

DEPARTMENT OF  
CITY PLANNING  
200 N. SPRING STREET, ROOM 272  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-4801

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

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(213) 978-1300

CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CALIFORNIA



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(213) 978-1271

KEVIN J. KELLER, AICP  
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(213) 978-1272

LISA M. WEBBER, AICP  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
(213) 978-1274

<http://planning.lacity.org>

October 10, 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:

**WALLACE BEERY'S HOLLYWOOD HIDEAWAY; 947 NORTH MARTEL AVENUE; CHC-2018-4252-HCM; ENV-2018-4253-CE**

At its meeting of **October 4, 2018**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway 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;
3. **Recommended** that the City Council consider the Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway for inclusion in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments; and
4. **Adopted** the attached findings as the findings of the Commission.

The Commission vote was as follows:

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

**Vote: 3 – 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 is hereby 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 on the proposed designation. The City Council may unilaterally extend the 90-day time limit to act for a maximum of 15 days for good cause. With written consent of the owner, the time for the City Council to act may be extended by up to an additional 60 days. If the Council does not act on the application or initiation within this specified time limit, the application or initiation to designate a Monument shall be deemed to have been denied.

Enclosures: Findings

# WALLACE BEERY'S HOLLYWOOD HIDEAWAY

## FINDINGS

(Adopted by the Cultural Heritage Commission on October 4, 2018)

- Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" and "represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as an excellent example of Streamline Moderne residential architecture in Hollywood and as a significant work of master architect William Kesling.

## 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 if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community;
2. Is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age.

## SUMMARY

Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway is a 1936 one-story single-family residence with an attached garage located at 947 North Martel Avenue between Romaine Street to the north and Willoughby Avenue to the south in Hollywood. Designed in the Streamline Moderne architectural style by master architect William Kesling (1899-1983), the property was commissioned by actor Wallace Beery, who sold it the following year.

Irregular in plan, the subject property is of wood-frame construction with smooth concrete plaster cladding and a flat roof. The primary, east-facing elevation is asymmetrically composed and has a concrete driveway leading to the garage on the south side. A paved pathway leads from the sidewalk through an entry pergola and courtyard garden to the primary entrance of the house, which is hidden from street view. The roofline features painted horizontal trim and raised horizontal banding. Fenestration consist of clerestory windows, transom windows, multi-lite steel corner windows, and multi-lite fixed steel windows. Interior features include a flagstone fireplace, original tiling in the kitchen and bathrooms, and built-in furniture.

William Kesling was born on October 18, 1899 in Kansas City, Missouri. Following the First World War, Kesling moved to Los Angeles and worked as a carpenter, eventually becoming superintendent of Jarboe Construction Company. In 1934, Kesling left his position at Jarboe and eventually formed his own contracting company, Kesling Modern Structures. Between 1935 and 1937, Kesling broke ground on more than 20 projects in Los Angeles. Many were designed in the Streamline Moderne style, including the Skinner House in Silver Lake (1936, HCM #856). Later, Kesling moved his business to the San Diego area where he practiced until 1962. Although in retirement, Kesling continued working as a handyman until his death on October 13, 1983.

The subject property has undergone only minimal alterations over the years that include the addition of a koi pond at the rear and an air-conditioning unit on the roof, as well as a kitchen remodel.

The citywide historic resources survey, SurveyLA, identified the subject property as individually eligible for designation through the national, state, and local programs as an excellent example of Streamline Moderne residential architecture in Hollywood and as a work of master architect William Kesling.

## **DISCUSSION**

Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" and "represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as an excellent example of Streamline Moderne residential architecture in Hollywood and as a significant work of master architect William Kesling.

The Streamline Moderne style emerged in the 1930s, replacing the ornamentation of Art Deco with smooth, aerodynamic design suggesting speed and motion. The subject property's smooth concrete plaster cladding, horizontal orientation, flat roof, and rounded corners are all reflective of the style. Other distinguishing features include multi-lite fixed steel windows and steel corner windows, painted horizontal trim and raised horizontal banding along the roofline, and unadorned wall surfaces.

William Kesling is considered a master architect for his prolific work in the Streamline Moderne architectural style during the height of its popularity. While buildings constructed in this style typically lack ornamentation, Kesling's interpretations often featured whimsical details like clerestory windows and hovering pergolas that produce a unique expression of the style, as exemplified by the subject property. Kesling's architectural career spanned nearly 30 years, and Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway not only represents one of his best-known designs, but is also among the last Streamline Moderne style buildings that he constructed in Los Angeles.

The subject property is highly intact and retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, 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 Wallace Beery's Hollywood Hideaway as a 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-2018-4253-CE was prepared on September 17, 2018.

## **BACKGROUND**

On August 16, 2018, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. On September 13, 2018, a subcommittee of the Commission consisting of Commissioners Barron and Kennard visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources.