



Council Agenda Report

Item 5e

Department: Community Development
Cost Center: 4003
For Agenda of: 1/11/2022
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

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

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO INCLUDE PROPERTY AT 211 CHORRO IN THE INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AS A MASTER LIST RESOURCE (HIST-0608-2021)

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 the property located at 211 Chorro Street to the Master List of Historic Resources as 'The Muller-Noggle House and Garage'."

DISCUSSION

Background

James & Mai Haselman, represented by James Papp, have requested that the property at 211 Chorro be designated as a Master List Resource in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources, as The Muller-Noggle House and Garage, and have provided an evaluation of the property and its eligibility for historic listing (Historical Evaluation, Attachment B), prepared by James Papp, PhD, Historian and Architectural Historian.

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

On November 8, 2021 the Cultural Heritage Committee considered this request and found that the property meets eligibility criteria for historical listing to a degree that qualifies it for designation as a Master List Resource and recommended that the City Council designate the property as such in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources.

Site and Setting

The property is at the southwest corner of Mission and Chorro Streets, in the Mount Pleasanton Square / Anholm Neighborhood, a low-density residential area northwest of Downtown between the base of Cerro San Luis Obispo and Stenner Creek, developed in the 1920s and 1930s. Craftsman, California Bungalow, and various Revival styles predominate in the area, reflecting popular architectural styles of that time. The area's popularity was due, in part, to its proximity to Downtown and sheltered location on the lee side of Cerro San Luis. Early residents include many prominent educators, business owners and professionals.

It continues to be an attractive, recognizable neighborhood, with most homes in good condition and many in original or near-original architectural character. Because of the apparent concentration of architecturally and historically important homes, the City has in the past considered whether the neighborhood may merit historic district status, but ultimately did not designate the area as such.

The Muller-Noggle House and Garage

City records indicate that the property was developed with a single-story dwelling in 1936, “built for attorney A.V. Muller and his wife Elizabeth by the Los Angeles-based woman architect Edla Muir and local builder F.C. Stolte,” noting it as “handsome, unusual for the area, and well-maintained.” It is described as having an L-shaped plan and a French Provincial stylistic influence, with several characteristic features highlighted:



Figure 1: Muller-Noggle House

- Wood shingle hipped roof (long leg), truncated hip roof (short leg)
- Projecting eaves, plain boxed cornice
- Shiplap siding and stucco exterior material
- Rectangular windows, various types, including three window bays, plain surrounds
- Chimney, shutters, turret with bay window
- Detached two-car garage

The property was added, as one of a group of 17 properties in the area, to the City’s Inventory of Historic Resources as a Contributing List Resource in 1999 (Council Resolution 8890). Minutes of the Council meeting show that 211 Chorro Street was noted as “possibly eligible for the Master List.”

The applicant’s Historical Evaluation describes the property’s history and the building itself in further detail,¹ attributing its style as “an extremely rare Minimal Traditional design characterized by a pyramidal roof with a central chimney...”.

Whatever the source, the Muller-Noggle House embodies the drama and streamlining of the Minimal Traditional. Even more unusually, it has a detached but matching pyramid-roof garage, one of the most architecturally significant garages surviving in San Luis Obispo.
(Papp, pg. 1)

¹ A description of the home’s architecture is provided from pg. 14 of the Historical Evaluation (Attachment B).

The City's Historic Context Statement describes the Minimal Traditional style as having its origins in the principles of the Modern movement and reflecting a desire for greater efficiency and reduced costs to keep homes affordable to the middle class.

