

FINDINGS

- The Bonnet House “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 Early Modern residential architecture and an important work of master architect Richard Neutra that illustrates the evolution of this career.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Bonnet House meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “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 Early Modern residential architecture and an important work of master architect Richard Neutra that illustrates the evolution of this career.

The Bonnet House reflects the execution of the Early Modern architectural style as Modernist architecture increasingly entered the mainstream in Los Angeles. The property features several defining characteristics of the style, including geometric volumes, overhanging eaves, ribbon windows, and lack of ornamentation. Other typical features include the experimental use of redwood siding and metal casement windows.

The subject property is also an important work of master architect Richard Neutra that illustrates the evolution of his career. Most of Neutra’s earlier commissions in and around Los Angeles were expressions of his European roots and evinced the International Style noted for their white stucco walls, ribbon windows, flat roofs, and orthogonal geometry. However, as Neutra’s career progressed his vocabulary evolved. During the 1940s, Neutra increasingly sought to create architecture that would reflect the particular climate, culture, and landscape of Southern California. The Bonnet House’s strictly geometric form and ribbon windows are typical of Neutra’s early work rooted in European Modernism, while the redwood siding and the open ceilings represent the evolution of his work.

While the applicant argues that the subject property also “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” for its connection to writer Theodore Bonnet, staff do not find that Bonnet rises to the level of an historic personage. While *The Mudlark* was a bestseller and adapted into a film, Bonnet’s contributions to literature, journalism, or the film industry do not appear to have been exceptionally significant. The film’s Academy Award nomination was for Best Costume Design, which does not reflect Bonnet’s work.

Despite interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, 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 Bonnet 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 City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

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-2020-511-CE was prepared on March 13, 2020.