



Department: Community Development
Cost Center: 4003
For Agenda of: 9/7/2021
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Michael Codron, Community Development Director
Prepared By: Walter Oetzell, Assistant Planner

SUBJECT: A REQUEST TO INCLUDE THREE PROPERTIES IN THE CITY'S INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AS MASTER LIST RESOURCES (198 PASO ROBLES, 201 BUENA VISTA, 2424 SUNSET)

RECOMMENDATION

As recommended by the Cultural Heritage Committee, adopt a Resolution entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, adding three properties to the Master List of Historic Resources: 198 Paso Robles Drive (Pimentel-Orth House); 201 Buena Vista Avenue (Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House); and 2424 Sunset Drive (Page-Selkirk House)."

DISCUSSION

Background

The owners of the properties at 198 Paso Robles Drive, 201 Buena Vista Drive, and 2424 Sunset Drive have each requested that their properties be designated as Master List Resources in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources and have provided an evaluation of each of the properties and its eligibility for historic listing (Master List Applications, Attachment B, hereinafter referred to as "applicant's Evaluation"),¹ prepared by James Papp, Architectural Historian. None of the properties is within an Historic District, and none are currently included in the Inventory of Historic Resources.

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

On July 26, 2021, the Cultural Heritage Committee considered this request and found that the properties meet eligibility criteria for historical listing to a degree that qualifies them for designation as Master List Resources and recommended that the City Council designate the properties as such in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources.

¹ James Papp, PhD. *Master List Applications – Peter and Carol Andre House, Pimentel-Orth House, Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House, and Page-Selkirk House, (March 2021)*. Three of the properties discussed in the evaluation have been grouped for consideration together, as designed by the same architect, with similar setting and execution of design. The Peter and Carol Andre House at 1801 Woodland Drive, also described in the applicant's evaluation, is not under consideration at this time.

Site and Setting

All three of the subject properties are within hillside residential areas characterized by single family dwellings. Each is developed with a single-family dwelling designed by Kenneth Schwartz, a formerly active local architect and public servant, (Papp, pg. 84), and is described in the applicant's property evaluation to have been specifically named by the architect as worthy of designation as a historical resource (Papp pg. 3).

The City's Historic Context Statement describes the representative forms and styles and character-defining features of the style described as "Mid-Century Modern" (see excerpt, Attachment C). The specific architectural characteristics of the building are more fully discussed in the applicant's Evaluation document (Attachment B) and summarized in the Evaluation section of this report, below

Kenneth Schwartz

The Applicant's Evaluation provides a comprehensive timeline and description of the life and achievements, professional, public, and private, of Kenneth Schwartz, local architect, Cal Poly professor, City Planning Commissioner, Council Member, and Mayor (Papp, pp. 10-67). Born and raised in Los Angeles and trained in architecture through the University of Southern California, he relocated to San Luis Obispo with his wife and children to take up a teaching position in the Department of Architectural Engineering at Cal Poly. As more fully described in the applicant's Evaluation, he would make significant contributions to the City throughout his life and career. Of particular note are his efforts contributing to the establishment of the City's first General Plan and the creation of Mission Plaza (Papp, pg. 62).

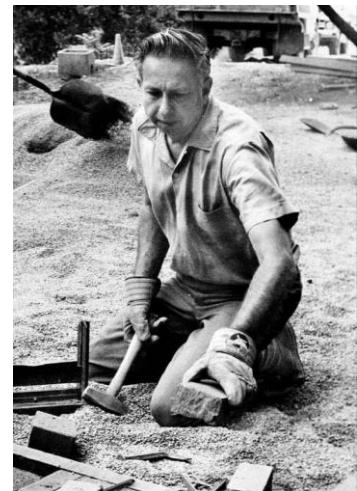


Figure 1: Kenneth Schwartz

Pimentel-Orth House (198 Paso Robles)



Figure 2: Pimentel-Orth House

The Applicant's Evaluation notes that the dwelling on this property, designed in 1962, "embodies Minimalism and Functionalism in an axial arrangement" that "descends down the grade" (Papp, pp 84 85). The Evaluation describes the placement and orientation of spaces within the house in greater detail (Papp, pp. 38-40), and summarizes character defining details (pg. 84):

- V-groove vertical shiplap siding, exhibiting Minimalist subtlety;
- Use of Masonite panels above and below windows to emphasize verticality and define visual exterior planes;
- Absence of eaves and horizontality (breaking with Mid-Century Modern characteristics);
- Kitchen island, west-facing corner window, hill-facing dogtooth skylight, introducing the relaxed spirit of the Third Bay Tradition

Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House (201 Buena Vista)



