



## CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

### AGENDA ITEM

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Report: 2795 Mira Vista Drive: Consideration of Glendale Register Nomination and Request for a Mills Act Historic Property Contract.

1. Resolution to designate the residential property at 2795 Mira Vista Drive as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, as the Sherman and Henrietta Ford 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 2795 Mira Vista Drive as a historic resource in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources.

### COUNCIL ACTION

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**Item Type:** Public Hearing

**Approved for** November 1, 2022 **calendar**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The owner of 2795 Mira Vista Drive 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 1936 and is an excellent and highly intact example of a modestly scaled Tudor Revival-style residence within the city.

On June 16, 2022, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed the nomination and voted 5-0 to recommend to the City Council that the property at 2795 Mira Vista Drive be listed in the Glendale Register of Historic Resources as the "Sherman and Henrietta Ford 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**

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**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**

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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**

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### *Historical Background*

2795 Mira Vista Drive is a one-story, single-family residence constructed in 1936 in the Verdugo Woodlands neighborhood. The property is an excellent and highly intact example of a modestly scaled Tudor Revival-style residence within the city. It was designed and built by builder John Frith who worked on a variety of projects including modest residences such as the subject property as well as larger houses and remodels for high profile clients including Fred Astaire and Humphry Bogart. He also built furniture such as desks and chairs for some residences. The nomination report (Exhibit 1) gives further information about Frith's life and career.

The house was built for Sherman W. Ford and his wife Henrietta. Sherman had recently retired from real estate when he gave Frith the commission. Ford owned the property for approximately ten years before selling it to Harry Albert and Shirley A. Isabel in 1946, who held it briefly before a selling it to Harry R. and Jean Agnes Hough the same year. In 1971, it was sold to George B. and Audrey Barrett before being sold to Richard "Dick" and Geraldine F. Alexander in 1973. Dick Alexander is an American sound engineer who has worked on over 170 films during a career spanning more than four decades. He won two Academy Awards for his work on *All the President's Men* in 1976 and *Bird* in 1988 and was nominated six additional times. Though Alexander appears to have lived at the residence during his peak professional years and held meetings with clients there, no information in the nomination or further research suggests his work has significantly impacted the sound engineering field or the history of the city. No other owners associated with the property appear to have made any significant contributions to local, state, or national history and the property does not appear eligible under Criterion 2. The current owner purchased the property in 1997. Additionally, 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.

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 recommends the house be listed as the “Sherman and Henrietta Ford House” after its original owners.

### *Architectural Description*

The residence is located on an irregularly shaped corner lot in the Verdugo Woodlands neighborhood. Mira Vista Drive is a short winding street located east of N. Verdugo Road. The lot measures only 3,406 square feet with the 1,153-square-foot house and attached garage occupying much of it. The one-story, single-family residence has an irregular footprint and an asymmetrical front façade that faces southeast towards Mira Vista Drive. A narrow brick walkway leads from the street to the entrance porch and a winding gravel walkway runs perpendicular in front of the property. The gravel walkway was added by the current owner. The house is mostly clad in stucco with horizontal wood clapboard in the gables, brick detailing at the entrance and below the bay windows, and half timbering around the entrance. It has a steeply pitched cross gable roof with slightly flared eaves and exposed rafter tails. The roof is clad in faux wood shingles which mimic the look of the original wood shingles. A prominent front-facing gable with low sloping eaves is located at the far west of the primary façade and a shed roof with a shallower pitch extends off this gable to create the small entrance porch. The shed roof is supported by wood posts and brackets and a brick wall encloses the porch to the south. The brick entrance steps, which face east, and metal handrail lead to the original paneled wood entry door with a metal grill viewer. The remainder of the primary façade contains three striking leaded-glass windows with a small diamond pattern. The window at the far west also has wood shutters. There are two bay windows on the building; one at the west end in the front facing gable with wood multi-pane fixed and casement windows, and one on the east façade with a combination of leaded glass and wood multi-pane windows. Additional window patterns on the non-primary facades include slightly recessed, multi-light wood casement windows with bold wood sills.

