

MEMORANDUM

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CITY OF SANTA MONICA PLANNING DIVISION

DATE: June 11, 2007

TO: The Honorable Landmarks Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: **Item 10B. 136 Hart Avenue, LC-07SM-002**
Public Hearing to Consider a Structure of Merit Application

PROPERTY OWNER: William T. Graham
APPLICANT: City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission

INTRODUCTION

On April 9, 2007 an application was filed by the Landmarks Commission to designate the residential property at 136 Hart Avenue as a Structure of Merit. A Structure of Merit Assessment Report (Attachment A) with evaluation of the subject property as a contributor to a potential South Beach Historic District has been prepared by the City's historic resources consultant PCR Services Corporation.

The subject property at 136 Hart Avenue is situated on the south side of Hart Avenue between Barnard Way to the west and Neilson Way to the east (Lot 13, Block B of the Central Beach Tract in the City of Santa Monica). The lot size of the subject property is approximately 25 feet by 94.25 feet. The single-family residence and detached, rear accessory building fronts north and is located in a residential neighborhood. The accessory building is accessed via a narrow driveway on the west side of the subject property.

Historic Resources Inventory Status

The property at 136 Hart Avenue has been previously identified and assessed under the City's ongoing survey process on three separate occasions. It was initially evaluated in 1982-83 under Phase I of the City's historic resources inventory process. At that time, the subject property was identified as a contributor to the potential South Beach Historic District.

Following the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the property was resurveyed and evaluated for historical significance in 1995 as part of the City's assessment to determine the

earthquake's overall effects to those properties listed in the City's Historic Resources Inventory. The earthquake had no effect on the eligibility of the building as a contributor to the potential South Beach Historic District.

The building was again surveyed in 2003 as part of the Historic Resources Survey Update Ocean Park, Final Report, June 2004. In the 2003 area update, 136 Hart was mistakenly given an updated status code of "6Z," and was found ineligible for National Register, California Register, or Santa Monica City historic designation through survey evaluation. The DPR forms for the survey recognized that no significant change had occurred to the building since the original survey in 1982-83, but nonetheless, it was recommended that status of the building be reduced to a non-contributing level.

Staff and the Landmarks Commission carefully reviewed the recommended "6Z" status code and found that the property still retains its architectural integrity and that the previous addition of the garage was likely an early addition. Therefore, it was determined that the property continued to be a contributor to a potential South Beach Historic District.

The erroneous status recommended for the 136 Hart Avenue property in the 2003 update was reconciled in the most recent City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory, where it was given a California Historical Status Code of "5D2," as a contributor to a district that is eligible for local listing or designation.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Notice of the public hearing was provided as follows: Pursuant to SMMC Section 9.36.120, notice of the public hearing was mailed to all owners and residential and commercial tenants of property within a 300-foot radius of the project and was published in the *Santa Monica Daily Press* at least ten consecutive calendar days prior to the hearing. A copy of the notice is included as Attachment C.

Staff has received written correspondence in support of the Structure of Merit designation; correspondence is contained in Attachment B.

ANALYSIS

Property Information and Architectural Description

The subject property was developed in 1906 as a two-unit, single-family dwelling with a detached ancillary building. The primary residence is a single-story, wood-frame Craftsman Cottage with wood shingle and wood clapboard siding. The garage has horizontal-running, v-groove shiplap wood siding. The garage and concrete driveway on the street-facing façade were probably an early addition; however, there are no building permits on file for such work.

The residence has a front-gable roof that extends roughly one foot beyond the primary façade. The roof is surfaced with built-up roofing covered by asphalt shingles. On the

primary street-facing elevation, the soffit of the roof appears to be sheathed with thin strips of beaded board, while the eaves fascia is wood board. The gable end of the front façade is shingled, while the surface below the gable end is covered with wood clapboard. There are three small casement windows in the triangular section of the front façade between the header beam and the roof ridge, which probably were placed in an opening that was originally a vent.

