



# City Council Report

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City Council Meeting: March 10, 2020  
Agenda Item: 6.A

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: David Martin, Director, City Planning  
Subject: Appeal 19ENT-0423 of the Landmarks Commission's determination to approve Application 19ENT-0281 designating the single-unit residential property located at 1531 Georgina Avenue as a City Landmark and associated Landmark Parcel.

## **Recommended Action**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the proposed appeal of Landmark Designation 19ENT-0281 and find the property ineligible as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit based on the findings provided in this staff report.

## **Executive Summary**

On July 15, 2019, the property owner, Real Santa Monica, LLC, filed a demolition permit application for the residential building located on the subject property.

Pursuant to Interim Zoning Ordinance 2626 (CCS) ("IZO"), upon filing an application for demolition of a building or structure that is 40 years of age or older, applicants request a review by the Landmarks Commission to determine whether the building or structure meets one or more of the criteria for Landmark or Structure of Merit. On August 12, 2019, consistent with the IZO, the Landmarks Commission conducted a preliminary hearing and determined that there was enough credible evidence in the record to conduct a full evidentiary hearing to determine whether the subject property is eligible for Landmark or Structure of Merit designation.



1531 Georgina Avenue

As part of the Commission's review, an historic assessment report evaluating the subject property according to both Landmark and Structure of Merit designation criteria was prepared by one of the City's historic preservation consultants, Ostashay and Associates Consulting (OAC) (Attachment B), with particular focus on Edla Muir, the architect of record, as having potential significance to the property. Constructed in 1941, the subject two-story residence is a vernacular example of Monterey Colonial-style architecture. The subject property was designed by notable architect Edla Muir, a recognized female architect best known for her rich, evocative interpretations of the mid-century modern ranch style homes of the Post- World War II era. The subject Monterey Colonial Revival-style residence was designed during the early period in Muir's professional career while working with prominent Santa Monica architect John Byers as an associate and partner, and is not comparably stylistic to Muir's well-established and recognized work.

Based on findings provided in the report, OAC concluded that the property appeared ineligible as a City Landmark, however eligible for Structure of Merit designation under the City of Santa Monica Structure of Merit criteria set forth in 9.56.080(A) and 9.56.080(B)(3) as being identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory and as appearing to contribute to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District.

Based on the Landmark designation findings outlined on the OAC report and upon review of the property, staff concluded the property ineligible for Landmark designation as the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. However, as further detailed in this report, staff had a different conclusion on the property's eligibility as a Structure of Merit in that in evaluating the integrity of the property as a whole, the residence does not appear to accurately reflect its Period Revival-style architecture that is identified as one of the features that contribute to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District. As such, staff recommended that the Landmarks Commission find the property ineligible for both Landmark and Structure of Merit designations, as outlined in the November 11, 2019 staff report.

On November 11, 2019, the Landmarks Commission held a public hearing to discuss the property's potential eligibility as a Landmark or Structure of Merit. Representatives for the property owner submitted an additional consultant report prepared by ESA which concluded that the property does not satisfy the criterion findings as a City Landmark, but was inconclusive regarding whether the property is eligible as a Structure of Merit. At the hearing, ESA confirmed their opinion that the property does not satisfy the Structure of Merit criteria. In consideration of all written and oral testimony, staff and historic preservation consultant reports, and materials introduced into the public record, the Commission, in a 6-1 vote, designated the residence and property as a City Landmark and associated Landmark Parcel. The Commission determined that the property met City of Santa Monica Landmark Designation Criteria 9.56.100(A)(5) as a representative example of the early work of notable architect Edla Muir. Under the IZO, if the Commission designates a property as a Landmark, the application for a Structure of Merit is determined to be denied. Thus, no findings were made based on the Structure of Merit criteria.

On November 21, 2019, Real Santa Monica, LLC, filed a timely appeal of the Landmarks Commission's decision. The appellant's statement is further discussed in this report. Staff notes that subsequent to the filing of the appeal, a change of ownership occurred and the new property owners of 1531 Georgina Avenue, Mr. Yee Meen Chai and Ms. HeeYun Kim, are formally the appellants of record. The owners have informed staff to proceed with the appeal procedures according to the appeal statements submitted on November 21, 2019 by prior owner Real Santa Monica, LLC.

