



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: 268 W. Kenneth Road: Glendale Register Nomination and Mills Act Application

1. Motion authorizing listing of the property located at 268 W. Kenneth Road, Glendale, California, on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources as GR-136 to be known as the "Webber House".
2. Motion authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act historic property contract with the property owner of 268 W. Kenneth Road, Glendale, California, pursuant to Section 15.20.070.A of the Glendale Municipal Code.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for September 21, 2021 **calendar**

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Submitted by:

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Reviewed by:

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Michael J. Garcia, City Attorney

Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council list the property located at 268 W. Kenneth Road in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources (GR-136 and to be called the “Webber House”) and authorize the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act historic property contract with the property owner.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Introduction

The owners of the single-family house at 268 W. Kenneth Road request that the property be considered for local listing on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources. Based on a field visit to the property, information on the property obtained from City records, and the nomination and historical documentation submitted by the owner (Exhibit 1), the property appears to meet the criteria for eligibility to the Glendale Register of Historic Resources under Criterion 3. The property owners also request to enter into a Mills Act contract with the City of Glendale for the benefit of property tax savings in exchange for continued preservation of the property.

Glendale’s Historic Preservation Ordinance establishes the process for designating historic properties locally and outlines the procedure for considering future alterations of those officially designated properties, which includes the review role of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). On August 19, 2021, HPC reviewed the nomination and voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend to the City Council that the property at 268 W. Kenneth Road be designated as a local historic resource, be added to the Glendale Register as GR-136 as the “Webber House,” and that the City Manager be authorized to enter into a Mills Act historic property contract with the property owner under Section 15.20.070A of the Glendale Municipal Code.

Historic Significance and Eligibility of the Property

Historical Background

268 W. Kenneth Road is a one-story, single-family house, located in the Verdugo Viejo neighborhood, that was designed by A. Quincy Jones and completed in 1950. It is an excellent example of Modern-style post-and-beam construction, for which Jones was well known, and also represents a relatively early work in his career. He was one of the key architects of mid-20th century design in Southern California, with numerous awards to his name, including one for a design that the subject property is based upon. Other notable works include his designs for the famous “Eichler House” tracts in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Orange County, his architectural office in West Los Angeles, the unbuilt Case Study House #24 (all in partnership with Frederick Emmons), and the Annenberg Estate (“Sunnylands”) in Palm Springs. Jones was also closely associated

with the USC School of Architecture, teaching in the program for almost thirty years and serving as dean for three years. The nomination provides extensive documentation regarding Jones' career.

The design of 268 W. Kenneth is a near-copy of a Jones design built for a local developer in San Diego in 1949. Marketed as the "Sun Villa," the house won an AIA First Honor Award and was published in *Architectural Forum* and *House Beautiful*. The developer went on to build several other iterations in the San Diego area. As an early work in Jones' career, it reflected his interest in bringing high-design to easily replicable tract housing that would be both affordable and appealing to postwar homebuyers. This would continue throughout much of his career, as seen at the Mutual Housing Association development in Crestwood Hills and the various Eichler tracts in Northern and Southern California. Like the Sun Villa, the house in Glendale features a compact design that nonetheless feels spacious due to the open-plan living space, high, sloping ceilings, extensive use of glass, and emphasis on linking each room to its own outdoor space.

The house changed hands a number of times in its early years. Jones designed it for the first owners, Frank Webber, a public school teacher, and his wife Mary. The Webbers lived there for only a short time, selling it to Harry and Lillian Gilmore in early 1951. Mr. Gilmore's career appears to have focused on Native Americans and he served for a period as a superintendent with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1952, the Gilmores sold to Maurice Buchen, the manager of Angelus Temple in Echo Park, and his wife Isabel. By September 1953, Gilbert and Mary Greene had bought the house and it remained in their family until 1997. No information provided in the application suggest that any of these owners made significant contributions to the history of Glendale or the region and the house does not appear eligible under Criterion 2. The current owners purchased the property in 2013. The house was featured on the Glendale Historical Society's "Mad for Modern" house tour in 2015.

Based on the information in the nomination, attached to this report as Exhibit 1 and incorporated by reference, HPC found the property eligible for listing in the Glendale Register under Criterion 3, as detailed in the "Findings of Eligibility" section below. HPC also recommends that, in accordance with the City's naming protocol, the house be called the Webber House.

Architectural Description

The house is located on the south side of Kenneth Road and is set back deeply on its downward sloping lot. From the street, the flat-roofed carport is the most prominent feature, along with an interesting privacy fence that spans the remainder of the street

frontage and is built out of wide, zigzagging vertical boards. This establishes the architect's goal of maximizing the occupants' privacy within the constraints of a standard suburban lot. A set of stairs leads downward from the carport toward a trellis-covered walkway accessing the front door. The house is rectangular in plan and features a simple front-gabled roof with a shallow pitch and very deep eaves. It is quite compact, containing less than 1000 square feet. The gable-end walls at the north and south are largely glazed and the side walls feature narrow clerestory windows that are shielded from both the sun and neighbors' views by the wide roof overhangs. The fully-glazed gables and clerestories provide for great expression of the post-and-beam structural system and the interesting cylindrical chimney at the living room.

