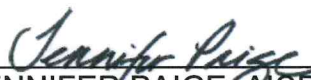
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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



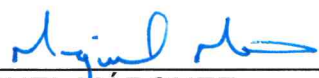
STEPHANIE CISNEROS
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



KEVIN JOHNSON
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MIGUEL MÁRQUEZ
City Manager

Attachments (4):

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