Because the criteria established in the Landmarks Ordinance for designation of Landmarks and Structures of Merit are designed to evaluate if a property conveys the City's cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history, it is possible to properly apply the criteria based on evidence in the record, with equally valid viewpoints that arrive at different conclusions. This report includes reasonable perspectives on the subject property; a summary and explanation of the Landmarks Commission's discussion related to its finding under criteria 9.56.100(A)(5), staff's analysis and recommendation, and the appellant's appeal. In addition to staff's analysis, the City

Council should consider the Commission’s deliberations when determining whether appropriate findings can be made to support or deny historic designation of the property.

Based on the Landmark designation findings outlined in the OAC report, evidence received prior to and during the Commission’s public hearing on November 11, 2019, and review of the appeal statement, staff continues to recommend that the property is ineligible as a Landmark and Structure of Merit. Staff recommends that the City Council support the appeal and staff’s recommendation based on findings that the property does not appear to meet one or more of the Landmark or Structure of Merit Designation criteria.

## **Background**

### City of Santa Monica Landmark and Historic District Ordinance (SMMC 9.56)

Adopted in 1976, the stated purpose of the City’s Landmark and Historic District Ordinance (the “Ordinance”) is:

[T]o promote the public health, safety and general welfare by establishing such procedures and providing such regulations as are deemed necessary to:

- A. Protect improvements and areas which represent elements of the City’s cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history.
- B. Safeguard the City’s historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage as embodied and reflected in such improvements and areas.
- C. Foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past.

- D. Protect and enhance the City's aesthetic and historic attractions to residents, tourists, visitors and others, thereby serving as a stimulus and support to business and industry.
  
- E. Promote the use of Landmarks, Structures of Merit and Historic Districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of this City.

The Ordinance further establishes procedures and standards intended to achieve these purposes. Among these procedures, the SMMC grants the Landmarks Commission the power to designate Landmarks and Structures of Merit. The Commission has the option to designate an improvement as a Landmark or Structure of Merit to allow the City to protect and enhance improvements that are found to meet certain criteria to support either designation. Currently, there are 134 designated City Landmarks, 13 designated Structures of Merit, and 5 Historic Districts within the City.

To guide the exercise of discretion by the Landmarks Commission in designating Landmarks and the Council in approving or disapproving the actions of the Landmarks Commission, the Ordinance sets forth six Landmark Designation Criteria:

[T]he Landmarks Commission may approve the landmark designation of a structure, improvement, natural feature, or an object if it finds that it meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.
  
2. It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.
  
3. It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.

4. It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.
5. It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.
6. It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

A Structure of Merit is an improvement that has been designated as and determined to be appropriate for official recognition by the Landmarks Commission. A Structure of Merit contributes to Santa Monica's cultural identity but is not sufficiently distinguished to merit designation as a City Landmark. A key difference between Landmark and Structure of Merit designations is the level of historic significance based on their respective designation criterion, as the Landmark criterion are more elevated in comparison. Also, upon an owner's request to demolish a designated Structure of Merit, the City may negotiate with the property owner in an effort to agree to a means of historically preserving the designated property. However, if no such agreement can be reached within this 180-day period, the Structure of Merit could be demolished. Further, a Structure of Merit designation can also be used for a potential contributor to a potential Historic District. However, the intent of using a potential district as the basis of a Structure of Merit designation kick starts a 90-day period where a historic district application must be filed. If such application is not received, then the Structure of Merit designation is automatically nullified. In this manner, the Structure of Merit designation does not provide certainty in the protections of a property that a Landmark designation provides.

The Landmarks Ordinance sets forth the following Structure of Merit Criteria:

- A. The property has been identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory.
- B. The subject building is a minimum of 50 years of age and meets one of the following criteria:
  - 1) It is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type.
  - 2) It is representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent.
  - 3) The structure contributes to a potential Historic District.

In accordance with the Landmarks Ordinance, the City Council reviews the Commission's designation of a Landmark, as well as any related decisions *de novo*. The Council may review and take action on all determinations, interpretations, decisions, judgments or similar actions taken that were in the purview of the Commission, and the Council may approve, in whole or in part, or disapprove the prior determinations and decisions of the Commission.

#### Property Information

The subject property is located at the northwest corner of Georgina Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street within the R1 North of Montana single-unit residential district and is currently developed with a residence facing Georgina Avenue and a detached garage accessible from 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The area consists of Period Revival-style and mid-twentieth century architectural style single-unit residences from the 1920s and early 1940s.

