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May 22, 2018

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

**SABSAY HOUSE; 2351 NORTH SILVER RIDGE AVENUE; CASE NO. CHC-2018-776-HCM,
ENV-2018-777-CE**

At its meeting of **May 3, 2018**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the above-referenced property in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council:

1. **Determined** that the proposed designation is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
2. **Determined** that the property conforms with the definition of a Monument pursuant to Section 22.171.7 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code; and
3. **Recommended** that the City Council consider and designate the subject property a Historic-Cultural Monument; and
4. **Adopted** the attached staff report findings as amended by the Commission.

This action was taken by the following vote:

Moved: Milofsky
Seconded: Barron
Ayes: Buelna, Kanner, Kennard

Vote: 5 – 0

Etta Armstrong, Commission Executive Assistant I
Cultural Heritage Commission

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject property to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Time for Council to Act The Commission action will be transmitted to the City Council for consideration. Pursuant to Section 22.171.10 (f) of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Council may approve or disapprove in whole or in part an application or initiation for a proposed designation of a Monument. The Council shall act in 90-days of the public hearing held before the Commission. The 90-day time limit may be extended by the Council for good cause for a maximum of 15 days. If the Council does not act on the application or initiation within this 105-days total time limit, the application or initiation to designate a Monument shall be deemed to have been denied. The Council may override a Commission recommendation of denial of Council initiated designation by a minimum of 10-votes.

Enclosures: Amended Findings

THE SABSAY HOUSE

FINDINGS

(Amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on May 3, 2018)

The Sabsay House "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for study of a period, style or method of construction" as an excellent example of a residential building designed in the International Style architecture.

The Sabsay House is "a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as a highly intact work by master architects J.R. Davidson and Rudolph Schindler.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

SUMMARY

The Sabsay House is a one-and-a-half story single-family residence located on North Silver Ridge Avenue on the crest of a hill, near the intersection of North Silver Ridge Avenue and Silver Ridge Way in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. It was designed in the International Style by master architect Julius Ralph Davidson or J. R. Davidson (1889-1977) and constructed in 1941 as a residence for Rubin and Zipporah Sabsay. A 1944 conversion of the original basement into a one-bedroom apartment and the addition of a bedroom and rear deck in 1952 were alterations to the subject property made by master architect Rudolph Schindler (1887-1953).

The L-shaped subject property is constructed of wood with smooth stucco cladding and has a flat composition shingle roof. The building is set on a sloped lot and has a detached garage set below the basement level on the primary, east-facing elevation. It is reached via a concrete stairway south of the garage leading past the basement to a concrete terrace on the first story. The east-facing primary entry, consisting of a single wood door, is at the northwest corner of the terrace and there is a built-in barbeque grill to the south. A glass wall on the south-facing elevation encloses the terrace. The main mass of the house projects five feet over the basement beneath a three-foot eave, and contains flat stucco planes with bands of single-lite, fixed and operational windows on the upper part of the east and south-facing elevations. The lower part of the south-facing elevation is a flat stucco plane with a small fixed window and door to the basement. Inside, the living room has an extra height of nine feet. Interior features include a Factrolite glass panel in the entry space, original wall and kitchen cabinets, built-in shelves, and a projecting fireplace chimney with a tile fireplace surround and hearth. At the rear of the property there is a garden and a pool.

J. R. Davidson was born in Berlin, Germany in 1889. He worked in London and Paris before coming to Los Angeles in 1923, where he worked with architect Robert D. Faquhar. Davidson relocated to Chicago starting in 1933, but by 1936 he had returned to Los Angeles and resumed his work designing residential buildings. Some of his work on single-family dwellings include the Thomas Mann Residence (1941) in Mandeville Canyon, the MacFadden House (1948) in Toluca Lake, and the Rabinowitz House (1958) in Bel Air. Throughout his career, Davidson's work bridged the Art Deco, International, and Modernist architectural styles, and his involvement in Arts & Architecture magazine's Case Study House Program included designing Case Study Houses #1, #11 {demolished}, and #15. The magazine recognized Davidson's work as being the first modern designs for stores, restaurants, offices, and single and multiple residential units in Los Angeles and Chicago. In 1972, he retired and in 1977 he passed away in Ojai, California.

Rudolph M. Schindler (1887-1953) was a pivotal modernist architect who designed more than 500 projects, of which over 150 were built, mostly in the Los Angeles area. Schindler was born in Vienna in 1887 and trained at the Imperial Institute of Engineering and the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts where he was influenced by the work of the Vienna Secessionists Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. He was drawn to America by the 1910 Wasmuth portfolio on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Schindler went to Chicago in 1914, eventually entering Wright's office in 1918. Wright sent Schindler to Los Angeles in 1920 to supervise construction of Aline Barnsdall's Hollyhock House. By 1921 Schindler decided to remain in Los Angeles and went on to build his own practice which he housed at his personal residence and studio that he designed in 1922 on Kings Road in what is now West Hollywood. Schindler resided at the house until his death in 1953. During his lifetime, Schindler created a body of work in Southern California that placed him as one of the masters of early modern architecture. Schindler became more widely recognized after his death for what he called "space architecture" that focused on creating complex and light filled interior spaces. Some of Schindler's other notable works include the How House (1925, HCM #895), Elliot House (1930, HCM #690), Buck House (1934, HCM #122), the Sachs Apartments (1927-1939, HCM #1118), the Luby and Anastasia Bubeshko Apartments (1939, HCM #831), and the S. T. Falk Apartments (1940, HCM #1133).

Apart from the work done by Schindler in 1944 and 1952, it appears that over the years the property has only experienced minor, maintenance-related alterations and repairs.

The citywide historic resources survey, SurveyLA, identified the subject property as individually eligible for listing or designation at the national, state and local levels as an excellent example of an International Style residence, which was originally designed by J. R. Davidson and has later additions by Rudolph Schindler.

DISCUSSION

The Sabsay House successfully meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria. The property "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for study of a period, style, or method of construction" as an excellent example of a residential building designed in the International Style architecture. The hallmarks of the International Style, as exhibited by the subject property, are a horizontal orientation, unadorned smooth wall surfaces, a flat roof, windows arranged in bands, flush-mounted windows with no trim, and an overall absence of ornamentation. The subject property also retains other

characteristic features of the style that include geometric massing, open interior space, and a cantilevered upper floor.

The Sabsay House is also "a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as a highly intact work by master architects J.R. Davidson and Rudolph Schindler. Much of Davidson's original work remains, including interior design features like built-in furniture and storage spaces which represent the mix of modernity, warmth, and fluidity for which he is known. Schindler's work on the subject property is notable for the introduction of angular dynamism into the more conventional Modern-style design of Davidson, as well as for his signature style that plays on the relation between form and space and incorporates open walls of wood and glass.

The Sabsay House is intact and retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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 Sabsay House 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 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-2018-777-CE was prepared on April 12, 2018.

BACKGROUND

On March 1, 2018, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. On March 22, 2018, a subcommittee of the Commission consisting of Commissioners Barron and Milofsky visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources.