



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JULY 21, 2020

**TO:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS A LANDMARK  
1500 NORTH LOS ROBLES AVENUE

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment such as designation of historic resources;
2. Find that the house, garage and pergola at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue meet Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040(2)(C) because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style, period, and method of construction. The property is a locally significant example of a two-story Arts and Crafts period single-family residence, designed and built by the original owner, Edward William (E.W.) Woodruff; and
3. Recommend that the City Council approve the designation of the E.W. Woodruff House at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue as a Landmark.

#### BACKGROUND:

On May 18, 2020, Carol and Jeff Potter, residents and property owners, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the single-family house at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the building qualifies for designation as a landmark.

## **DESCRIPTION:**

### Property Data

- Address: 1500 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena
- Location: East side of North Los Robles Avenue, between Ladera Street and Howard Street
- Date of Construction Completion: 1913 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: Owner/Builder, Edward William Woodruff (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Builder: Owner/Builder, Edward William Woodruff (Source: Original Building Permit)
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Property size: 10,940 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 2,702 square feet (source: County Assessor)

### **Architectural Description:**

#### The Site:

The property is located on a rectangular-shaped lot on the east side of North Los Robles Avenue, two blocks north of East Washington Boulevard, between Ladera Street and Howard Street. To the immediate north, south and east of the property are single-family residential properties of varying sizes, ages, and architectural styles. Directly across North Los Robles Avenue to the west is a multi-family residential structure, surrounded on all sides by the Pasadena Christian School. The property was part of the Thornton and Morse Tract which was subdivided in 1904 and was originally 200 feet deep and approximately 74 feet wide. At a later date, approximately 43 feet of the east, rear yard was subdivided to create an expanded parcel for the property located at 469 Ladera Street.

The site is relatively flat with a landscaped front yard setback of approximately 32 feet, a rear yard of approximately 51 feet, a north side yard of approximately 11 feet, and a south side yard of 18 feet and contains a two-story single-family residence, a detached garage, and a freestanding pergola.

#### Exterior Features of the House & Garage:

The E.W. Woodruff House is a prime example of the two-story Arts and Crafts period house. The house features distinctive character-defining features of the Arts and Crafts movement including a prominent split front-facing gable that extends at mid-elevation to the south to partially cover a full-width upper-floor balcony that in turn serves as the cover to the full-width first-floor front porch. The upper balcony is framed by a low wood balustrade of equally-spaced vertical wood slats. The underside of the upper-floor balcony deck features expressed beams that tie into the exposed wood structural framing of the front porch. The front porch features three equally-spaced, tapered stucco-covered piers with wooden posts at the upper ends. A solid stucco-covered balustrade wraps the front porch with openings at the southern half to accommodate concrete steps. The gable roofing features extended roof eaves with visible rafter tails. The house is notable for its expressive and exposed wood structural framing with a

repeating design element of wood posts, extended wood cross beams, and wood knee braces at all connection points. This detailing is repeated at the upper gable ends with three exposed outriggers supported by wood knee braces. The upper gable ends also feature vertical slatted attic vents, located above a decorative lintel beam with triple pairs of protruding trim. The house is uniformly clad in straight-edge wood shingles and features original wood, double-hung or fixed wood windows with upper transoms. The windows and doors each feature protruding sills, wide casement trim, and an extended wood lintel trim. An original wide oak front door features a leaded glass window, and multi-paned side lites. Directly above the front door entry, at the upper-floor balcony, is a pair of double French doors. An original pergola extends from the front porch to serve as a porte cochere at the south side yard driveway, with the southern end supported by a tapered stucco pier, matching the piers of the front porch. The rear of the house roughly mirrors the front with a split gable that extends out at the northern half to provide a rear covered porch. The original detached garage with sliding barn doors remains standing in its original location along the southeast rear yard. The garage also features a gable roof, open eaves, and shingle siding. The pergola runs directly behind the rear of the house extending from the rear covered porch and running north to the north side yard property line. The pergola features a colonnade of neoclassical rounded Doric columns, capped by a simple rectangular wood runner beam on each side, with equally spaced wood rectangular stretcher beams crossing the colonnade span. The stretcher beams are smaller in dimension than the runner beams.

