

**M E M O R A N D U M****PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF SANTA MONICA  
PLANNING DIVISION**

**DATE:** November 11, 2019  
**TO:** The Honorable Landmarks Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Staff  
**SUBJECT:** **1531 Georgina Avenue, 19ENT-0281**

Public Hearing to consider Landmark and Structure of Merit Designation 19ENT-0281 to determine whether the subject residential building, in whole or in part, should be designated as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit and, if designated as a Landmark, whether an associated Landmark Parcel should be defined and described in order to preserve, maintain, protect, or safeguard the Landmark.

PROPERTY OWNER: Real Santa Monica, LLC  
APPLICANT: Real Santa Monica, LLC

**INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

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 2599 (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.

Accordingly, an assessment report evaluating the property according to both the Landmark and Structure of Merit designation criterion was prepared by one of the City’s historic preservation consultants, Ostashay and Associates Consulting (OAC), provided as Attachment C. Based on the findings as provided in the report, the consultant finds that the property is eligible for Structure of Merit designation under the City of Santa Monica Structure of Merit criteria set forth in 9.56.080(B)(3) as appearing to contribute to the potential Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District.

However, extensive research and evaluation of the existing building conditions of this particular property indicates that the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. 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. While the property may retain integrity of its location and setting, the property no longer maintains integrity of its design, materials, and workmanship. Therefore, staff has determined that the subject property does not appear to satisfy any of the criteria for designation as a Landmark or Structure of Merit, and is thereby ineligible for designation as an historic resource.

The property owner submitted an independent historic assessment prepared by ESA. The assessment concludes that the property does not satisfy the criterion findings as a City Landmark, and appears inconclusive regarding whether the property is eligible as a Structure of Merit. The ESA report is provided as Attachment B along with the applicant's demo permit application materials.

### 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 streetscape consists of uniform setbacks with mature landscaping within front yards and parkways. Despite some alterations and infill, this section of Georgina Avenue continues to maintain a sufficient concentration of Period Revival-style residences as identified in the current HRI. Based on pedestrian reconnaissance, it appears that there have been no significant changes since the 2018 HRI update.

### **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

Notice of this hearing was provided as required by Section 9.56.170(C) of the Landmarks Ordinance, with notice sent to all owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius and a

newspaper notice published in the Santa Monica Daily Press at least 10 consecutive calendar days prior to the hearing. A copy of the notice is included as Attachment A.

## **ANALYSIS**

### Property Information and Architectural Description

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.

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 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 City's consultant 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.

However, as mentioned previously, the Georgina Avenue Residential Historic District is identified in the HRI based on its concentration of Period Revival residential architecture in Santa Monica. Extensive research and evaluation of the existing conditions of this particular property indicate that the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. In evaluating all aspects of integrity and the property as a whole, the residence does not appear to accurately reflect the Period Revival-style architecture that is identified as the significant feature of the potential district. Additionally, 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. Therefore based on this information, it would seem inappropriate to still consider the property as a contributor to the potential district.

### 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 to 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Many of the blocks along this section of Georgina Avenue are located within the Palisades Tract extensions of 1912. The blocks between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Street were subdivided in 1922 as Tract 5859 and adopted by the City in 1923. This immediate area contains residences dating from 1923 through to the 2000s. 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 and would also become a member of the American Institute of Architects in Washington a few years later. 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 designed 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.

The subject Monterey Colonial Revival-style residence was designed during the early period in her 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.

### Landmarks Ordinance/Findings for Landmark and Structure of Merit Designations

#### *Landmark Criteria*

The Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission 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 Commission 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 Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission to review the building's eligibility as a Structure of Merit based on the four criteria discussed below. In order to be designated

as a Structure of Merit, the Commission is required to find that the property meets one or more of these 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.

Based on the findings as provided in the Assessment prepared by OAC, the consultant finds that the property is eligible for Structure of Merit designation under criteria 9.56.080(A) and 9.56.080(B)(3). However, based on the research and evaluation of 1531 Georgina Avenue, staff does not believe the property is eligible for Structure of Merit designation.

Staff notes that although the subject property is identified on the current Historic Resource Inventory, further evaluation of this particular property indicates that the residence has been considerably altered since its original construction. In evaluating the integrity of the property as a whole, the residence does not appear to accurately reflect its Monterey Colonial Revival-style and therefore the Period Revival-style architecture that is identified as the significant feature of the potential district. Therefore, it would seem inappropriate to still consider the property as a contributor to the potential district as the residence no longer appears to warrant its current listing on the City's Historic Resources Inventory as described in the findings below under criteria 9.56.080(A) and 9.56.080(B)(3).

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. 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.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission deny the property located at 1531 Georgina Avenue as a Landmark and Structure of Merit based on the draft findings contained herein.

Pursuant to SMMC 9.36.180, the Landmarks Commission's determination regarding this application may be appealed to the City Council if the appeal is filed with the City Planning Division within ten (10) consecutive days commencing from the date that the decision is made by the Landmarks Commission.

Attachments:

- A. Public Notice
- B. Property Owner Materials (Demo Permit Application & ESA Historic Assessment)
- C. City's Landmark/Structure of Merit Assessment Report, Ostashay & Associates Consulting, November 2019