

JOHN AND MYRA VAN PELT ESTATE
2131-2149 North Lyric Avenue
CHC-2020-6024-HCM
ENV-2020-6025-CE

FINDINGS

(As amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on August 5, 2021)

- The John and Myra Van Pelt Estate “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a unique and highly intact, multi-acre complex of residential buildings designed in the Storybook architectural style.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Cultural Heritage Commission voted to change the proposed monument name to the John and Myra Van Pelt Estate (formerly the John Van Pelt Estate).

The John and Myra Van Pelt Estate meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a unique and highly intact, multi-acre complex of residential buildings designed in the Storybook architectural style.

Storybook-style architecture was based completely on a fairytale version of medieval Europe, employing a cartoonish interpretation of medieval forms, and exaggerated handmade details meant to suggest great age. It was distinguished by an eccentric combination of historical and fictional design references, often taking common design elements from Tudor Revival-style architecture, coupled with multiple references to English medieval vernacular architecture. Buildings of this style are asymmetrical and artificially distressed to create a ramshackle appearance. Usually one to two stories in height, the roof is often designed to appear thatched with undulating and uneven shingles applied in wavy patterns. Steeply pitched roofs of multiple gables with rolled or pointed eaves are accented with turrets and dovecotes capped with conical roofs. Elevations combine many materials, including wood, stucco, stone, and bricks. Intentionally imperfect half-timbering uses dark and twisted wood. Doors are made to resemble medieval plank doors. Multi-paned or lead-glass windows in arched openings are deliberately misaligned across the elevations. Additional accents include rubble stone or clinker brick chimneys that appear to be collapsing or haphazardly repaired over time. All of these elements were difficult to replicate on a mass scale, giving each Storybook style building a unique and handmade appearance.

Storybook-style architecture was primarily utilized in the design and construction of single-family residences; the subject property represents a relatively rare and highly stylized example of the style applied to a multi-family residential property. Its asymmetrical facades, multi-gabled, steeply pitched roofs with pointed eaves, irregular rooflines, turrets, and diamond-pane wood casement windows, and wood plank doors are all representative features of the style. Other characteristic features are inclusive of exposed wood ceilings, wood built-ins, brick and stone fireplaces, and wood floors. In addition, the Storybook-style theming continues throughout the multitude of landscape and hardscape features at the subject property that include nautical-themed lamp posts, clinker-brick retaining walls and stairs, stone stairways and retaining walls, chain handrails, a stone throne, and a tree-design set into the brick walkway.

While there have been minor alterations over time, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, design, 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 John and Myra Van Pelt Estate 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.

An amended Categorical Exemption ENV-2020-6025-CE was prepared on August 5, 2021.