

# Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: CITY MANAGER  
SUBJECT: **Appeal of Decision of Cultural Heritage Commission to Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition of 175 N. Bonnie Ave.**

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the house at 175 North Bonnie Avenue does not qualify for designation as a landmark nor as a structure of merit (according to the definitions in P.M.C. §2.75.110 T and §2.75.120); and
2. Based on this finding, affirm the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the house at 175 North Bonnie Avenue.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The lot at 175 N. Bonnie Avenue has a 1912 Craftsman house. The property is zoned RM 16-PK, which allows parking lots to support businesses nearby on Walnut Street. The applicant proposes to demolish the house and construct a parking lot. Because the house is over 50 years old, the Cultural Heritage Commission may order a six month delay in the demolition. A delay is authorized by Code only for structures that qualify as either "landmarks" or "structures of merit," and only if the structural condition of the house and its site conditions make relocation feasible. The Commission found that the house does not qualify for status as either a landmark or structure of merit because it has been severely altered.

A neighbor has appealed the decision by the Cultural Heritage Commission to approve demolition of the house without delay. The applicants contend that the proposed parking lot will negatively impact their neighborhood.

## **BACKGROUND:**

At a meeting held on December 6, 1999, the Cultural Heritage Commission approved an application for Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the house at 175 North Bonnie Ave. The property is zoned with a parking overlay zone (RM16-PK), and the owner, Mark Kazarian, proposes to develop a parking lot to support his auto body repair business on Walnut Street. The Commission reviewed the application at two meetings,

which were attended by neighbors who objected to the development of a parking lot on this residential street.

## **ANALYSIS**

The house is a modest example of the Craftsman Bungalow style with its shallow gable roof, broad front porch supported by wood columns on tapered brick piers, projecting rafter tails, and multi-paned casement windows. Unfortunately, the historic significance of the house has been severely diminished by the following alterations:

- an oversized front dormer containing an inappropriate aluminum window,
- asbestos siding, and
- louvered windows on the south side.

Due to these alterations, the Commission found that the house does not qualify for designation as a landmark or as a structure of merit, and it issued the Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition. By code, the Commission can stay a demolition *only* if it finds that the building qualifies for “landmark” designation or as a “structure of merit.”

The house could be considered a structure of merit if it is a contributor to a possible landmark district with ten or more contiguous properties. The neighborhood is just north of PCC and has groupings of historic houses and a few newer apartment buildings. The 1993 Citywide Historic Resources Survey found that the street is a “historic resource planning area.” (category 5). However, the Commission has to make a more careful determination in cases like these, and they found that the house does not qualify as a structure of merit because of the alterations that have been made over the years. Unless the Commission adopts findings that the building qualifies as a structure of merit or was eligible for landmark designation, the Cultural Heritage ordinance directs: “the Certificate of Appropriateness [for demolition] shall be issued without further review...” (§2.75.210 B).

The party filing the appeal, Mario Calderon, 155 N. Bonnie, was one of four or five neighbors who objected to the demolition due to impacts on traffic, safety, property values, and precedent for more parking lots in the future. Code provisions do not permit the Commission to consider the quality or impacts of the replacement project when considering a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The first issue the Commission considers is the historic significance of the house and its neighborhood. If the house is considered significant, then the Commission considers whether a demolition delay might result in preservation of the house, either in its current location or at a new site.

Due to the possibility that the house might be considered a structure of merit, the applicant advertised the house on six occasions in the Pasadena Star News as a relocation prospect. Staff assisted the publicity effort. After three months of advertising, to our knowledge, no one has stepped forward with a plan to move the house.

### **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

1. Deny the appeal and approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.
2. Find that the alterations to the house are not as substantive as the Commission believes and that the house qualifies as a structure of merit. Issue a stay of demolition of 180 days or less. (Note that the appellant's desire to preserve the house at its current location only seems likely if the parking overlay zone is eliminated by a zone change approved by Planning Commission and City Council. A directive to staff to undertake such a study could be a part of this option.)

### **HOUSING IMPACT:**

The proposal will reduce the City's housing inventory by one unit in order to assist a growing commercial business.

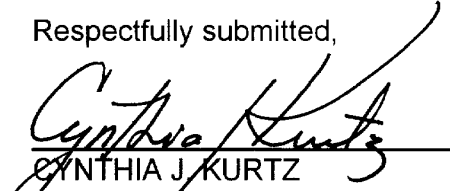
### **WORKLOAD IMPACT:**

A decision on the appeal will not affect the staff's workload.

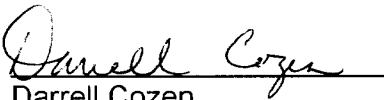
### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Council's decision on the appeal will not affect revenues to the City. The General Fee Schedule sets fees to cover the cost of reviewing the application to the Commission and the appeal to the Council.


Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Written by:

  
Darrell Cozen  
Planner

Approved by:

  
Darrell L. Lewis  
Director,  
Planning & Permitting Department

Attachments:

1. Application
2. Site Map
3. Photographs of 175 N. Bonnie
4. Appeal Letter from Mario Calderon