There are five notched-beam brackets extending horizontally from the façade along the pitch of the gable roof. The three highest brackets all have a diagonal board connecting the bracket to the façade, while the two brackets on the north and south edges of the elevation rest on the header beam at the outer edge of the primary façade.

Based on review of Sanborn maps indicating the building footprint in previous years, it appears that the primary (north) elevation originally had a recessed covered porch that spanned the entire length of the primary elevation. The east side of the original porch may have had a knee-wall that created an outdoor covered porch room, while the west side of the porch was the open exterior entrance foyer. The front door is a wood craftsman-style door that is not original to the building.

The porch is supported by three pairs of box-posts with a decorative tie running horizontally between each pair. On each pair, the tie extends beyond the outside column and terminates with a decorative notch end. Probably an early alteration, the exterior covered porch room was enclosed by windows between the knee wall and header beam.

Originally, there was a steep staircase that ran perpendicular to the front façade leading to the sidewalk. The current stairs and exterior porch were added in the 1980s.

The east elevation has horizontal wood clapboard siding with a thin wood molding that starts at the intersection of the knee-wall and the east elevation and wraps around the east elevation. There are two small orthogonal bays with windows extending eastward from the east façade at the main floor level. There is a wood door on the east elevation near Hart Avenue that leads to storage space underneath the residence.

The west façade has a continuous wood clapboard surface without variation. Both the east and west elevations have exposed roof rafters that extend beyond the vertical walls of the dwelling.

Property Context: South Beach District

As described in greater detail in the attached Structure of Merit Assessment Report, the South Beach District (approximately bounded by Hollister Avenue, Ocean Park Boulevard, Barnard Way, and Neilson Way) has a rich history that began at the turn of the twentieth century. The majority of the cottages on the two tracts were constructed between 1901 and 1905. The 1902 Sanborn map of Hart Avenue shows the north side of the street, roughly, two-thirds developed, while the south side was nearly half built. By 1909 almost all the lots on Hart Street were improved. Progress in the area was reported in The Daily Outlook and

was a source of pride to the city. Around 1902 the fire department issued a souvenir book picturing notable residences in the city, including seven on Fraser Avenue.

In 1983, the South Beach Historic District was designated a potential landmark district, a “2” level of significance, by the Review Committee of the Santa Monica Architectural and Historical Survey. At that time, a “2” level ranking by the Committee indicated that the potential district was significant in a local context and worthy of local designation. Today, the South Beach neighborhood continues to be significant as the most intact district of beach cottages in Ocean Park. It possesses an extraordinary amount of architectural and historical integrity and reflects a unifying entity that conveys its overall historic context that is rooted in the development of Ocean Park during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Specifically, the area’s setting and feeling has been substantially maintained over the decades, despite the appearance of numerous postwar apartment buildings and condominiums, which have proliferated in nearby neighborhoods. Because of the continued architectural cohesiveness of the South Beach neighborhood, it is an important, visible component of the historic and cultural identity of Santa Monica.

Architectural and Historical Significance

As detailed more fully in Attachment A, the subject residence at 136 Hart Avenue is a good example of the Craftsman Bungalow Cottage architectural style as applied to construction on a narrow lot with a moderate grade. Review of building permits and visual inspection confirm that the residence has experienced remarkably few alterations since its early history, including the retention of design, materials and workmanship of original entrances and fenestration. As such, the subject residence exhibits a high level of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The subject property is a good, representative example of its building type and architectural style and it strongly exemplifies the historic development patterns of the associated potential South Beach Historic District.

In this area of Santa Monica, the original lots had 25 foot frontages with minimal setbacks leaving miniscule front gardens that have often been enclosed with a low picket fence or removed and the area paved. All of the original residences are one to two stories and have the typical turn-of-the-century features associated with the Bungalow Cottage genre. Craftsman influences are also apparent. The dominant roof shapes found in the South Beach Tract area are hips and gables with a center dormer window or vent. Many roofs have exposed rafters with shaped tails in the eaves. Wood siding, in the form of shingles and clapboard was original to most of the buildings. The front porch was also an integral part of the architecture.

