



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: 849 Cavanagh Road: Consideration of Glendale Register Nomination and Request for a Mills Act Historic Property Contract.

1. Resolution to designate the residential property at 849 Cavanagh Road as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, as the Vida H. Wallace House, and authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act Historical Property Contract with the property owner.
2. Motion to deny the request of the property owner to designate the residential property at 849 Cavanagh Road as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Public Hearing

Approved for November 1, 2022 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The owner of 849 Cavanagh Road requests that the City Council designate/list the property in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources and authorize a Mills Act historical property contract. The house was designed in 1928 by master architect Paul Williams and is an excellent and highly intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture.

On April 21, 2022, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed the nomination and voted 5-0 to recommend to the City Council that the property at 849 Cavanagh Road be listed in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources as the "Vida H. Wallace 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 preserving an existing structure is more sustainable than the development of a new structure.

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council authorize 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

849 Cavanagh Road is a three-story, single-family residence built in 1928. The residence was designed by master architect Paul Williams and is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style. Paul Williams (1894-1980) was one of the most celebrated architects of the 20th century, designing in a variety of styles including the Period Revivals and Mid-Century Modern over a career spanning more than five decades. In 1923, he became the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was elected into its College of Fellows in 1953. He posthumously received the group's Gold Medal in 2017. Williams designed many types of buildings, including single-family homes, public housing projects, and commercial and institutional buildings. Among his works are numerous homes, including many designed for Hollywood celebrities, the Angelus Funeral Home, the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance building, and the 28th Street and Hollywood YMCAs. A detailed biography of Williams' life and work can be found in the nomination packet attached as Exhibit 1.

The original owner, Vida H. Wallace, was a widow who shared the house with her unmarried sister. Wallace had moved to Los Angeles early in the 20th century with her husband Dr. Frederick Wallace, a dentist, who passed away in 1920. Vida Wallace was an active socialite in the community hosting many events at the property where she lived until her death in 1955. In 1956, the property was purchased by Dorothy and Carl Herrick, a real estate agent, and in 2013 it was owned by television producer, writer, and stand-up comic Mark Brazill and Shelley Brazill, a real estate agent. The current owner, Karen N. Young, purchased the house in 2017.

No information provided in the application suggests that the property is identified with important events in national, state, or city history, or that it exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, political, economic, social, tribal, or historic heritage of the nation, state, or city. It therefore does not appear eligible under Criterion 1. Additionally, none of the previous owners appear to be significant in the history of the

nation, state, region, or city and therefore, the property does not appear eligible under Criterion 2.

Architectural Description

The 3,806-square-foot residence is located on a 20,930-square-foot irregularly shaped lot within the winding streets at the base of the Verdugo Mountains, just north of the pending Bellehurst historic district. Only the rear façade is visible from Cavanagh Road. The house is at the end of a winding driveway shared by homes on lots that were later subdivided from the original parcel. The rock retaining wall along the driveway appears to date to the original construction but most of it is no longer part of the property.

The house has an L-shaped footprint, is clad in smooth stucco, has a low pitched-hipped and gabled roof clad in two-piece clay tiles, and has an asymmetrical primary façade. It has three levels, which are each visible at the rear façade. From the front, the house appears to be two-stories high, with one story projections at the living room wing and the attached garage. The living room wing to the south has a pair of tall arched wood sliding doors set into a segmental blind arch separated and flanked by stucco pilasters. These doors, which opened onto the front yard, have been sealed but the original interior pocket screen doors still function. The primary entrance is located at roughly the center of the primary façade. The elaborate wood-paneled entrance door has a stained-glass speakeasy window and a somewhat Moorish appearance. The door is recessed in the splayed opening, which has stucco mouldings wrapping the wall and jamb at the top of each side that work a little visual magic by giving the appearance of flanking pilasters. The doorway is accessed by a simple concrete porch. The front landscaping is notable in its simplicity. The decomposed granite yard, with only limited planting, feels more Iberian than Glendalian. It is not known if this remains from Williams' vision for the property or is something that developed later, but it does feel appropriate to the house and refreshingly different from the abundant landscaping so often found at the front of Glendale's homes.

The second story above the entrance cantilevers slightly with a bold horizontal beam and corbels which are mirrored around the building under the slight eave overhang of the roof. The projecting "L" of the building to the north has a wrought iron balcony facing east accessed by wood multi-light French doors. Below the balcony is another deeply set blind arch with a steel multi-light casement window. This type of window can be seen throughout the building in singles and pairs. Most of these windows have a deep recess with a steep canted sill on the non-primary façades. It also appears that the windows on the lower level of the non-primary facades were replaced with compatible steel windows, though they were installed flush to the façade and not recessed.

