



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
1031 SAN PASQUAL STREET ("WILSON COURT")

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 Wilson Court at 1031 San Pasqual Street meets Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040 because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type and period. It is a locally significant example of a bungalow court from the 1920's; and
3. Recommend that the City Council approve the designation of Wilson Court at 1031 San Pasqual Street as a landmark.

BACKGROUND:

On January 21, 2020, Teo Sierra, on behalf of California Institute of Technology (Caltech), submitted an application for Landmark designation of the bungalow court located at 1031 San Pasqual Street. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the property qualifies for designation as a landmark.

DESCRIPTION:

Property Data

- Address: 1031 San Pasqual Street, Pasadena
- Location: Northeast corner of San Pasqual Street and S. Catalina Avenue (originally located at the southeast corner of E. Del Mar Boulevard and S. Wilson Avenue; relocated to current location and rehabilitated in 2019-2020)
- Date of Construction Completion: 1923 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: None
- Original Builder: Whitescarver and Picton (five buildings now located along San Pasqual Street and facing a landscaped courtyard) and S. Russell Johnson (two buildings now facing S. Catalina Avenue) (Source: Original Building Permits)
- Original / Present Use: Multi-family residence / student housing
- Property size: 24,113 (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 6,316 total (source: Building Plans)

Architectural Description:

The Site:

The property is located on a rectangularly-shaped lot at the northeast corner of San Pasqual Street and S. Catalina Avenue. The property contains six separate one-story buildings (three individual bungalows and three duplexes) and one two-story building (a duplex), which were relocated from the southeast corner of E. Del Mar Boulevard and S. Wilson Avenue to this site in 2019 and subsequently rehabilitated. Four of the one-story buildings and the two-story building are located at the east side of the site with their entries oriented toward a 37-foot, 8 ½-inch-wide central landscaped and hardscaped courtyard that opens to the south toward San Pasqual Street. The two-story building is situated at the northern terminus of the courtyard. A central concrete pathway leads from the public sidewalk to the rear of the courtyard and has pathways to each unit entry extending at 90 degrees from it. The pathway also breaks into two semi-circular paths with a landscaped area at their center toward the rear as it approaches the two-story building at the courtyard's terminus. The remaining two, one-story buildings are located to the west of the courtyard-facing buildings and have their entries oriented toward S. Catalina Avenue with individual pathways connecting them to the public sidewalk. A surface parking area is located behind and to the east of the bungalows. The site configuration is consistent with the original configuration of the bungalows at their original site, except that there is a landscaped setback from S. Catalina Avenue in compliance with the Caltech Master Plan, which differs from the original zero setback from E. Del Mar Boulevard. The landscaped courtyard that is the central focus of the project includes new landscaping and pathways that replicate the original courtyard design.

Exterior Features of the Buildings:

The buildings are designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style and all seven buildings have flat roofs and cement plaster exterior wall coating. The five easterly buildings that are oriented around the central courtyard have simple stepped parapets with clay tile

coping, double French entry doors with shallowly arched transoms covered by shed-roofed canopies with exposed rafters, support brackets and clay tile roofing, concrete stoops with brick side-wall caps; wood double-hung windows and rectangular wood-louver attic vents. The bases of the buildings have a distinctive rounded water table feature defining the transition from the foundation to the finish floor on the interior. The two-story building at the northern terminus of the courtyard has a second single French entry door with a separate stoop to the west of the main entry as well as a new exterior stair and accessibility ramp on the west elevation.

The two westernmost buildings that face S. Catalina Avenue have some differentiating characteristics from those surrounding the courtyard to the east, while also representing the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. These bungalows have a different, more complex stepped parapet configuration and an articulated plaster cornice detail rather than clay tile coping. They also have projecting covered porches with segmental arched openings, shed roofs covered in clay tiles, and side-oriented concrete access stairs. The entry doors to these units also lack the arched transoms that are present on the courtyard buildings and the water table design is a simple recess to the foundation.

Documented Changes to the Property:

As previously noted the entire bungalow court was relocated to this site from the southeast corner of E. Del Mar Boulevard and S. Wilson Avenue and rehabilitated. The Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the proposed relocation and rehabilitation project on October 3, 2017 and provided advisory comments to the Design Commission. This landmark designation was required as a condition of approval of the project. Alterations to the buildings that were evident in their original locations were restored based on documentary and physical evidence, including windows, entry canopies, and removal of a non-original balcony on the two-story building. A non-original carport structure was demolished in conjunction with the relocation project. A monument has been installed on the property to document its historical significance and original location.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans:

The exterior of the buildings are currently in recently restored condition and they are being used for Caltech housing. No significant changes to the property are proposed at this time.

Historical Overview:

Bungalow Courts

The City has undertaken three separate studies of bungalow courts, including the development of a website that outlines the history and significance of bungalow courts in Pasadena. The printed text of this website is included in Attachment D for reference. The 1994 Multiple Property Documentation Form “Bungalow Courts of Pasadena” states that bungalow courts are identified by three main features:

1. Focal point created by a central open space, which provides access and a realm for public activity;

2. The site plan configuration, or arrangement of dwellings, around this central space; and
3. A service zone often providing automobile access to the rear of the units.

Bungalow courts also come in wide (on lots over 100 feet wide) or narrow forms, enclosed or unenclosed configurations (referring to the presence or lack of a structure at the terminus of the courtyard), and with attached and detached structures of dwelling units. “Half courts” are also found and are typically in an “L”-shaped configuration.

