



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue: Consideration of Glendale Register Nomination and Request for a Mills Act Historic Property Contract

1. Resolution to designate the residential property at 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue as a historic resource on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources and authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act Historical Property Contract with the owner of the property;
2. Motion to deny the request of the property owner to designate the residential property at 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue as a historic resource on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Public Hearing

Approved for May 3, 2022 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The owner of 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue requests that the City Council designate/list the property on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources and authorize a Mills Act historical property contract. The Spanish Colonial Revival-style house was built in 1926 and designed by S. Charles Lee, who was later renowned for his movie theater designs, including the marquee and spire of the Alex Theater.

On January 20, 2022, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed the nomination and voted 4-0 to recommend to the City Council that the property at 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue be listed in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources as the "Robert and Florence Dick 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.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Environmental Stewardship: the protection of properties through historic preservation is an inherently sustainable practice because the greenest building is the one that's already built.

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council approve designation/listing of the property in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources and authorize the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act historic property contract, with the conditions recommended by HPC, between the City and the property owner under Section 15.20.070A of the Glendale Municipal Code.

BACKGROUND

Historical Background

1639 Santa Barbara Avenue is a one-story, single-family residence built in 1926 and located in the Verdugo Woodlands neighborhood. The residence was designed by prominent movie theater architect S. Charles Lee and is an excellent example of a modestly-scaled Spanish Colonial Revival style residence. It was constructed early in Lee's career and, while not as flamboyant as his later theater work, features a number of interesting design features that set it apart from more-traditional iterations of the style by other architects. Lee's theater work includes the Tower Theater (1925) in downtown Los Angeles and the design or remodeling of over 400 other theaters. Glendalians know him best for his exuberant 1940 design of the Alex Theater's tower and marquee. Lee also designed several large scale single-family and multi-family residences in Los Angeles County. A more detailed biography is included in the nomination attached to this report as Exhibit 1.

The residence was built for owners Robert and Florence Dick, who retained the property for several decades until selling it in 1972. Mr. Dick is listed as an "importer" in the 1930 and 1940 historic census records and the nomination report cites him as the president of the Donald A. Holm Company, a tile importer and distributor. In 1972 the property was purchased by John A. and Diana M. Monday and in 1991 it was purchased by James W. Ripple. The home passed back and forth between Karen K. Miller and James W. Ripple between 1991 and 1996 before being purchased by the current owners in 1998. None of the previous owners appear to have made significant contributions to the history of Glendale or the region and therefore the residence does not appear eligible under Criterion 2. In addition, the property does not appear to be associated with important events in national, state, or city history nor exemplify significant contributions to the broad cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the nation, state, or city. Therefore, the residence does not appear eligible under Criterion 1.

Based on the information in the nomination, attached to this report as Exhibit 1 and incorporated by reference, HPC and staff believe the property is eligible for listing in the Glendale Register under Criterion 3 as detailed in the “Findings of Eligibility” section below. It is recommended that, in accordance with the Commission’s naming protocol, the house be called the Robert and Florence Dick House.

Architectural Description

The residence is located on the north side of Santa Barbara Avenue, a linear street in the Verdugo Woodlands neighborhood. The street is wide, with no sidewalks, and its mature street trees create a generous canopy over the street and residences. The single-story residence was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture, is clad in textured stucco, measures 2,277-square-feet, and has an irregular footprint. The front portion of the house has a cross-gabled roof clad with one-piece red clay s-tiles. A re-roof permit was issued in 1990, so this tile likely dates to that project. The roof at the rear portion of the house is flat, with clay tile parapet copings. The residence has an asymmetrical primary façade with a wide entrance turret featuring a conical roof and an interesting curved wood entrance door. The light fixture next to the door appears to be either original or a period-appropriate replacement. The awning above the door is not original and the tile address plaque is probably not as well. The entrance is accessed by three curved steps with terra cotta treads and small decorative tiles applied to the risers. The steps appear to be in their original configuration and have the original handrail. Terra cotta treads and several small decorative tiles at the risers have been added. This façade also features two multi-pane wood casement windows, with non-original flower boxes set in wrought iron frames, and two whimsical porthole windows. At the far east end of the façade, there is a parabolic arched opening. This originally accessed an open-air passageway, with a corresponding arch at the other end, that led to the central courtyard. Both arches were infilled with wood-and-glass doors and sidelights, apparently quite some time ago, to create a narrow interior room. An iron gate was installed at the front arch more recently. The gate does not follow the shape of the arch and is inappropriate in design. A set of brick steps that do not appear original but are appropriate to the design lead up to the infilled front arch.

The secondary facades are generally simple in design and aesthetic. A driveway leads from the street along the western façade and the eastern façade closely abuts the property to the east. The low iron gate and wall at the driveway are not original but appear appropriate to the property. The west and north facades have multiple multi-pane wood casement windows and one-over-one wood double-hung windows. A wood door provides a side entrance off the driveway.

Doors and windows from several rooms open onto the central courtyard, which is also accessed from the formerly-exterior passageway and a wood gate from the rear yard. The courtyard is paved with bricks in a double basket-weaved pattern and is partially covered by a shed roof that extends north from the building. This roof is supported by square wood posts set on low brick piers and has exposed beams below. At the west side of the courtyard, stairs with decorative tiles on the risers lead to multiple wood French doors with exterior wood screen doors. A decorative tile fountain (not currently functioning) is located at the north side of the courtyard.