Nearly all of the houses in this area have been altered to some degree. The most common alterations have involved re-siding, enclosing the porches (often using original windows and doors), raising the building over a new garage, and division into apartments. Relatively few

intrusions compromise the integrity of the district, although a few parcels of two to three lots have been assembled and stucco infill apartments constructed on them.

Based on a review of the City's Historic Resources Inventory and a field survey of surrounding neighborhoods, there are similar dwelling types located throughout the potential South Beach Historic District. In particular, there are multiple extant residences on Hart Avenue that appear similar in materials, proportion, building-type, and construction history to 136 Hart Avenue. Although there is no single dominant style of architectural detailing associated with the proposed South Beach Historic District, nearly all the contributing dwellings on Hart Avenue were either one or two story Bungalow Cottages built by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century as part of the beachfront residential development of Ocean Park.

The neighboring dwelling to the east of the subject property, 140 Hart Avenue, is a raised two-story Bungalow Cottage built in 1906 by builder, J. B Robertson, while the raised one story bungalow cottage at 134 Hart Avenue on the west side of the subject property, was built before 1902. Other contributing buildings to the proposed South Beach Historic District include 157, 154, 148, 147, 137, 133, 129, 127, 124, and 122 Hart Avenue.

Based on current research of the proposed South Beach Historic District, in comparison to other similar examples of the architectural style and property type in the general area, the subject property exhibits a high level of integrity, and as such is able to convey its historical significance and association within the context of the South Beach District.

Landmarks Ordinance/Findings

The Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission to review the building's eligibility as a Structure of Merit based on the two criteria discussed below. The Commission may designate a property as a Structure of Merit if it meets one or more of these criteria.

9.36.080(a) The structure has been identified in the City's Historic Resources Survey.

The residence at 136 Hart Avenue has been identified in previous surveys and is listed in the City of Santa Monica's Historic Resources Inventory and hence clearly satisfies this criterion.

9.36.080(b) The structure is a minimum of 50 years of age and meets one of the following criteria:

The residence at 136 Hart Avenue was constructed in 1906 and is 101 years of age, clearly above the bare minimum 50-year criterion.

9.36.080(b)(1) The structure is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type.

The residence at 136 Hart Avenue represents a good example of a Craftsman Bungalow

Cottage with a high level of integrity. Additionally, its incorporation of the uncommon bracketing on the primary façade and its decorative boxposts raise the building's architectural merits above other similar examples of the style and type in the vicinity. Therefore, the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

9.36.080(b)(2) The structure is representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent.

Although the raised Bungalow Cottage at 136 Hart Avenue is prevalent in the South Beach Historic District, it is uncommon in other parts of the City and therefore satisfies the above criterion.

9.36.080(b)(3) The structure contributes to a potential Historic District.

The residence at 136 Hart Avenue, situated within the original Central Beach Tract of Ocean Park, has been previously identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory and in subsequent survey updates and evaluations as being a contributor to the potential South Beach Historic district within the City of Santa Monica. The area in which the subject property is located possesses a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of buildings that are united historically or aesthetically by plan, architectural style, or physical development. Additionally, the surrounding area reflects a unifying entity that conveys its overall historic context. Specifically, the area's setting and feeling has been substantially maintained over the decades, despite the appearance of numerous postwar apartment buildings and condominiums, which have proliferated in nearby neighborhoods. The subject property is a good, representative example of its building type and architectural style and exemplifies the historic development patterns of the associated potential South Beach Historic District. Therefore the residence contributes to a potential historic district.

Recommendation

Based on the research and evaluation of the property at 136 Hart Avenue, it is recommended that the Landmarks Commission designate the single-family residence as a Structure of Merit subject to 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.

Prepared by: Roxanne Tanemori, Associate Planner

Attachments:

- A. PCR Services Structure of Merit Assessment Report (May 2007)
- B. Correspondence received regarding the application
- C. Public Notice