A wing wall with a single-leaf wood gate and squared-off opening allows access to a brick walkway along the west façade. This leads to a rear courtyard along the north façade with a brick patio. Two sets of multi-pane wood French doors with exterior screens flank the brick chimney with stepped shoulders at the center of this façade. At the east end of the patio there is a contemporary entrance door which leads to the kitchen and a single double-hung wood window. Beyond this door and window, a set of stairs lead down to a solid wood door at the rear of the garage.

The attached single-car garage is located at the northeast corner of the lot. It has a small, rectangular footprint with high pitched gable roof clad in faux wood shingles and

exposed rafter tails, mirroring the residence. There is a multi-light wood casement window on the south façade with wood shutters. The narrow swing up door is metal with vertical grooves. It does not appear to be original but is compatible with the house and style.

Notable character-defining features of 2795 Mira Vista Drive include:

- Irregular footprint
- One-story massing
- Steeply pitched roof with faux wood shingles, flared eaves, and exposed rafter tails
- Stucco, horizontal wood clapboard, and brick exterior cladding
- Half timbering
- Entrance porch with shed roof, bracket supports, and brick wall
- Wood-paneled door with metal grill viewer
- Leaded glass windows in diamond pattern
- Multi-light wood casement windows
- Multi-light wood French doors
- Wood shutters flanking one front façade window
- Bay windows
- Attached single-car garage (if original)
- Rear patio with step-shouldered brick chimney

### *Alterations and Integrity*

The residence at 2795 Mira Vista Drive retains a high degree of integrity with minimal alterations occurring since original construction. In 1988, a permit was issued to repair the chimney from the roofline up due to earthquake damage. It also appears that the chimney was painted at some point and the paint was later removed. According to the current owner, minor stucco repair has taken place in various locations with a compatible stucco finish. The house was also re-roofed with faux wood shingles prior to the current ownership which mimic the wood shingles called out on the original permit. A rear door which allows access to the kitchen was replaced at an unknown date with a more contemporary style door, but it is minimal in design and compatible in style. The gravel walkway at the front of property was also added by the current owner. Oddly enough, the original building permit does not include the construction of an attached garage and the plot plan associated with the original permit shows the footprint of the house only. The chimney permit from 1988 also does not include the garage as part of the footprint of the property. Based on this information, it is possible that the garage was added later, though its design and materials also lend to the possibility it was constructed at the same time as the residence. Due to a slight gap between the garage door and wall, there is some minor wood rot at the foundation of the garage along the

perimeter that should be repaired. None of the listed minimal alterations detract from the building's integrity of materials, design, or workmanship. The building's integrity of location, feeling, and setting have also been maintained as it has not been moved, is still located within a single-family neighborhood, and its surroundings retain a sense of small-scale development.

HPC and staff therefore recommend the following Mills Act conditions:

1. Repoint the brick cladding below the bay windows on the front of the property, the brick on the entrance way stairs and wall, and the brick chimney on the north façade to repair failing mortar joints.
2. Repair/reinforce joints of wood windows and doors to ensure no further damage.
3. Repair wood rot at the foundation of the attached garage.

## **ANALYSIS**

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### *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.”

2795 Mira Vista Drive is an excellent and thoughtfully detailed example of a modest Tudor Revival-style residence within the city. The building is an interesting example of Period Revival architecture scaled down to a reduced size incorporating many character-defining features of the style on only 1,153-square feet. Much of the area surrounding the subject property was developed in the 1930s and 1940s with many houses in the Minimal Traditional style. The intricate detail of the property makes it a contrasting property even among the handful of Period Revival residences nearby. Character-defining features such as the flared eaves, exposed rafter tails, prominent front facing gable with low sloping eaves, striking leaded glass windows, bay windows with brick detailing, stepped-shoulder brick chimney, and long list of interior details makes this property an exceptional example of Tudor Revival-style residential on a smaller scale. In addition, the property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling with very little alterations occurring since construction. 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**

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There are no stakeholders other than the property owner.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

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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)**

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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**

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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**

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Alternative 1: Designate 2795 Mira Vista Drive 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 2795 Mira Vista Drive 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**

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### **Prepared by:**

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**Reviewed by:**

Jay Platt, Principal Planner

**Approved by:**

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

**EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS**

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Exhibit 1: Glendale Register Nomination

Exhibit 2: Photographs

Exhibit 3: Mills Act Application

Exhibit 4: Campaign Disclosure