A detached garage is located at the northeast corner of the lot. It has a square footprint, a flat roof with red clay tile coping, and is clad in textured stucco. A non-original metal garage door is located on the west façade that has a non-original horizontal wood surround.

Notable character-defining features of 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue include:

- Cross gabled-roof at front of house with red clay tiles
- Flat roof at rear of house with clay parapet copings
- Entrance turret with conical roof and curved wood door
- Parabolic arches at the east sides of the front and courtyard facades
- Small accent window at west side of entry turret
- Wrought iron light fixture at front door (if original)
- Primary façade porthole windows
- Eastern passageway with arched openings leading to the central courtyard
- Central courtyard
- Wood casement windows
- Wood French doors with wood screen doors
- Detached garage (altered)

Alterations and Integrity

The residence at 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue retains a high degree of integrity despite a few compatible alterations or alterations which can be mitigated occurring since original construction. A 1990 re-roof permit was issued, which likely led to the existing s-tile roof cladding. The architect's drawing includes sketched in roof tiles with something of an s-shaped profile. This was likely a drawing convention rather than an indication that s-tiles should be employed. While s-tile roofing existing at the time of construction, two-piece clay barrel tiles were typically used for Spanish Colonial Revival houses in Glendale. At this point, HPC recommends retaining the existing tiles because it is compatible with the building and the architectural style. Two-piece tile should be considered for any future reroofing. The original stairs on the primary façade, including the primary entrance and passageway stairs, and the stairs on the western façade were

replaced in the early 2000's by the current owner, though the alteration is minimal and appears to conform to the original design. At an unknown, but probably an early date, the wood doors enclosing the eastern passageway were added. The inappropriate iron gate was added at a later date. Additionally, the wood flower boxes, wrought iron work, awning, and tile street number plaque on the primary façade are not original to the building. At the garage opening, a metal door was installed that is currently in poor condition. Inappropriate horizontal wood strips were also added above and at the sides of the opening at some point. The alterations to the building over the years have been minor, are compatible, and/or are reversible. Therefore, the alterations do not compromise the building's integrity of design, workmanship, or materials.

HPC and staff therefore recommends the following Mills Act conditions:

1. Remove the metalwork in front of the window at the recessed portion of the front façade adjacent to the driveway.
2. Repair tiles at the fountain in courtyard, including replacement of missing or severely deteriorated tiles.
3. Replace garage door with a new wood door to recall the doors depicted on the S. Charles Lee drawing.
4. Remove horizontal wood siding at garage surround and repair underlying stucco as required.
5. Remove iron gate at parabolic-arched side door on the front façade. If the owners desire, it can be replaced with an appropriate new gate sized and designed to complement the shape of the arch and the overall design of the house after staff review and approval.
6. Remove all window-box ironwork.

ANALYSIS

Finding of Eligibility

After reviewing the nomination submitted by the owners and its supporting documentation, as well as visiting the site, Planning Division staff concludes that the property appears to meet Criterion 3 of the eligibility criteria for listing on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, as follows:

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.”

1639 Santa Barbara Avenue is an excellent example of a modestly-scaled Spanish Colonial Revival-style house that features interesting design element and planning not commonly found on the type. The residence was designed by S. Charles Lee, a master architect who impacted the aesthetics of movie theater design from 1920 to 1950 with his theory of “the show starts on the sidewalk.” The house, though modest in comparison to Lee’s theater work and other large scale single-family commissions from the period, incorporates details on the primary façade that create intrigue from the public right-of-way. The porthole windows, large turret entrance with curved door, and eastern passageway set this building apart from more typical Spanish Colonial Revival buildings and make it a distinctive example within the city. The property is an excellent and intact example of this style in Glendale, retains a high level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, despite some alterations, and retains many character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Therefore, the subject property is eligible for listing on the Glendale Register under Criterion 3.

Staff recommends that City Council consider HPC’s recommendation and find the property eligible for designation as a historic resource on the Glendale Register under Criterion 3, and authorize the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act contract, with the recommended conditions, between the City and the property owner.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

There are no stakeholders other than the property owner.

FISCAL IMPACT

Listing historic properties in the Glendale Register has no fiscal impact. However, future property tax savings to private owners of listed historic properties under Mills Act contracts will slightly reduce City property tax revenues from the general County tax levy received from each Mills Act property.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

The project is exempt from CEQA review as Class 31 (“Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation”) and Class 8 (“Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment”) exemptions pursuant to Sections 15331 and 15308 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it involves the designation and protection/preservation of a historic resource.

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 proposed for contract in this Agenda Item Report are attached in Exhibit 4, in accordance with the City Campaign Finance Ordinance No. 5744.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Designate 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue as a historic resource on 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 contract, with conditions, between the City and the property owner.

Alternative 2: Reject designation/listing of 1639 Santa Barbara Avenue on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, finding that the property does not meet Criterion 3 or any other criteria.

Alternative 3: Any other alternative not proposed by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

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

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit 1 Glendale Register Nomination

Exhibit 2 Photographs

Exhibit 3 Mills Act Application

Exhibit 4 Campaign Disclosure