#### Architectural Description

Constructed in 1941, the subject two-story residence is a vernacular example of the Monterey Colonial-style that is simple in its overall design and includes common features of its architectural style. The Monterey Colonial Revival-style combines vernacular adobe construction with elements of American Federal and Greek Revival architecture. The residence is generally rectangular in plan and has a side-facing gable roof and overhanging eaves that project over the second-floor balcony. The exterior walls are finished in stucco siding and the roof consists of composition shingle roofing material. The building consists of multi-pane sash wood-framed windows, some with louvered shutters. The second-floor balcony wraps around the front, street side, and

rear portions of the building elevations and is mostly covered by the extended roof above.

The residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. Modifications included extensive alterations and additions to the street side and rear elevations in 1985 and alterations to the front elevation in 1993.

Alterations to the front façade include replacement of the front door and transom, window replacement and addition (upper window above entry), and the enlargement of the front dormer and associated fenestration. Alterations to the east side (16<sup>th</sup> Street) elevation include the removal of the original balcony staircase (access to the rear yard) and the extension of the balcony deck and rail system further along the side elevation that currently wraps along the rear elevation. While second-floor balconies across primary facades and occasionally wrapping one or more of the sides may be a common feature of the Monterey Colonial Revival-style, it is atypical for the balcony to extend from the front to the rear elevation.

Substantial alterations to the rear elevation consists of a large addition with wood and stucco siding at the northwest corner of the building, resulting in an alteration to the original window configuration and fenestration, and enclosure of the roofed patio area. A cross gable roof was added to the elevation clad with wood clapboard siding material, faux multi-pane sliding windows at the upper level, and French doors on the ground floor.

### Historic Context

#### *North of Montana Neighborhood: Georgina Avenue*

The subject property is located in the North of Montana neighborhood of the City. The neighborhood is residential in character and is notable for its generous lot sizes, wide streets, broad parkways, and mature street trees. The North of Montana neighborhood contains several subdivisions including the Palisades Tract, Adelaide Drive/Adelaide Place, Gillette's Regency Square, and Canyon Vista Park (mostly comprising properties along La Mesa Drive). During the early period of development, these were a few of the

tracts advertised as having oversized lots with canyon and ocean views, proximity to the street-car line along San Vicente Boulevard, and a general exclusivity not found in other parts of the City. By the 1930s, the neighborhood was mostly built out and contained some of the finest and most architecturally significant residences in the community. Today, the neighborhood remains residential in character, and still contains a notable concentration of 1920s and 1930s single-family houses.

The grouping of properties within the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District extends east-west along Georgina Avenue between 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The majority of the properties within this tract were constructed during the mid-1920s and reflect a variety of Period Revival styles in their architecture. The subject property was constructed in 1941, subsequent to the initial construction boom and development of residences in the area. Because the residence was constructed during the early 1940s, the property does not reflect the early architectural development of the area that mostly occurred during the mid-1920s.

#### Edla Muir, Architect

The residence was designed by notable architect Edla Muir. Muir was an American architect who began working full time with prominent Santa Monica architect John Byers in 1923 as an office assistant until 1926 when she was promoted to a draftsman and designer. Muir never received any formal architectural education, however based on her apprenticeship with Byers, received her license to practice architecture in California in 1934. Following that time, Byers and Muir formed a partnership, renaming the firm Byers and Muir, Associated Architects which operated between 1934 to 1942 when the partnership dissolved at the on-set of World War II. During Muir's partnership with Byers, she worked on over a dozen independent projects, including the subject property.

Muir became the principal of her own architectural firm in West Los Angeles in 1942 and maintained the practice through the early 1970s. Muir designed homes in a wide variety of styles that appealed to wealthy clients in Santa Monica, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, Beverly Hills, and other affluent Southern California communities. She

focused on designing modern private homes and her designs were featured in *Sunset* magazine, *Architectural Digest*, *Architectural Record*, and other publications, as representative of the modern California home. Muir also designed some public, ecclesiastical, and commercial buildings both in California and Washington, as well as in Mexico City. In total, she designed more than 200 projects that were mostly residential, with approximately 13 projects that were located in Santa Monica. Muir was a member of the American Institute of Architects, the California Council of Architects, Women in Architecture, and the winner of several national and local awards.