#### Documented Changes to the Property:

The house has two notable additions including an 8'x12' second story addition at the rear supported with wooden posts and covered with a shed roof. The other addition is a 7'x20' second story addition at the north elevation that features a cross gable roof, and covers a side porch with similar detailing as the front porch.

Between 1919 and 1929, a long rear yard pergola that connected the subject property to the property immediately to the north, 1508 North Los Robles Avenue, was constructed by the house's second owners, Joseph and Florence Taggart; the Taggarts also owned the 1508 property. The Taggarts sold 1508 North Los Robles Avenue in 1929, and additions to that property in 1942 resulted in the demolition of the pergola as it crossed the property line; however, the pergola at 1500 North Los Robles remains.

A wood beam extension, jutting from the header of the front upper gable extends across the front of the front-facing upper balcony and is supported by a wood post that is extended from the northwest corner of the balcony balustrade. This wood framing is unoriginal as evidenced by a historical photograph. It is unknown when this feature was added.

A building permit record exists for a storage shed that was also constructed by the Taggarts in the far eastern rear yard before a portion of the rear yard was portioned off to the property at 469 Ladera Street. Although no longer a part of the subject property, the storage shed is still standing and in the same location, as evidenced by satellite imagery and the 1930 Sanborn Map.

### Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans:

The exterior of the building is largely intact as evidenced by historical photographs, and remains in good condition. No significant changes to the property are proposed at this time. Aside from being surveyed as an individual eligible resource, the property was also surveyed as a contributor to the eligible Howard Street Landmark District.

### **Historical Overview:**

#### Arts and Crafts Origins and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Single-Family Residential Development

According to the Historic Context/Property Type Report entitled 'Residential Architecture of Pasadena, CA, 1895-1918: The Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement' prepared for the City of Pasadena in 1998, the property was evaluated under the Historic Context of the Single-Family Residential Architecture of the Arts and Crafts Period in Pasadena, 1898-1918.

The Arts and Crafts architectural movement originated in England by William Morris during the second half of the nineteenth century primarily as a revolutionary reaction against industrialization, but also a reaction against the formality of Victorian architecture. The Arts and Crafts movement was more than an architectural movement, it was a lifestyle of change that espoused a simpler way of living, and a return to the handmade craft of product. The Arts and Craft movement was meant to provide relief from the deleterious effects of industrialization, along with the pollution, and overcrowding of cities, and mass-manufactured goods of the industrialized era of the late 1800s.

The movement gained traction in the United States by two New Yorkers, Elbert Hubbard, author and founder of an American Arts and Crafts community, the Roycrafters, and Gustav Stickley, a furniture maker and journalist-publisher of *The Craftsman* magazine, published between 1901 and 1916. *The Craftsman* featured many articles about the Arts and Crafts architectural movement in Pasadena, highlighted by contributor and Pasadenan, Helen Lukens Gaut. Ms. Gaut contributed photographs, essays, and most notably introduced Charles and Henry Greene to the American public. It was through these early promoters, along with the William Morris societies, that the Arts and Crafts movement gained prominence in American architectural vernacular, with three primary epicenters of Arts and Crafts architecture forming around Oak-Park in Illinois through Frank Lloyd Wright, the San Francisco Bay Area through Bernard Maybeck, and in Pasadena through the Greene brothers with distinctive regionalistic styles, promoted through the early suburb developments tied to the Garden City urban movement.

#### Arts and Crafts Architectural Style

The rise in the Arts and Crafts movement also coincided with the population and building boom of Pasadena at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and closely reflected the early ethos of Pasadena's founding in 1886 as a semi-isolated city of artistry unlike the more industrious City of Los Angeles.

When the City's first settlers arrived from the Mid-west and Eastern United States, they brought with them the known architectural housing styles of those regions, primarily the Queen Anne

shingle-style house. With the advent of the Arts and Crafts movement, and an influx of designers and architects residing in the Arroyo Seco Valley and outlying regions, a new architectural movement that was reflective of the Southern California landscape soon developed. Naturally, this style grew out of the Queen Anne shingle-style house, and developed into what is known as the Arts and Crafts architectural style, transforming the verticality and formality of the Queen Anne into a new architectural idiom of horizontality and the embracement of the California lifestyle through indoor and outdoor spaces such as fully integrated front porches, rear porches, and sleeping porches. Houses also featured thoughtful expanses of glazing to bring in air and light, while, on the exterior, the houses were sheathed in wood siding of varying styles reflective of a naturalistic spirit.

