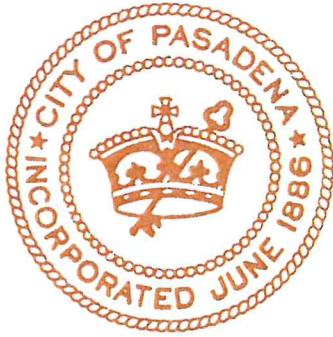




Agenda Report

November 17, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: **APPROVE THE DESIGNATION OF THE FRONT PROPERTY LINE
RETAINING WALL AT 333, 353 AND 375 ANITA 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 front property line retaining wall at 333, 353 and 375 Anita Drive meets Criterion C as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2.c because it possesses artistic values of significance to the City. The front property line retaining wall that extends across three properties is a unique and highly crafted landscape feature that references the original Tudor Revival design of the house at 353 Anita Drive (which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places) and demarcates the likely extent of the original property's frontage along Anita Drive;
3. Adopt a resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for the retaining wall fronting 333, 353 and 375 Anita Drive, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute a Declaration of Landmark Designation for the retaining wall fronting 333, 353 and 375 Anita Drive, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On July 15, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the retaining wall fronting 333, 353 and 375 Anita Drive as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.

BACKGROUND:

On March 17, 2025, E. J. Remson, owner of 375 Anita Drive, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the front retaining wall spanning 333, 353 and 375 Anita Drive. The owners of 333 and 353 Anita Drive have indicated in writing their support for the designation of the wall on their respective properties. City staff evaluated the property and determined that the historic site feature, the retaining wall, qualifies for designation as a landmark.

The Site

The retaining wall fronts three irregularly shaped properties on the west side of Anita Drive within the Cheviotdale Heights neighborhood. All three residences are set above and back from the street and are accessible by up-sloping driveways. The retaining wall spans approximately 304 feet in length, not including voids for driveway openings. The property at 353 Anita Drive, designed by notable architect Donald R. Wilkinson, is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places and the retaining wall extends beyond this property to the adjoining properties, which were likely originally part of the 353 Anita Drive site and later subdivided; houses were built on those lots in 1940 (333 Anita Drive) and 1950 (375 Anita Drive).

Exterior Features

The retaining wall is designed in the Tudor Revival style and is composed of brick, concrete and Arroyo stones with a peaked brick cap. The wall also has brick and stone pillars capped with tiered pyramidal concrete caps at the south end and flanking the driveway opening of 375 Anita Drive are two brick and stone pillars with simplified pyramidal caps. At the north end of the wall, the driveway opening to 333 Anita Drive is flanked by a concrete retaining wall with no caps. Specific to 353 Anita Drive, the wall incorporates a wrought iron gate for pedestrian access from the street and a similarly designed driveway gate for vehicular access, both of which are original to the design. As the wall spans from south to north, it is tiered to correlate to the topography at any given location.

Documented Changes to the Property

The wall was likely originally constructed, along with the house at 353 Anita Drive, in 1926. As the area around this property developed over time, driveway openings punctured the wall to allow for vehicular access to 333 and 375 Anita Drive, likely at the time of construction for both properties. The punctured openings for 375 Anita Drive maintain similarly designed pillars. The openings for 333 Anita Drive appear to be modern concrete simple retaining walls, likely modified or constructed when the house was altered post-1950.

Tudor Revival Architecture¹

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 residential developments to attract buyers and tenants looking for affordable housing options. The retaining wall fronting 333, 353, and 375 Anita Drive is reflective of the Tudor Revival style.

Donald R. Wilkinson

Donald Reuben Wilkinson is one of Southern California's most prolific architects whose Southern California career spanned from approximately 1912 until his death in 1975 and whose commissions can be found in various cities throughout the region. Wilkinson was born in Chicago in 1891 and attended the Chicago Art Institute in the early 1900s. Post-completion of his coursework in 1910, he apprenticed with D. H. Burnham & Company until he moved to Los Angeles in 1912. Upon arriving to Los Angeles, he worked as a draftsman for local architects Robert Farquhar and Reginald Johnson. He eventually went on to travel and study in Europe following World War I and received a diploma from Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1919. In the same year, Wilkinson entered a submission for a Spanish Colonial Revival residential design into a competition sponsored by the Los Angeles Pressed Brick Company and won third place. At the time of the commission for 353 Anita Drive, Wilkinson was a practicing architect with the firm Meyer & Holler Architects, Engineers and Builders, whose presence became well-known among the design-build field throughout Southern California. Wilkinson remained as a practicing architect with the firm from 1920 to 1932. His name became tied to some of the firm's high-profile projects including the Grauman's Chinese Theater (1926), the Hollywood Athletic Club (1927), and at least three churches for the Christian Science Church in Los Angeles and Glendale among others.

Character-Defining Features of Wall

- Original form, plan, and structure
- Brick, stone and concrete materials
- Brick and stone pillars with concrete caps
- Sloped brick linear caps

ANALYSIS:

The retaining wall fronting 333, 353, and 375 Anita Drive is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.D.2, which states:

¹ Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915 – 1942, page 33.

[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 retaining wall is significant because it is a unique and highly crafted landscape feature that references the original Tudor Revival design of the house at 353 Anita Drive (which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places) and demarcates the likely extent of the original property's frontage along Anita Drive; The wall has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as follows:

- Location: The retaining wall is in its original location.
- Design: The wall retains the majority of its form, plan, structure, and style, including its brick, stone and concrete materials, brick and stone pillars with concrete caps, and sloped brick linear cap.
- Setting: The wall was constructed at a time when 353 Anita Drive was one of the only properties developed on the street. Subsequent to the construction, the lot was subdivided and developed with additional single-family residences at later dates. The setting has changed to include the development of other single-family residences. However, the retaining wall was maintained at the front of the current three lots.
- Materials: The wall retains all of its original exterior materials, except for minor removal of wall areas to accommodate later construction of driveways.
- Workmanship: The wall retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of the Tudor Revival style as applied to a landscape feature, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The wall expresses characteristics of the Tudor Revival architectural style and evokes the feeling of the early residential development in the Cheviotdale Hills neighborhood of Pasadena.
- Association: The wall fronting 333, 353, and 375 Anita Drive retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with the Tudor Revival style and early-20th century residential development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the retaining wall retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The wall retains all of its original character-defining features, including its original form, plan, structure, style, brick, stone and concrete materials, brick and stone pillars with concrete caps, and sloped brick linear cap. All alterations to the wall, including insertion of driveway openings, are compatible with the original structure. Contributing features to this designation include the retaining wall only. As previously indicated, the house at 353 Anita Drive with which the wall is associated has already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places; the retaining wall was not expressly included as a contributing feature to that listing.

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.”

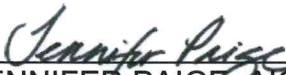
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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,



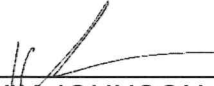
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City Manager

Attachments (4):

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