

SIMPKINS RESIDENCE
9743 N. Pali Avenue
CHC-2020-7439-HCM
ENV-2020-7440-CE

FINDINGS

(As Amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on March 18, 2021)

- The Simpkins Residence “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction [and] represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an excellent and intact example of a Mid-Century Modern design for post-World War II residential tract development, and a significant early work of master architect Carl Maston, in conjunction with architects Ray Kappe and Edgardo Contini.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Commission adopts the staff recommendation to change the proposed monument name to the “Simpkins Residence,” after Bette Simpkins, the first owner of the subject property, to reflect the original ownership history.

The Simpkins Residence meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction [and] represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an excellent and intact example of a Mid-Century Modern design for post-World War II residential tract development, and a significant early work of master architect Carl Maston, in conjunction with architects Ray Kappe and Edgardo Contini.

The Mid-Century Modern architectural style gained popularity because of its use of standardized, prefabricated materials, and economical construction, and as a result, it became the predominant style in post-World War II era design for single-family homes. The hallmarks of the style, as exhibited by the subject property, are the post-and-beam construction, one-story configuration, horizontal massing, and open interior space. The subject property also retains other characteristic features of the style that include the low-pitched roof, clerestory windows, sliding glass doors, and generally unadorned wall surfaces.

Furthermore, Maston is generally known for his works in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style and is particularly renowned for his design for garden apartments. With the contributions of Ray Kappe and Edgardo Contini, the subject property represents an early fusion of the work of three master architects, and a nascent commission of Maston that exhibits features that came to define his body of work. The residence is a distinctive example of Maston’s philosophy of garden-apartment architecture as applied to tract homes. Maston’s signature concepts for garden apartment design, as exemplified in the design of the subject property, include transparency, light and privacy through floor-to-ceiling windows, and an integral glass door looking out on protected and private outdoor patios and gardens.

Despite minor interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.*”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.*”

The designation of the Simpkins Residence as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2020-7440-CE was prepared on February 16, 2021.