Although the subject property was designed by notable architect Edla Muir, the residence does not appear to be a significant or representative example of the architect's important work. Muir is a recognized female architect and is best known for her rich, evocative interpretations of the mid-century modern ranch style homes of the Post- World War II era, many of which incorporated the use of natural materials and the careful integration of outdoor and indoor spaces. The subject Monterey Colonial Revival-style residence was designed during the early period in her professional career while working with prominent Santa Monica architect John Byers as a partner and associate. As discussed, Muir would later establish her own architectural firm in 1942 and maintained the practice through the early 1970s, a period when Muir's work is best known for and recognized. The subject residence is not comparably stylistic to Muir's well-established and recognized work and does not accurately represent a distinguishable phase in her career.

#### Historic Resources Inventory Status

The subject property has been previously identified in the 2002 (NOMA Update), 2010, and the 2018 Citywide Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) survey update and evaluated as a contributor (5D3) to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District.

#### *Potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District*

According to the 2018 HRI, the district was identified as an excellent concentration of Period Revival residential architecture in Santa Monica. The period of significance is 1912-1957 spanning the period of development of the residences. Of the 78 properties

within the potential district, 43 (55%) are identified as potential contributors, and 35 (45%) are identified as potential non-contributors. Nine properties within the potential district were identified both as district contributors and as individually eligible resources or are district contributors that are also individually designated.

Georgina Avenue is predominantly composed of two-story, single-unit residences designed in a variety of complementary Period Revival styles and mid-twentieth century architectural styles. The Period Revival styles that are represented include Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Tudor Revival, Monterey Colonial Revival, and American Colonial Revival. Although the properties were designed by different architects and builders, they are similar in terms of massing, scale, and visual character. The north side of Georgina Avenue include uniform setbacks with lushly planted lawns shrubs, and mature trees. Landscaped parkways with mature palm trees and lawns line both sides of the street and are a unifying feature of the district.

#### Landmarks Commission Action

On November 11, 2019, the Landmarks Commission held a public hearing to discuss the property's potential eligibility as a Landmark or Structure of Merit. In consideration of all written and oral testimony, staff and historic preservation consultant reports, and materials introduced into the public record, the Commission, in a 6-1 vote, designated the residence and property as a City Landmark and associated Landmark Parcel. The Commission designated the Landmark and Landmark Parcel based on findings set forth in the Statement of Official Action, including that: (5) the subject property is a representative example of the early work of notable architect Edla Muir (SMMC 9.56.100(A)(5)). No findings were made based on the Structure of Merit criteria.

During its deliberations, the Commission held a thorough discussion on the Landmarks and Structure of Merit criteria and whether the property would be eligible for designation. The Commission determined that the property did not appear to satisfy any of the Structure of Merit designation criteria and focused their discussion on whether the property would satisfy Landmark criterion 5. Commissioners agreed that the property's architect, Edla Muir, was clearly an important and notable architect, and reviewed

evidence whether the property was a representative or significant example of her work. It was noted that Muir's recognized Modernist work later in her career should not diminish her early revival-style work. The Commission noted that the subject residence is a rare example of Edla Muir's work in Santa Monica, and that it is representative of the Colonial Revival Style employed in residential architecture. The Commission concluded that although the residence is not comparably stylistic to the work for which Muir is best known, it is a representative example of her revival-style work while working with notable architect John Byers, and is a rare example of her work in Santa Monica. As a representative example of the early work of notable architect Edla Muir's, the Commission determined that the property satisfied criterion 5.

The property owner's representatives submitted an independent historic assessment prepared by ESA as a part of the record for consideration by the Landmarks Commission. The assessment concluded that the property does not satisfy the criterion findings as a City Landmark, was inconclusive regarding whether the property is eligible as a Structure of Merit, but later confirmed at the public hearing by ESA that the property does not satisfy the Structure of Merit criteria. The ESA report is provided as Attachment A along with the applicant's demo permit and appeal application materials.

The November 11, 2019 Landmarks Commission staff report (Attachment C) and approved meeting minutes (Attachment E) are provided for reference. The approved Statement of Official Action is provided as Attachment D. The audio recording of the November 11, 2019 meeting is posted on the City's webpage:

<https://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Boards-Commissions/Landmarks-Commission/>.

### Appeal

The appellant filed a timely appeal on November 21, 2019. The appellant's statement reiterates that the staff report, the City's historic preservation consultant report (OAC) and the property owner's historic preservation consultant report (ESA) finds that, "the property does not retain sufficient integrity from its original construction to convey its significance." The appellant also states that, "...the property is not a distinctive or

representative example of the Monterey style, nor is it a distinguished example of the work of architect Edla Muir.” The appellant states that the “primary character-defining features are altered and doesn’t convey original design intent”. The appeal statement is provided as Attachment A.