The Arts and Crafts architectural style was noted for its harmonious siting within the landscape, and often seen as an organic extension of the landscape through its wood-clad exterior, simplified form that was respective of the land contours, and horizontality that emphasized its grounding and being of the land, not just on the land.

Local California materials were used for construction including redwood and Arroyo stones. Stucco was also used, albeit restrictively, on architectural features such as foundations, porch piers, lower walls, and foundations. The craft of design was evident in the arrangement of the building's form, its relationship to its surroundings, the application and palette of its exterior materials, and its use of articulated wood structural elements such as those found on the E.W. Woodruff House.

The internal layout of programmatic rooms were also designed to reflect the new Arts and Crafts, and Southern California ethos, with the removal of formalized and partitioned rooms found in the traditional architecture of the 1800s to a more free-flowing arrangement of spaces, and minimal use of dedicated circulation zones such as hallways. Common in Arts and Crafts architecture was the informal entry through a front porch, which often opened immediately onto an expansive living room, considered under this architectural lexicon, the heart of the home. Bedrooms often opened onto balconies or sleeping porches at the upper levels, while ground-level bedrooms would open onto, or look out onto the rear and side yard gardens.

The "Craftsman" style is often used interchangeably with the Arts and Crafts movement, however, as the Historic Context Report notes, the use of "Craftsman" in describing this period of architecture is often misguided as it represents an ahistorical usage of vocabulary. Under this report, the authors also noted that there are two subtypes of architecture that were surveyed, the one-or one-and-one-half story bungalow, and the two-story Arts and Crafts period house, with the former often referred to as the California Bungalow, and the latter representative of the E.W. Woodruff house.

The California Bungalow is often determined as the primary dwelling type associated with Pasadena, and its sense of place as a "City of Homes." The California Bungalow provided affordable, yet quality, housing to an expanding working and professional class of Pasadena citizens. The statelier, and larger two-story Arts and Crafts houses, provided housing for the City's new wealthier East Coast and Mid-west transplants, including E.W. Woodruff.

### E.W. Woodruff and the History of the E.W. Woodruff House

According to the Sutton Nebraska Museum Historical Society, Edward William Woodruff was once a prominent local businessman and political figure of Sutton, a small-town in southern Nebraska. Mr. Woodruff was the second-ward councilman in 1888-1890, and the mayor in 1891. Woodruff was born in Illinois in 1874 and married Emma Catherine Barnhart (b. 1864, PA) in 1881. Woodruff was initially listed in the 1880 Census of Sutton as a boarder of a local hotel. The Woodruffs had a daughter, Lena Mary, in 1882. Mr. Woodruff eventually transitioned into the financial sector, and was appointed as a clerk in the Treasury Department in Washington D.C. in the 1890s. The Woodruffs resided in D.C. until Edward retired around 1912 and moved his family out to Pasadena, California. It was here that he built his new home in 1913, the E.W. Woodruff house located at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue. Emma Woodruff died in 1934, and Edward died in 1937. Their only daughter, Lena, never married, and was a stenographer with a local school, before moving on to become a stenographer at Pasadena City Hall. Lena died in 1957.

The Woodruffs lived together in the E.W. Woodruff house until 1919 when they sold it to Joseph and Florence Taggart. The Taggarts resided at the property with their two sons until moving to Altadena in 1924. However, they retained the property as a rental, eventually selling it in 1935 to Lewis and Blanche Garrison. In 1938, the Garrisons sold the property to Everest P. and Norma Zediker and their four children. The family resided there until about 1950, after which the property was primarily used as a rental until the current owners, the Potters, purchased the house in 1994.