Figure 3: Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House

As described in the Applicant's Evaluation, the dwelling on this property, designed in 1966, "embodies Minimalism and Functionalism, particularly in their Southern Californian and Neutraesque variant" (Papp, pp 87). The Evaluation describes the integration of the building within its hillside context and the arrangement of and hierarchy of spaces within the house in greater detail (Papp, pp. 40-42), and summarizes character defining details (pg. 87):

- A single level built out over a hillside location;
- Continuous rectangular facade with offset wings under a continuous flat roofline;
- Expanses of glass and vertical redwood siding rhythmically arranged;
- Axial counterpoints between the house and stair tower; A Usonian hallway;
- Integration between interior and exterior materials
- Expression of structure through overall form rather than exposed structural elements

Page-Selkirk House (2424 Sunset)

The dwelling on this property, designed in 1966, is of a “hexagonal hub and spoke design” that “embodies a combination of Minimalism, Functionalism, and Futurism” (Papp, pp 90). The Evaluation describes the genesis and execution of the unusual form of the home in greater detail (Papp, pp. 42-44), and summarizes its character defining details (pg. 90):

- Hexagonal hub and spoke design, with pergola-covered “interstitial alcove areas” (with views from each)
- Exposed beams, plank ceilings, round skylight
- Brick fireplace and freestanding chimney at the building “hub”
- “Neutraesque” plywood siding outside and paneling inside
- Large sliding glass doors



Figure 4: Page-Selkirk House

Evaluation of Eligibility

To be eligible for listing as a historic resource, a building must exhibit a high level of historic integrity, be at least 50 years old, and meet one or more of the eligibility criteria described in § 14.01.070 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (see Attachment D). These criteria are supplemented with more specific information about property types, integrity considerations, and eligibility standards associated with Mid-20th Century Residential Development provided in the Citywide Historic Context Statement (see excerpt, Attachment E).

Architectural Criteria

As described in the Applicant’s Evaluation, the dwellings exhibit characteristic features of Mid-Century Modern architectural styles, consistent with listing criteria for “Style” and for “Design.” In addition, consistent with listing criteria for “Architect,” it is observed that all of these buildings were designed by Ken Schwartz, a noted local architect trained at the University of Southern California, “informed by direct contact with the intellectual cutting edge of L.A.” (Papp, pg. 25). As more fully described in from page 23 of the Applicant’s Evaluation (“Ken Schwartz as an Architect”) and from page 60 (“Ken Schwartz as Politician”), Ken Schwartz, in addition to executing excellent examples of buildings in a Mid-Century Modern style, also made significant contributions to the City through his work as a Cal Poly professor, City Planning Commissioner, City Council Member, Mayor, and numerous civic functions and activities.

Pimentel-Orth House (198 Paso Robles)

- Minimalism and Functionalism

“Its interior and exterior axial arrangements formed of boxes; complex use of materials, light, and views; and angular juxtaposition to the natural landscape express the Corbusian notion of a machine for living” (Papp, pg. 7)

The property and building retain their character defining features including: the V-groove vertical siding; Masonite panels; absence of eaves and horizontality; west-facing corner window, and hill-facing dogtooth skylight.

Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House (201 Buena Vista)

- Minimalism and Functionalism

“The most Neutraesque of Schwartz’s work in exterior expression of Minimalist form, it shows the influence of Mies in use of planes, Wright in treatment of public and private space, and the Second Bay Tradition (possibly through Neutra) in its use of materials, but it is distinctively the work of Schwartz in its kinetic logic.” (Papp, pg. 8)

The building retains its character defining features including: its single level form; rectangular facade and offset wings; flat roofline; glass expanses; rhythmic vertical redwood siding; and expression of structure through overall form. Having been designed by Ken Schwartz himself, a noted local architect as described above, it also satisfies listing criteria for “Architect.”

Page-Selkirk House (2424 Sunset)

- Minimalism, Functionalism, and Futurism

““It’s extraordinary hexagonal hub design leading to three wings of different uses is a Functionalist breakthrough within a Minimalist aesthetic clearly influenced by Futurism.” (Papp, pg. 8)

The building retains its character defining features including: its hexagonal hub and spoke design, alcoves, exposed beams, plank ceilings, round skylight; “hub” brick fireplace and freestanding chimney; plywood siding outside and paneling; and large sliding glass doors.