## **Appeal Analysis**

### Appeal Analysis

1. *Appellant states that the staff report, the City’s historic preservation consultant report (OAC), and the property owner’s historic preservation consultant report (ESA) finds that the property does not retain sufficient integrity from its original construction to convey its significance.*

#### *Historic Integrity*

Historic integrity is described as the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period. While the property may retain its integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. Based on the inappropriate alterations described above, the residence no longer maintains sufficient integrity to accurately reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture.

The OAC report concludes that although the property does not possess sufficient historical integrity to be eligible as a City Landmark, the property retains enough integrity of its location and setting and continues to appear eligible as a contributor to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District. The report states that the property appears compatible with the overall visual and physical characteristics that may define the potential district, including uniform landscaped front setbacks, mature plantings, the scale, massing, and orientation of the structures, and its complementary Period Revival styles. As described in the report, an historic district can be comprised of features that lack individual distinction, including properties that lack some qualities of

historical integrity, and that it is possible for a property to be ineligible for individual designation while still contributing to a potential district. The findings conclude that the property retains enough integrity to remain as a contributor.

While the property appears to retain the physical characteristics identified for the potential district such as its uniform landscaped front setbacks with mature plantings, landscaped parkways with mature palm trees and lawns, and the scale and the orientation of its structures, staff has concerns whether the residence continues to reflect its Period Revival style and whether the property continues to accurately contribute architecturally to the potential district.

As further analyzed in the Structure of Merit section of the report, in evaluating the integrity of the property as a whole, the residence does not accurately reflect its Period Revival-style architecture that is one of the features identified that contribute to the feeling of the potential district. Therefore, it would seem inappropriate to still consider the property as a potential contributor to the potential district.

As discussed, while the property may retain its integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. Based on the inappropriate alterations over the years, the residence no longer maintains sufficient integrity to accurately reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Therefore, staff agrees with the appellant in terms of the overall integrity of the property.

2. *Appellant states that the property is not a distinctive or representative example of the Monterey style, nor is it a distinguished example of the work of architect Edla Muir.*

As discussed, the subject residence is a vernacular example of the Monterey Colonial-style that is simple in its overall design, includes common features of its architectural style, and is not considered an excellent example. The building does not possess particularly noteworthy concepts of design, or of aesthetic or artistic interest or value.

Staff agrees with the appellant in that the property is not a distinctive or representative example of the Monterey Colonial-Revival style. In its review, the Commission also did not find that the residence embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design.

Appellant states that the property is not a *distinguished example of the work of architect Edla Muir*. This statement is related to Criterion 5 which states the following:

*“It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.”*

The subject Monterey Colonial Revival-style residence was designed during the early period in Muir’s professional career while working with John Byers as an associate and partner. The residence is not comparably stylistic to Muir’s well-established and recognized work and does not accurately represent a distinguishable phase in her career. According to her peers, architectural critics, and biographers, Muir is a recognized female architect and is best known for her rich, evocative interpretations of the mid-century modern ranch style homes of the Post- World War II era, many of which incorporated the use of natural materials and the careful integration of outdoor and indoor spaces. Although the subject residence was designed by Edla Muir, it was an early design that is not reflective of her significant and recognized work. Examples of Muir’s recognized work during the Post-World War II era is provided in the attachment section of the OAC report. As such, it does not appear that the residence is a significant or a representative example of the work of the notable architect.

OAC concluded that the subject residence is not comparably stylistic to Muir’s well-established and recognized body of work, does not accurately represent a distinguishable phase in her career, and therefore does not appear as a significant or representative example of her work. Similarly, it is staff’s opinion that for a property to be eligible under this criteria, the property should be an example that exemplifies Muir’s design style that represents her more well-known and recognized work, which would be

of her mid-century modern ranch-style residences. As such and upon further consideration, staff continues to believe the property would not satisfy Criterion 5. The Landmarks Commission held an extensive discussion on evaluating the property within the context of Muir's architectural career and had a different approach in applying Criteria 5, resulting in a different conclusion than staff and the City's consultant. The Commission noted that the residence is representative of the Colonial Revival Style employed in residential architecture, and discussed that Muir's recognized Modernist work later in her career should not diminish her early revival-style work as demonstrated with the subject property. As such, the Commission considered Muir's entire body of work which included the subject property as an example of her early work compared to staff's consideration of her more distinguished phase in her career. The Commission recognized the early phase of Muir's career while working with notable and highly-recognized architect John Byers, and concluded that although the residence is not comparably stylistic to the work for which Muir is best known, it is a representative example of her revival-style work while working with Byers, and is a rare example of her work in Santa Monica. As such, the Commission determined that the property satisfied Criteria 5.