### Character-Defining Features of the Two-Story Arts and Crafts Style:

The character-defining features of the two-story Arts and Crafts period house are:

- Fully-integrated Indoor and outdoor transitional spaces
  - Prominent front porches, rear porches, and upper floor sleeping porches
- Wood-sheathed exterior
  - Shiplap, clapboard, shingle siding, or combination of
- Articulated window and door fenestrations through trim and sill treatments
- Front or side gable roofing and deep overhangs
- Locally-sourced materials and thoughtful application of material palette
  - Wood siding, Arroyo stone
- Expressed structural detailing and wood joinery
  - Exposed rafters and rafter tails, gable outriggers, knee braces, trellis woodwork, elemental porch columns, upper gable end detailing
- Simple geometric forms
- De-formalized internal spatial programming

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements constructed during the property's period of significance that give the building its character. In general, a property that retains its character defining features continues to convey its significance and therefore retains integrity as an historic resource. Removal or alteration of just one character-defining feature does not necessarily alter the integrity of an historic resource.

Impacts to historic integrity can result from a single major change or from many incremental changes over time.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The E.W. Woodruff House at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040(C)(2), which states:

[The property] embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or, to the region or possesses artistic values of significance to the City or to the region.

Generally, in order to qualify under Criterion C, a property type would display most of the character-defining features of its style. It must retain high integrity of design, materials and workmanship that convey its period of construction. While most buildings undergo alteration over time, these alterations should not significantly change the historic appearance of the building.

Under Criterion C, the E.W. Woodruff House at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a single-family two-story Arts and Crafts Period House. The house was previously evaluated in the City's 1999 survey of the Arts & Crafts Period as being individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. More recently, the property was also identified as a contributing structure to an eligible landmark district on Howard Street between Los Robles Avenue and El Molino Avenue. Though records do not indicate a specific designer, architect, or building, the original owner was the builder of record on the original building permit. The building has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building and other site features are in their original locations.
- Design: The building retains the majority of its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its simple massing, exterior shingle-clad walls, original fenestration patterns, doors and windows, original and extensive articulated exposed wood structural elements, roof form, primary entry, and detached original garage.
- Setting: The single-family residential property along with its similar immediate surrounding context is largely intact and has been identified as the eligible Howard Street Landmark District. The subject property has remained largely unaltered with the house and garage in their original locations. The only change to the setting was the cessation of the far rear yard to another adjacent property which is currently used as rear yard space and thus, essentially retaining the same historic setting.
- Materials: The building retains a majority, of its original exterior materials including cladding, windows and doors.

- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of early 20<sup>th</sup> century two-story Arts and Crafts single-family design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the two-story single-family Arts and Crafts architectural style and evokes the feeling of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential housing construction of Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with early 20<sup>th</sup> century single-family residential development and the Arts and Crafts movement in Pasadena.

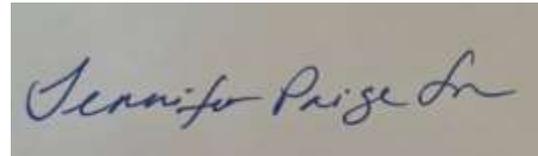
Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The building retains all of its original character-defining features, including its original windows and doors, shingle-clad exterior, prominent wood structural detailing, the full-width front porch that transitions to the still-standing porte cochere, original roof forms at the primary elevation, and the original detached garage. All alterations to the building, including the north side yard second story addition and ground level side porch, and rear-facing second story addition, along with the rear yard pergola structure, have historic significance of their own right, while still retaining compatibility with the original structure in form, materiality, composition, and detailing. Though the exact dates are not known of these additions, they are noted on the Sanborn Map of 1930, implying that they were constructed during the house's period of significance between the original owner, E.W. Woodruff, and the house's second owners, the Taggarts. Additionally, the neoclassical pergola constructed by the Taggarts is evocative of its construction era, during Pasadena's then subsequent and notable residential architectural movement: the Period Revival era of the 1920s and 1930s.

Contributing features to this designation include the main house, the rear yard detached garage, and the rear yard pergola structure.

**CONCLUSION:**

The E.W. Woodruff House at 1500 North Los Robles Avenue qualifies for designation as a Landmark under Criterion C as an intact, locally significant example of the two-story Arts and Crafts Period House, designed and built by its original owner, Edward William Woodruff.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

- A. Vicinity & Aerial Maps
- B. Application
- C. Sanborn Maps (1910 and 1930)
- D. Original Tract Map and Current Parcel Map
- E. Building Description Blanks
- F. Historical Photograph
- G. Current Photographs
- H. Effects of Historic Designation