Spanish Colonial Revival Style:

Spanish Colonial architecture in California originated with the construction of the Spanish missions along El Camino Real in the 18th century, beginning with San Diego de Alcala in 1769. The 20th century revival of Spanish Colonial architecture is generally attributed to the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego, the principal architect of which was Bertram Goodhue. The City’s 2004 Historic Context Report, “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942” (Teresa Grimes & Mary Jo Winder) states: “The Panama-California Exposition helped to promulgate Spanish architecture as the appropriate California tradition, and soon Spanish forms were adopted as the leitmotif for building types and whole urban districts to which the style had not been previously applied.” This report also indicates that, rather than interpreting Spanish Colonial buildings from 18th century America, Spanish Colonial Revival buildings generally referenced buildings from Spain and other Mediterranean countries.

Buildings with elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style are ubiquitous throughout Pasadena and Southern California, with the majority being one-story bungalows. The city also has an impressive collection of high-style Spanish Colonial Revival buildings designed by architects who mastered the style, including, among others, Wallace Neff, Sylvanus Marson, Garrett Van Pelt, Reginald Johnson, Everett Phipps Babcock and George Washington Smith.

The Spanish Colonial Revival Style is applied in many forms from complex, high-style architect-designed buildings to simple, vernacular bungalows. Character-defining features of the simple vernacular style that is present at Wilson Court include:

- One or two stories
- Flat roofs with short parapets
- Clay tile roofing
- Open central porch or no porch
- Slightly rustic exterior plaster finish
- Wooden double-hung sash windows
- Arched openings

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:

Wilson Court at 1031 San Pasqual Street 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 property type or 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, Wilson Court is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a bungalow court. The registration requirements in the 1994 Multiple Property Documentation Form “Bungalow Courts of Pasadena” indicate that “a bungalow court should present a clear example, in site plan,” of one of the forms illustrated and described in the report. A bungalow court must retain integrity and “must have been designed, planned and built as a bungalow court within the period of significance (1909-1944)...Location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling and association should remain essentially unaltered...Architectural style is not a factor when considering the significance and National Register eligibility of a bungalow court as an example of the court form.”

Wilson Court is a unique example of a wide, enclosed bungalow court with both attached and detached dwelling units and adjoining a half-court. The property retains the three components of the bungalow court form as identified above. The property has architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its design, materials, workmanship and feeling as follows:

- **Design:** The court retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above, but rotated 90 degrees from its original orientation and with a deeper setback on the west (formerly north) side. These changes are minor and do not detract from the ability to recognize the design as that of a traditional bungalow court, similar to many others throughout the City and region. During the relocation review process, the westerly orientation of the court was not found to be a character-defining feature of the property.
- **Materials:** The bungalow court has been restored using all of the original materials used in its construction, including reversal of alterations that had occurred over time based on documentary and physical evidence.
- **Workmanship:** The restoration was conducted using techniques of the original time of the bungalow court’s construction, including use of lime plaster.
- **Feeling:** The property clearly expresses the characteristics of bungalow courts, as detailed above.

The property lacks integrity of location, setting and association as described below:

- Location: Although in close proximity to its original location, the bungalow court has been relocated and is therefore not in its original location. Based on National Register Bulletin 15, “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” integrity of location is not essential to properties that are representative of a property type or architectural style, provided the essential components that make up the type or style remain represented, which is the case for this property.
- Setting: In addition to the relocation affecting the bungalow court’s setting, the expansion of Caltech to the north of the historic core of the campus, which is closer to California Boulevard, and the growth of multi-family residential housing in the mid-twentieth century in the vicinity, has also affected the historical setting of Wilson Court. Based on National Register Bulletin 15, if the setting in the resource’s new location is comparable to its original setting, it may still be eligible for designation under criterion C. In this case, although integrity of setting has been lost, the new location is in close proximity to the original location and similar types of buildings exist within both contexts.
- Association: “Association” is defined as “the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.” This aspect of integrity does not apply to the property because it is not significant as the location of a historical event or person.

Based on the above, staff finds that the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C.

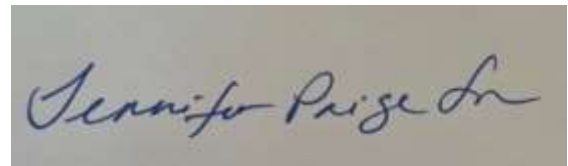
It should also be noted that the property was determined eligible for historical designation in a survey of Caltech properties that was completed in conjunction with the development of the Caltech Master Plan in 1989.

Contributing structures to this designation include six of the individual bungalows (three of which are duplexes) and the two-story duplex. In addition, the arrangement of the buildings, paving and landscaping on the site is a character-defining feature of the property.

CONCLUSION:


Wilson Court at 1031 San Pasqual Street qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion C as an intact, locally significant example of a bungalow court. Despite its relocation, it retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an example of the historical bungalow court property type as identified in the “Bungalow Courts of Pasadena” Multiple Property Documentation Form dated 11/15/94.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Reyes
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Application & Supplemental Information
- C. KSMA Report of Findings Including Historical Documentation and Photographs
- D. Current Photographs
- E. City of Pasadena Bungalow Court Website
- F. Effects of Historic Designation