Criteria Related to History

Based on the significance of Kenneth Schwartz and his contributions to the local community, the Applicant’s Evaluation also concludes that the Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House (201 Buena Vista) qualifies for Master List designation by its association with persons significant to the community as a public leader (History – Person):

“... as the home of Ken Schwartz, a person significant in San Luis Obispo’s past who made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history as the most influential exponent of city planning in over six decades of service as mayor, Planning Commission chair, and many other roles. (pg. 8)

Criteria Related to Integrity

To demonstrate satisfaction of listing criteria for “Integrity,” the Applicant’s Evaluation notes for each building the retention of the character-defining elements of the building, and the minor nature of modifications, which were made by the original architect:

“The integrity of the Pimentel-Orth House in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association obtains after subtle pushouts to augment interior spaces, executed by the architect within the period of significance... (pg. 39)

“The 1962 design [of the Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House] has been changed only in details, such as the reconfiguration of dining room fenestration, the staining of exterior redwood to match the interior paneling, and the addition of pergolas and a garage door. These changes were brought about by Schwartz as refinements in aesthetic theory and practice.” (pg. 39)

The 1966 design [of the Page-Selkirk House] has not been changed, except for the barely noticeable addition of an elevator from garage level at the front of the deck. Indeed, a pergola that had been removed was rebuilt by Shirley Selkirk after Bruce Selkirk’s death in deference to the original design “to please Ken.” (pg. 91)

Historic Resource Designation

According to the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, those resources that maintain their original or attained historic and architectural character and contribute either by themselves or in conjunction with other structures to the unique or historic character of a neighborhood, district, or to the City as a whole may be designated as a “Contributing List Resource”. The most unique and important resources and properties in terms of age, architectural or historical significance, rarity, or association with important persons or events in the City’s past may be designated as “Master List Resources” (HPO § 14.01.050).

The applicant’s Evaluation (Attachment B) notes that the subject properties are among a select few identified by the architect himself to be among the most worthy of his works for historical listing (pg. 3), and provides (from pg. 23) an in-depth description of the architect’s Modernist influences, training, and design approach.

Along with individual discussion of the characteristics of each of the subject properties, it provides summary conclusions of eligibility under these criteria (pg. 6), noting each as “one of the most unique and important properties” in terms of architectural significance, “representing the work of a master,” and as having retained integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with the period of significance.

Conclusion

The information submitted by the applicants, documenting the architectural character and integrity of each of the houses on these properties, and their attribution to Ken Schwartz, provides a basis for the Committee to find that these properties satisfy Architectural Criteria for Style, Design, and Architect (§ 14.01.070 (A), and Criteria for Integrity (§§ 14.01.070 (C) (1) & (2)), and that their architectural significance qualifies them for designation as a Master List Historic Resource. Furthermore, the association of the Kenneth and Martha Schwartz House with Kenneth Schwartz, “who made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history as the most influential exponent of city planning in over six decades of service as mayor, Planning Commission chair, and many other roles (Papp, pg. 8) satisfies listing criteria for History (§14.01.070 (B)).

Policy Context

The recommended action on this item is supported by historical preservation policies set out in § 3.0 of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City’s General Plan, and with procedures and standards for listing of historic resources set out in the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance §§ 14.01.060 & 14.01.070.

Public Engagement

Public notice of this hearing has been provided to owners and occupants of property near the subject site, and published in a widely circulated local newspaper, and hearing agendas for this meeting have been posted at City Hall, consistent with adopted notification procedures. Public notice was also previously provided for the Cultural Heritage Committee meeting of July 26, 2021.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Inclusion of the subject properties on the City’s Inventory of Historic Resources does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and so is covered by the general rule described in § 15061 (b) (3) of the CEQA Guidelines.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No
Funding Identified: No

Budget Year: 2021

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Total Budget Available	Current Funding Request	Remaining Balance	Annual Ongoing Cost
General Fund	N/A	\$	\$	\$
State				
Federal				
Fees				
Other:				
Total	\$	\$0	\$	\$0

Adding the properties to the Master List of Historic Resources will have no fiscal impacts. Historic designation of property itself has no bearing on City fiscal resources. As a Master List Resource, however, each property would be eligible for historic preservation incentives under the “Mills Act.” Any subsequent request to enter into a “Mills Act Contract” with the City would be considered under separate application. A separate fiscal analysis would be reviewed by the City Council should any of the properties be proposed for participation in the Mills Act Program.

ALTERNATIVES

1. **Designate one or more of the properties as a Contributing List Resource in the City’s Inventory of Historic Resources.** This action would be based on finding that one or more of the properties is not considered to be sufficiently unique or important, or found to satisfy Evaluation Criteria for listing to a degree warranting designation as a Master List Resource.
2. **Decline to include any of the properties in the Inventory of Historic Resources.** This action would be based on finding that none of the properties satisfy Evaluation Criteria for historical listing.
3. **Continue consideration of the request for additional information or discussion.**

ATTACHMENTS

- A – Draft Resolution adding three properties to Master List of Historic Resources
- B – Applicant’s Evaluation of Eligibility for Listing (James Papp, PhD)
- C – Mid-Century Modern (Context Statement, Excerpt)
- D – Evaluation Criteria (Historic Preservation Ordinance)
- E – Mid-20th Century Residential Development (Context Statement, Excerpt)