Both the Landmarks Commission and staff have properly applied the criteria however with equally valid viewpoints, arrived at different conclusions; the Commission viewed the property as representing Muir's early development as an architect within the context of her lifetime body of work, whereas staff views the property as not representative of the period of her more well-known body of work.

*3. Appellant states that the primary character-defining features are altered and doesn't convey original design intent.*

As further detailed in the OAC report, based on the inappropriate alterations to the structure, the residence no longer appears to maintain sufficient integrity to *accurately* reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Based on the Commission's determination under criterion 5, the residence was determined to have

maintained enough of its Monterey Colonial-Revival style for the purposes of this particular finding.

#### Eligibility as Landmark or Structure of Merit Designation and Proposed Findings

The Ordinance requires the City Council, on appeal, to review the building's eligibility as a Landmark based on the six criteria discussed below. In order to be designated as a City Landmark, the Council is required to find that the property meets one or more of these criteria.

Based on the findings as provided in the Assessment prepared by OAC, the consultant finds the property ineligible as a City Landmark. Staff agrees with this assessment, and recommends the following draft findings that summarizes the findings provided by the consultant that support this conclusion:

- (1) *It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.*

The subject property is located in the North of Montana residential neighborhood in a tract adjacent to the earlier developed Palisades Tract and Gillette's Regency Square. By the 1930s, the neighborhood was mostly built out and contained some of the finest and most architecturally significant residences in the City. Currently, the neighborhood remains residential in character and still contains a notable concentration of 1920s and 1930s Period Revival style single-unit houses. The subject property was constructed in 1941, subsequent to the initial construction boom and early development period of residences in the area. Additionally, the building has been considerably altered since its original construction and no longer maintains sufficient integrity to reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Therefore, the property does not appear to exemplify the cultural, social, economic, political or early architectural development history of this particular area of the North of Montana neighborhood.

- (2) *It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.*

The subject residence is a vernacular example of the Monterey Colonial-style that is simple in its overall design and includes common features of its architectural style. The building does not possess particular noteworthy concepts of design, or of aesthetic or artistic interest or value. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

*(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.*

No evidence was found to suggest that any of the prior owners or occupants of the property were persons of significance or made significant contributions to important events in local, state, or national history. Accordingly, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

*(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.*

The subject residence is a vernacular example of the Monterey Colonial-style that is simple in its overall design and includes common features of its architectural style. The building has been considerably altered since its original construction and no longer maintains sufficient integrity to reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Additionally, the building is not a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail, or historical type, and it does not embody distinguishing characteristics valuable to study. Therefore, the subject residence does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

*(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.*

Although the subject property was designed by notable architect Edla Muir, the residence does not appear to be a significant or representative example of the architect's important work. Muir is a recognized female architect and is best known for her rich, evocative interpretations of the mid-century modern ranch style homes of the Post- World War II era, many of which incorporated the use of natural materials and the careful integration of outdoor and indoor spaces. The subject Monterey Colonial Revival-style residence was designed during the early period in her professional career while working with prominent Santa Monica architect John Byers as a partner and associate. Muir would later establish her own architectural firm in 1942 and maintained the practice through the early 1970s, a period when Muir's work is best known for and recognized. The subject residence is not comparably stylistic to Muir's well-established and recognized work and does not accurately represent a distinguishable phase in her career. Therefore, the subject property is not considered a significant or representative example of the work of Edla Muir, and therefore does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

*(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.*

The subject residence is located in the North of Montana residential neighborhood that is currently developed with similar scale single-unit residence. It does not have a unique location or singular physical characteristic and is not an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

#### *Structure of Merit Criteria*

The Ordinance requires the City Council, on appeal, to review the building's eligibility as a Structure of Merit based on the criteria discussed below. In order to be designated as a Structure of Merit, the Council is required to find that the property meets one or more of these criteria.

Based on the findings as provided in the Assessment prepared by OAC, the consultant finds the property eligible as a Structure of Merit under criteria (A) and (B)(3). Staff

disagrees with this assessment.