Edla Muir, Architect

The applicant's Historic Resource Evaluation also provides biographical details² about Edla Muir, the architect of the home, charting her family's background, from great-grandfather Thomas Fitch, a figure in early California history, to her early career working for architect John Beyer in the Los Angeles area, through the maturation of her architectural work into examples of "livable Modernism":

Edla Muir was not just an architect, not just a rare woman architect in an overwhelmingly man's field in the mid twentieth century, she was a regionally respected designer of revival homes who then became a nationally esteemed exponent of LA Modernism (Papp, pg. 22)

Evaluation of Eligibility

Architectural Criteria

Character-defining features of the Minimal Traditional Style are described in the City's Historic Context Statement to include:

- One-story
- Simple rectangular plan
- Medium or low-pitched hip or side-gable roof with shallow eaves
- Smooth stucco wall cladding, often with wood lap or stone veneer accents
- Shallow entry porch with slender wood supports
- Fixed wooden shutters
- Minimal decorative exterior detailing

As described and depicted in pages 18-25 of the applicant's Historical Evaluation, the dwelling exhibits many of these characteristic features:

The resource exemplifies the afore-mentioned Minimal Traditional's close-clipped rakes, minimized windows, decluttered walls, broad expanse of steeply pitched roof, prominent chimney, curvilinear features, and smooth transitions. (Papp, pg. 16)

This section of the Historical Evaluation also details notable interior features of the home:

Interior features include paneling, coves on the bedroom wing's exterior walls, reception room crown molding, and octagon dining room (formed by built-in cabinets in two corners topped with arches, faux keystones, and interior coves and a recessed ironing board in a third corner). (Papp, pg. 16)

² Biographical information about Edla Muir is provided from pg. 22 of the Historical Evaluation (Attachment B)

The dwelling was designed by Edla Muir, a notable architect who was “one of the two pioneer California women architects who mastered Modernism” (Papp, pg. 40). The Muller-Noggle House and Garage are also noted as “one of only two residential projects in the City documented to have been built by the F. C. Stolte Company, contractor for Hearst Castle [...] supervised by Carl Daniels, who oversaw work in the rest of the county while his colleague and sometime collaborator George Loorz managed construction for W. R. Hearst and Julia Morgan.” (Papp, pg. 2).

Historic Criteria

A timeline of the property, including a brief listing of its historical occupants is provided from page 3 of the Historical Evaluation. The house was built for A. V. Mueller, “a remarkable example of a self-made man in an era of self-made men” (Papp, pg. 6) who, in addition to conducting a successful private law practice, served as Assistant District Attorney for the County. It was later owned and occupied by John and Neva Noggle, John a top salesman at Standard Motors on Monterey Street, and the family operating the Little Chef restaurant (Papp, pg. 5). The evaluation, however, does not indicate a relevant association with singular and important historical events and patterns or significance to the community rising to a level of significance that would satisfy Historic Criteria described in § 14.01.070 (B) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Integrity

The dwelling remains in its original location, and in the discussion of the integrity of its design the various character-defining elements of the home are discussed, concluding that, notwithstanding minor subsequent modifications, including a 1963 bedroom wing extension and some non-original brickwork, the buildings and property satisfy the criteria for Integrity set out in § 14.01.070 (C) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

It retains the integrity of the six applicable aspects (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling) to communicate its significance.
(Papp, pg. 2)

Conclusion

The information in the Historical Evaluation prepared for this application, documenting the architectural character and integrity of the house, provides a basis for the Council to find that the dwelling satisfies Evaluation Criteria for Architectural Style, Design, and Architect (§ 14.01.070 (A)) and for Integrity (§ 14.01.070 (C)) to a degree that qualifies the property for designation as a Master List Historic Resource.

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 November 8, 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

Budget Year: 2022

Funding Identified: No

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. ***Decline to designate the property as a Master List Resource in the Inventory of Historic Resources.*** This decision would be based on finding that the Property is not considered to be sufficiently unique or important, or found to satisfy Evaluation Criteria for listing to a degree warranting such designation. The Property would remain in the Inventory as a Contributing List Resource.
2. ***Continue consideration of the request for additional information or discussion.***

ATTACHMENTS

- A – Draft Resolution adding 211 Chorro as a Master List Resource
- B – Historic Resource Evaluation (Papp)
- C – Evaluation Criteria