The unglazed walls are clad with vertical siding, which is also employed at the carport and the fence separating the front courtyards. These outdoor spaces reflect Jones' interest in uniting interior and exterior spaces, with the living areas and bedrooms all opening onto patios that feel linked to each room and make the house feel larger. The front patio, off the living room and adjacent to the entry walkway, features non-original brick pavers. An adjacent courtyard is located on the other side of the walkway and is separated from this area by a wood fence clad with the same vertical siding used for the walls. A portion of this courtyard, which serves the primary bedroom, was altered in 2020 with the addition of a small office that abuts the rear wall of the carport. The simple design of the addition is complementary to the house without mimicking its design and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. At the rear, concrete and brick patios open off of the dining area/kitchen and rear bedroom. The property continues to slope down to the lowest portion at the rear of the lot, which features a swimming pool added in 1951.

Notable character-defining features of 268 W. Kenneth Road include:

- Simple rectangular plan
- Post-and-beam structure

- Low-pitched front gable roof with wide eaves
- Extensive glazing at the north and south facades, including at the gables
- Clerestory windows at the east and west facades
- Casement and fixed wood windows
- Vertical-board wood siding at areas of solid wall
- Slab front door
- Round chimney constructed of concrete pipe
- Stacked-bond buff-colored Roman brick at three-sides of the fireplace (interior and exterior) and combed red brick at its exterior facing the west property line
- Wood trellis over entry walkway
- Open carport with flat roof
- Privacy fence with wide, vertical wood boards and a zig-zag pattern at front yard
- Vertical board privacy screen at walkway and stairs leading to the house, with the boards set on the diagonal
- Vertical board fencing separating the front yard and the primary bedroom courtyard and at other locations
- Sliding aluminum doors opening to rear patio (the existing doors are replacements)

Alterations and Integrity

268 W. Kenneth Road retains a high degree of design and material integrity despite a few alterations. The 128 square-foot office addition is located behind the taller carport and alongside the privacy fence at the entry walkway. The addition is taller than the fence, but a wide clerestory window reduces its mass and allows its flat roof to have a floating appearance. The north wall of the office replaced about half of the storage cabinets, clad in vertical siding at the back side of the carport. The small size of the addition allows a significant amount of the open courtyard to remain. Several doors at the house have been replaced, including the sliding aluminum doors that closely match the originals. A slab wood door opening into the living room from the front yard was recently replaced with a glazed door to bring more light into the front room; HPC considered a condition to restore a slab door at this location but ultimately voted to allow the existing door to remain. New insulated roofing was also added recently using a thoughtful design that allows the thickness of the insulation to taper down at the perimeter, making it invisible from up close and barely discernable from more distant viewpoints. Finally, dog-eared fences and gates were added at the east and west sides of the property. While it is common for perimeter fences to vary from a property's historic appearance depending on which property owner has built it, the gates between the fence and each side the house maintains the same dog-eared boards used for the fence. HPC recommends that a Mills Act condition to replace the gates with new gates made of vertical boards similar to those used throughout the property to provide an

appropriate transition between the house and the non-original fence. Some commissioners found areas of wood rot at the front zig-zag fence and the Commission voted to add a condition to repair those areas.

HPC therefore recommends the following Mills Act condition:

1. Remove the dog-eared wood gates at the east and west sides of the house and replace with solid vertical-board gates in keeping with the appearance of the property's wood siding and fencing.
2. Repair areas of wood rot at the front zig-zag fence; any areas beyond repair to be replaced in kind with new wood to match dimension and texture.

Finding of Eligibility

After reviewing the nomination submitted by the owner and its supporting documentation, as well as visiting the site, HPC finds that, pursuant to Section 15.20.050 of the Glendale Municipal Code, the property meets Criterion 3 of the eligibility criteria for listing on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

Architectural Significance [Criterion 3]

To meet Criterion 3, a property must “embody the distinctive and exemplary characteristics of an architectural style, architectural type, period, or method of construction; or represent a notable work of a master designer, builder or architect whose genius influenced his or her profession; or possess high artistic values.”

268 W. Kenneth Road is an exemplary specimen of post-and-beam mid-20th century Modern design. It is a notable early house by A. Quincy Jones, whose work helped define a strain of modernism that is deeply associated with Southern California and the buildings produced by architects associated with the USC School of Architecture during the postwar era. It is also important as an example of well-designed, affordable housing based on Modernist principles that Jones and many in his cohort strove to create. The house retains a high level of historic integrity despite a few alterations and retains many character-defining features of its style.

FISCAL IMPACT

Listing historic properties in the Glendale Register has no fiscal impact. However, future property tax savings under Mills Act contracts to private owners of listed historic

properties would slightly reduce City revenues from the general County tax levy received from each Mills Act property.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: List 268 W. Kenneth Road in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, finding that the property meets designation Criterion 3, and authorize the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act historic property contract with the owner.

Alternative 2: Reject listing of 268 W. Kenneth Road in Glendale Register of Historic Resources, finding that the property does not meet Criterion 3, or any other criteria.

Alternative 3: The City Council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

The names and business addresses of the members of the board of directors, the chairperson, CEO, COO, CFO, subcontractors and any person or entity with more than 10% interest in the company or individual(s) proposed for contract in this Agenda Item Report are attached as Exhibit 4, in accordance with the City Campaign Finance Ordinance.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Glendale Register Application and Supporting Documentation

Exhibit 2: Photographs of 268 W. Kenneth Road

Exhibit 3: Mills Act Application

Exhibit 4: Campaign Finance Disclosure