A property is eligible for designation as a Structure of Merit under criterion (A) if it has been identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory. The subject property is identified on the current Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) as a potential contributor to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District with a status code of 5D3. The Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District is identified in the HRI based on its concentration of Period Revival residential architecture in Santa Monica.

Although Criteria A states that any property that is identified in the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) would satisfy this criteria, both staff and the Landmarks Commission apply Criteria A within the context of the three criteria provided in section B(1), B(2), and B(3). It is the practice of the Landmarks Commission, in its review of Structures of Merit, not to designate properties that only satisfy Criterion A, and to further study and evaluate a property beyond its preliminary survey listing in the HRI, according to Criterion B.

A property is eligible for designation as a Structure of Merit under criterion (B)(3) if the property is 50 years of age or more and contributes to a potential Historic District. If a structure is designated solely because it contributes to a potential Historic District under Criteria B(3), pursuant to SMMC 9.56.090(L), the designation shall be effective only if within 90 days from its designation that an application for designation of an Historic District has been filed which would include the Structure of Merit within its area. If no such application to evaluate a Historic District is filed within the 90-day period, the Structure of Merit designation would be automatically nullified.

Based on the findings as provided in its assessment, OAC determined that the property appears compatible with the overall visual and physical characteristics of the neighborhood and its Period Revival style residences, and concluded that while the property does not appear individually significant, it may appear as a potential contributor to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District.

However, based on the research and evaluation of the property staff does not believe the property satisfies Criteria B(3) and appears ineligible for Structure of Merit designation.

The property appears to retain the physical characteristics identified for the potential district such as its uniform landscaped front setbacks with mature plantings, landscaped parkways with mature palm trees and lawns, and the scale and the orientation of its structures, which are important features to consider when evaluating this potential district. One of the aspects of the potential district is its complementary Period Revival-style architecture. Based on the inappropriate alterations to the structure, staff has concerns whether the residence continues to accurately reflect its Period Revival style and whether the property continues to appropriately contribute architecturally to the potential district.

Extensive research and evaluation of the existing conditions of this particular property indicate that the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction, including alterations and additions to the street side and rear elevations. For example, within the Monterey Colonial Revival-style, it is atypical for the balcony to extend from the front to the rear elevation as it currently exists. Because many of these alterations have occurred on the front, street-side, and rear building elevations which are clearly visible from the street, these inappropriate changes may exhibit a false sense of the Monterey Colonial Revival-style. Although the integrity threshold can be lower when reviewing a property as a contributor to a district compared to as an individual Landmark, staff believes this residence's siting as a corner property should be reviewed with a higher integrity threshold compared to an infill property within a district's boundary. Although the complementary Period Revival style architecture is only one of the features identified that contribute to the feeling of the potential district, it is an important unifying component. In recent district cases, properties with low individual architectural integrity have been evaluated as non-contributing properties to a district even though their location, setting, scale and orientation to the street remained consistent with its original development. Although each district is reviewed on a case by

case basis, it would be appropriate for a corner property of a potential district to have considerable individual integrity that accurately reflects its Period Revival style.

While the property may retain integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. In evaluating the integrity of the property as a whole, the residence does not accurately reflect its Period Revival-style architecture that is identified as a feature of the potential district. Based on this evaluation, the residence does not appear to warrant its current listing as a district contributor on the City's Historic Resources Inventory and therefore does not appear to satisfy Criterion (B)(3).

Under the IZO, upon determining that the property was eligible as a Landmark, it was automatically determined that the property did not meet any of the criteria for Structure of Merit. However, at its November 11, 2019 hearing, the Landmarks Commission discussed and evaluated the residence based on the Structure of Merit criteria and generally agreed that the property was ineligible for designation as a Structure of Merit.

Based on the previous discussion, staff disagrees with OAC's conclusion that the property is eligible for designation as a Structure of Merit. The following draft findings are provided to support this conclusion:

9.56.080(A). *Structure has been identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory.*

The subject property is identified on the current Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) as a contributor to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District (5D3). The Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District is identified in the HRI based on its concentration of Period Revival residential architecture in Santa Monica. Upon further research and evaluation of the building permit history and existing building conditions of this particular property, the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. While the property may retain its integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. Based on the inappropriate alterations, the residence no longer maintains sufficient integrity to

reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Based on this evaluation, the residence does not appear to warrant its current listing on the City's Historic Resources Inventory and therefore appears ineligible under this criterion.

