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June 18, 2019

\*Corrected

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:

**ROBERTS APARTMENTS; 3740-3744 WEST LANDA STREET; 1780 NORTH GRIFFITH PARK BOULEVARD; CASE NO. CHC-2019-254-HCM, ENV-2019-255-CE**

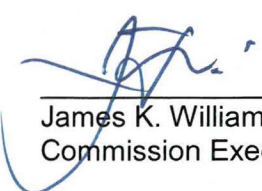
At its meeting of **April 18, 2019**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the  
\*Roberts Apartments in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council:

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 Roberts Apartments for inclusion in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments; and
4. **Adopted** the attached Findings.

The Commission vote was as follows:

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

**Vote: 5 - 0**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James K. Williams  
Commission Executive Assistant II

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.

Enclosure: Findings

## **FINDINGS**

- The Roberts Apartments “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern multi-family apartment building adapted to a hillside lot.

## **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**

The Roberts Apartments is a three-story, nine-unit multi-family residential building located on a steeply sloping lot on the southwest corner of the West Landa Street and North Griffith Park Boulevard intersection in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Commissioned by Albert Roberts in 1966, the subject property was designed in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style by local architect Allyn E. Morris (1922-2009).

Rectangular in plan, the subject property is of post and beam construction with stucco cladding and has a flat, rolled asphalt roof. The primary, west-facing elevation is symmetrically composed into three bays that step forward from north to south and features large window openings each comprised of a single-lite fixed window and a jalousie window. Other windows consist of metal greenhouse windows and skylights. The north-facing façade is dominated visually by the stepped nature of the building which gradually increases from one-story at the lowest point of the grade to three-stories. Also on this elevation are two garage door openings, a set of concrete steps leading to three of the units, and a mix of single-lite fixed and jalousie windows. On the east-facing elevation, there are a covered balcony that provides access to two units, small patios, and glass block and metal greenhouse windows with skylights. The windows on the south-facing elevation consist of fixed metal single-lite and jalousie. The interior layout and appearance of each unit is similar. A typical interior includes an open floorplan on the first floor, access to a balcony, a bathroom with a skylight, exposed wood beams, floor-to-ceiling doors, and in each living room there is a metal freestanding fireplace surrounded by a hearth of concrete set with river rocks and concrete tile.

Allyn E. Morris was born in 1922 in San Francisco, California. After serving in Europe during World War II, Morris attended Stanford University and graduated in 1949 with a degree in mechanical engineering. In 1950, he entered the University of California, Berkeley architecture school, but later dropped out to pursue independent experimental projects. Early in his career,

Morris worked for Lloyd Wright, Risley and Gould, and Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Menderhall before starting his own practice. In 1957, he received his architecture license and went on to design a number of residential commissions in Los Angeles, many of which utilized modern materials and featured cantilevered roof overhangs, decks, and balconies. Later in his career, Morris was recognized by the Los Angeles architecture community for his use of cubes as architectural forms, and cost-effective designs. Morris died in 2009 at the age of 87.

The subject property has undergone several alterations over the years that include the replacement of the door to Unit 1 in the late 1960s, the enclosure of the original balconies with greenhouse-style windows and skylights between 1975 and 1980, the addition of metal security gates towards the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the installation of white tile in the kitchens and bathrooms of some of the units in the 1980s, repair to one of the units due to fire in 1993, and the replacement of some aluminum windows in 2000.

The citywide historic resources survey, SurveyLA, identified the subject property as individually eligible for listing under the state and local designation programs as an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern multi-family apartment building.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Roberts Apartments meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern multi-family apartment building adapted to a hillside lot.

In the period following World War II, Los Angeles’ growth forced the city to grow outward and upward to accommodate its population. At the same time, wartime materials and technologies found new applications in Los Angeles’ architecture, resulting in innovative new designs unique to its climate and topography exhibited by the Mid-Century Modern architectural style. The Roberts Apartments reflects the execution of this style at the height of its popularity, and its adaptation to a hillside lot. The building’s unadorned wall surfaces, geometric massing, flat roof, and stepped design are all reflective of the Mid-Century Modern style. Other distinguishing features include metal-frame fixed windows, open floor plans, and exposed structural elements.

Despite some interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, 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 the Roberts Apartments 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-2019-255-CE was prepared on March 29, 2019.

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 7, 2019, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. On March 28, 2019, a subcommittee of the Commission consisting of Commissioners Kanner and Milofsky visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources.