



Council Agenda Report

Item 5h

Department: Community Development
Cost Center: 4003
For Agenda of: 11/15/2022
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Michael Codron, Community Development Director
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SUBJECT: REQUEST TO REMOVE THE PROPERTY AT 1720 MORRO STREET FROM THE CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES LIST OF THE CITY'S INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

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, removing the property at 1720 Morro Street from the Inventory of Historic Resources."

POLICY CONTEXT

The recommended action on this item is supported by historical preservation policies in section 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 of The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance San Luis Obispo Municipal Code ("SLOMC") Sections 14.01.060 & 14.01.070. The Historic Preservation Ordinance states that to qualify as a resource, a high degree of integrity must be maintained and that at least one of the historic significance criteria is satisfied.

DISCUSSION

The owner of the property at 1720 Morro Street has submitted an Historic Preservation Review application, requesting that the property be removed from the City's Inventory of Historic Resources, as ineligible for listing, based primarily on the compromised historical integrity of the building on the site. An evaluation of the property and its eligibility for listing as an historic resource has been prepared by James Papp, PhD, historian and architectural historian, to inform consideration of this request (see Attachment B).



Figure 1: 1720 Morro (1982)

Site and Setting

The property is a residential parcel on the east side of Morro Street, about 150 feet south of Leff Street, within the Old Town Historic District, one of the City's oldest residential neighborhoods, built up historically around the turn of the 20th Century, with older structures dating back to the 1880s (see description of district, Attachment C).

The site is developed with a single-family dwelling (see Figure 1). As described in the applicant's Historic Resource Evaluation, the dwelling appears on a 1905 Sanborn Map, but no permit record establishing a construction date has been found, nor is the architect of the building known. City records (see Historic Resource Information, Attachment D) describe the building as Neo-Colonial or Colonial Bungalow in style and discusses various architectural elements of the building. The applicant's evaluation more specifically describes the style as "Colonial Revival Bungalow."

Historic Listing

The property was included as a Contributing List Resource in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources in 1987, by adoption of Council Resolution 6424. Historic preservation policies are set out in the Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) of the City's General Plan, and the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (SLOMC Ch. 14.01) implements these policies. Property may be designated as a Contributing List resource where a building on it maintains its historic and architectural character, and contributes, by itself or in conjunction with other structures, to the unique or historic character of a neighborhood, district, or to the City as a whole, and satisfies at least one of the historic significance criteria listed in the Ordinance (see Attachment E).

Architecture

Style and Design: The primary residence on this property is described in the applicant's evaluation as a Colonial Revival Bungalow, with historical context for the style provided from page 6 of the document. As executed in the Old Town District, modest bungalows in this style commonly had a pyramidal hipped roof with a ridge oriented perpendicular to the street frontage, and an asymmetric façade with a windowed bay and a front porch topped by a pedimented front gable (Attachment B, pg. 1, with example photos pp. 9-11). These basic character-defining features were originally present on this home, but have been impacted by a series of modifications to the building since its construction, including:

1. Oversized front dormer (by 1949)
2. Large Post-Modern style dormer on rear
3. South facing pedimented dormer (1965-1982)
4. Porch enclosure (by 2017), including modification and fluting of porch columns
5. Removal of 10-over-1 sash window from front façade (behind porch enclosure)
6. Replacement window in front bay (also now removed)
7. North-facing "push-out" addition and window (attached to rear porch enclosure)
8. New window opening in north-facing pediment
9. New window opening (now boarded) between originals on south elevation
10. Full width back porch enclosure



Figure 2: Modifications - bay (left), porch (center), and south elevation (right)

With all of these modifications, the Papp evaluation describes loss of the original appearance and character-defining features:

In addition to the loss or major alteration of all three character-defining features of the street façade, the rear and side façades have been altered by various eras of expedient pushouts, enclosures, and added and removed fenestration, such that, among the chronological clutter, only two windows in the entire house—both on the south façade, separated by a stained glass window that was added and later removed—appear to be original. (Papp, pg. 2)

The most visible elevation, the front façade, has been subjected to loss of character-defining features by enclosure of the front porch, loss of the 10 over 1 sash window and modification of porch columns, the addition of an oversize dormer to the hipped roof form, and addition of the shed awning over the large window bay and removal of the original window. Today, observable original elements of the building at large are limited to the pedimented gable and window bay (missing the window from the opening) on the façade, siding on the south elevation (interrupted with a new window opening), siding remaining on some portions of the north elevation, the north-facing dormer (compromised by the added window), and the box cornice and frieze details.