9.56.080(B). *Structure is a minimum of 50 years of age and meets one of the following criteria:*

The subject property is a minimum of 50 years of age as it was constructed in 1941. Therefore, the structure is eligible for further consideration under the following criteria:

9.56.080(B)(1). *Structure is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type.*

The subject residence is a vernacular example of the Monterey Colonial-style that is simple in its overall design and includes common features of its architectural style. The building has been considerably altered since its original construction and no longer maintains sufficient integrity to reflect its original design and Period Revival-style architecture. Additionally, the building is not a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail, or historical type, and it does not embody distinguishing characteristics valuable to study. Therefore, the subject residence does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

9.56.080(B)(2). *It is representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent.*

The subject property is not considered a representative example of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent. The property does not reflect the Monterey Colonial Revival-style due to the loss of integrity. Considering there are several other stylistic representative examples of the Monterey Colonial Revival-style remaining in the City, including along Georgina Avenue and in the greater North of Montana neighborhood, the subject residence does not appear to be a rare example of its style and therefore does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

9.56.080(B)(3). *The structure contributes to a potential Historic District.*

The subject property is identified on the current Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) as a contributor to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District (5D3). The Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District is identified in the HRI based on its concentration of Period Revival residential architecture in Santa Monica. Upon further research and evaluation of the building permit history and existing building conditions of this particular property, the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. While the property may retain integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. In evaluating the integrity of the property as a whole, the residence does not appear to accurately reflect its Period Revival-style architecture that is identified as the significant feature of the potential district. Based on this evaluation, the residence does not appear to warrant its current listing as a district contributor on the City's Historic Resources Inventory and therefore does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

A draft Statement of Official Action reflecting these findings is provided as Attachment F.

#### Parcel Designation

The Ordinance grants the Landmarks Commission, and the City Council on appeal, the power to designate a Landmark Parcel to “preserve, maintain, protect or safeguard” a Landmark. SMMC 9.56.060(A); 9.56.030(K). Generally, any proposed alteration, restoration, construction, removal, or relocation that occurs on a Landmark Parcel requires approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness. SMMC 9.56.140. The Landmarks Commission, or the City Council on appeal, also has the power to specify the nature of any alteration, restoration, construction, removal, relocation or demolition of or to a Landmark or Landmark Parcel which may be performed without a Certificate of Appropriateness. SMMC 9.56.120(F).

At its November 11, 2019 meeting, the Landmarks Commission designated the property commonly known as 1531 Georgina Avenue (Assessor's Parcel Number 4279-021-029) as an associated Landmark Parcel.

## **Alternatives**

As an alternative to the recommended action, the City Council may consider the following if supported by the full evidentiary record:

1. Articulate revised findings resulting in the denial of the subject appeal, approving the subject property as a Landmark or Structure of Merit.
2. Adopt the Landmarks Commission's findings pursuant to Statement of Official Action 19ENT-0281 and designate the property as a City Landmark and the property commonly known as 1531 Georgina Avenue (Assessor's Parcel Number 4279-021-029) as an associated Landmark Parcel, thereby denying the appeal and upholding the Landmarks Commission's decision.

## **Environmental Analysis**

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15270, CEQA does not apply to projects that a public agency disapproves. Based on the recommended action, CEQA would not be applicable.

## **Financial Impacts and Budget Actions**

There is no immediate financial impact or budget action as a result of the recommended action.

**Prepared By:** Steve Mizokami, Senior Planner

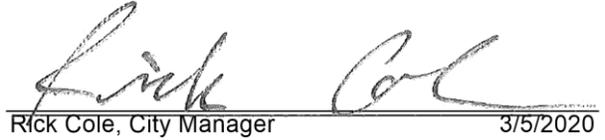
**Approved**

**Forwarded to Council**



David Martin, Director

3/5/2020



Rick Cole, City Manager

3/5/2020

**Attachments:**

- A. Appeal & Demo Permit Application & Property Owner's Historic Preservation Consultant Report (ESA October 2019)
- B. City's Historic Preservation Consultant Report (OAC Nov 2019)
- C. Landmarks Commission Staff Report (Nov 11 2019)
- D. Statement of Official Action (STOA) Landmark Designation (Nov 11 2019)
- E. Approved Minutes (Landmarks Commission Meeting Nov 11 2019)
- F. DRAFT Appeal STOA 19ENT-0281 (1531 Georgina Ave) LM Denial
- G. Written Comments
- H. Power Point Presentation