The lot slopes steeply to the west and the building's design responds to the topography. A stone staircase and winding path leads down the lot along the south façade and back up to a rear patio spanning the rear (west) façade. The patio features a stucco wall with wide, flat, brick coping. The building's massing along the west façade is irregular, mimicking the slope of the lot below, with the full three story mass exposed to view. At the center of the façade, wood French doors set within another deeply recessed arch allow access to the residence from the patio. Above this entrance, a small wrought iron Juliet balcony supported by corbels is visible.

A stone staircase leads back up the lot to the north where there is a small open patio with two additional entrance doors. The doors are contemporary wood paneled doors and it is unclear if these are original. The patio was covered with a corrugated sheet metal roof supported by metal decorative posts at an unknown date and is not appropriate to the building.

The attached garage located to the north has a gabled roof and two segmentally-arched openings with paneled wood doors that appear to be original. A utility light is mounted between the garage doors which is not appropriate to the design of the building and should be replaced. Non-original wood gates with stucco columns separate the property from the shared driveway.

Notable character-defining features of 849 Cavanagh Road include:

- "L"-shaped footprint
- 2-story massing at front and 3-story massing at rear
- Asymmetrical primary façade
- 2-piece red clay tile roof cladding
- Multiple gabled, hipped, and shed roof forms
- Smooth stucco cladding
- Cantilevered second-story at front façade with exposed beam and corbels
- Tall arched wood windows/doors on primary facade
- Multi-pane deeply-recessed steel casement windows with canted sills
- Wood entrance door with glazed speakeasy door
- Simple concrete entrance stairs
- Winding rock walkways, stairs, and retaining walls
- Paneled wood garage doors in segmentally-arched openings
- Wrought iron balconies on front and rear facades

Alterations and Integrity

The residence at 849 Cavanagh Road retains a high degree of integrity with minimal and/or compatible alterations occurring since original construction. In 2003, the house was re-roofed in kind with two-piece red clay tiles. At an unknown date the steel windows along the lower levels on the non-primary facades were replaced with compatible, almost-identical steel windows. The recess of these windows were changed to flush, yet this change does not deter from the overall design of the building. The arched windows on the primary façade were originally pocket doors and were sealed at some point, but this alteration only affected their function, not their appearance. Along the north (side) façade, a corrugated metal roof was added over the open patio and some alterations were made to the entry doors and windows on this façade (based on stucco repair/scarring). Fabric awnings were added over the primary entrance and various windows. Most of these are appropriate to the style but the awning over the front door detracts from its appearance and should be removed or replaced. The large retractable canopy over the arched living room windows serves a functional use and is relatively unobtrusive when retracted. The house was re-stuccoed with an appropriate smooth finish stucco at some point, though it is in need of repair in some places. A gate and wall were added at the end of the driveway enclosing the front of the property for security. It is simple and straightforward in design and may be seen as an acceptable intervention given that replacement with a more aesthetically “compatible” design could be problematic. None of these alterations deter from the building’s overall integrity of materials, design, workmanship, or feeling and the residence retains a high degree of integrity.

HPC and staff therefore recommend the following Mills Act conditions:

1. Repair failing/damaged stucco on residence where needed.
2. Repair cracks in concrete entrance porch.
3. Replace utility light fixture between garage doors with a period appropriate fixture.
4. Remove corrugated metal roof over north patio and replace with stylistically appropriate roof cover or leave patio uncovered.

ANALYSIS

Finding of Eligibility

After reviewing the nomination submitted by the owner and its supporting documentation, as well as visiting the site, HPC found that the property appears to meet Criterion 3 of the eligibility criteria for listing in 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; and retain integrity.”

849 Cavanagh Road is an excellent and highly intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture and was designed by renowned architect Paul Williams. The building is simple and thoughtful in design with modest detailing such as large, arched window openings from the living room to the front yard, cantilevered second story with an exposed beam and corbels, and deeply recessed windows and doors that give the large scale building with generally flat facades a visual break in plane. The irregular massing of the west façade mimics the site’s slope, allowing the building to complement rather than compete with its surroundings. Landscaping details of winding rock walkways/stairs and natural vegetation contrast with the sharp lines and blocky volumes of the building. Paul Williams was a master architect, celebrated for his skill designing in various styles and for his influence on the built environment of Southern California. The building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style, thoughtfully designed with its setting in mind and retaining a high level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Therefore, the subject property is eligible for listing in 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 in 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 849 Cavanagh Road as a historic resource 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 contract, with conditions, between the City and the property owner.

Alternative 2: Reject designation/listing of 849 Cavanagh Road 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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Reviewed by:

Jay Platt, Principal Planner

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