Work undertaken with these subsequent modifications would not be considered to be consistent with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historical Properties, mainly because it resulted in the removal and destruction of character-defining features, introduced incompatible new features, and substantially changed a roof form that was important in defining the overall historic character of the building. Together these changes have diminished the architectural and historic character of the building, as described in the applicant's evaluation



Figure 3: Addition to north elevation (left), added dormer window (center), rear dormer (right)

Integrity

As defined in the Historical Preservation Ordinance, integrity is measured in large part by the degree to which an historical resource has maintained its historic character or appearance, to be recognizable as an historic resource and to convey the reasons for its significance, and the degree to which the resource has retained its design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association (§ 14.01.070 (C)). A discussion of the historic integrity of the property, and in particular the cumulative effects of modifications to the building since its construction, is provided in the applicant's evaluation (Attachment B, from pg. 20).

The loss of integrity discussed in the evaluation centers around the “cluttered and jarring” effect that the modifications have had on the design, materials, workmanship, and feeling of the building in its current state. The upper-floor additions and related outsize dormers have obscured and complicated the original simple pyramid roof form. A recent porch enclosure and modification of porch columns has effectively eliminated the original characteristic porch and entry feature. Removal of the window from the front bay and addition of a canopy has altered this feature, with no remaining documentation to aid in its accurate reconstruction. And enclosures at the front and rear have altered the original building form with significant removal of original wall material. As summarized in the applicant's evaluation:

In short, loss of 4 of the 7 Aspects of Integrity—design, workmanship, and materials of the street façade and all secondary façades, and the resultant feeling into which these three aspects of integrity aggregate—has been so global and severe that 1720 Morro's exterior no longer communicates the streamlined and open nature of its original Colonial Revival architecture or its consistency with the other 27 examples of the subtype in the district. It is not eligible for historic resource listing ... (Papp, pg. 2)

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

The Cultural Heritage Committee reviewed this Historical Preservation application, requesting removal of the property from the City's Inventory of Historic Resources, at a public hearing on October 24th, 2022 and recommended by a vote of 5-1 that the Council remove the property from the Contributing Properties List, finding that the original dwelling has lost integrity due to alterations and additions to the primary residence, such that it is no longer eligible for listing as a Contributing List Resource.

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 for development projects

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Consideration of continued eligibility of this property for historic listing is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as it does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and so is covered by the general rule described in CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3). The determination of continued eligibility for historic listing is limited to review of whether the subject site remains eligible for historic resource listing according to the criteria set forth in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No

Budget Year: 2022-23

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

The property on 1720 Morro Street is not a Mills Act approved property and hence does not receive any property tax incentives. The cost for the consultant is borne by the property owner through the application process.

ALTERNATIVES

1. ***Maintain 1720 Morro Street on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources, based on findings that the property continues to satisfy the criteria for Historic Resource Listing of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.*** This alternative is not recommended because the Historic Resources Evaluation prepared for this property indicates that the property is not eligible for listing as an historical resource.
2. ***Continue consideration of the request to a future date for additional information or discussion.***

ATTACHMENTS

- A - Draft Resolution removing 1720 Morro from the Inventory of Historic Resources
- B - Historical Resource Evaluation (James Papp, PhD)
- C - Old Town Historic District (Historic Context Statement)
- D - Historic Resource Information (City "Yellow File")
- E - Evaluation Criteria for Historic Resource Listing