

**LANDMARK DESIGNATION
HLM2004-05
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS
244 Mira Mar Avenue**

ANALYSIS:

In compliance with Section 2.63.050 of the City of Long Beach Municipal Code (Cultural Heritage Commission):

The subject site is located at 244 Mira Mar Avenue, on the east side of Mira Mar Avenue between Broadway to the south and Vista Street to the north (Exhibit A – Location Map). The property has a zoning designation of R-1-N and is improved with a one-story, single-family residential building. Built in 1921, this structure is a Craftsman Bungalow that was built and designed by Miner Smith.

Miner Smith's early work as a stonecutter and contractor led to starting a company called M.R. Smith Stone and Mantel Company where he designed and built several ornamental pieces using concrete and stonework as his medium. This led to opportunities in Long Beach where he was commissioned to build full houses. He both designed and built the houses using his signature design elements of decorative fireplaces, cast stone porches, stone tree trunk porch railings, ornamental planter beds, and planter niches in column posts. He went on to build several homes in the Belmont Heights neighborhood during the 1920s and in other locations in Southern California. A Miner Smith house is unique due to the high-level of artisan craftsmanship found in each structure.

The structure itself, reflects many of the more traditional elements found in a Craftsman house, including porch, wood siding, tripartite wood windows, exposed beams, gable roof lines and a porte-cochere. The building uniquely has three front facing gables with decorative window light patterns, rather than a more traditional dual front gable with no openings. This structure also features stained glass windows flanking the fireplace. His specialty was stonework and concrete, which he used to adorn his buildings with elements resembling items found in nature, including plants, leaves, and trees. His craftsmanship can be found throughout the house, including in the fine interior detailing, built-in furniture, and unique moldings. Miner Smith transformed a standard Craftsman Bungalow into a "Bungalow Mansion" – a term used in advertising of his houses.

In compliance with Section 2.63.050 of the City of Long Beach Municipal Code (Cultural Heritage Commission), a cultural resource qualifies for designation as a Landmark, if it retains integrity and complies with one or more eligibility criteria. Staff has analyzed the proposed nomination and finds that this property retains integrity and meets Criteria C (distinctive characteristics) of the criteria for landmark designation of the building. This designation relates to the original exterior features of the primary building.

GENERAL PLAN FINDING: (from 2.63.060(A) of the Long Beach Municipal Code)

The proposed nomination is complementary to the surrounding neighborhood. The residence is surrounded by single-family and multiple-family residential structures in the neighborhood as well as a church, a park, commercial and residential uses in the larger

vicinity. The historic building retains a high level of integrity and represents the development patterns of the neighborhood. Its preservation through landmark status will enhance the character of the residences, parks and businesses in the surrounding community.

The General Plan Land Use Element includes relevant goals consistent with the proposed nomination, including:

Neighborhood Emphasis: Long Beach recognizes the strong neighborhood to be the essential building block of a City-wide quality living environment, and will assist and support the efforts of residents to maintain and strengthen their neighborhoods.

The proposed nomination will preserve the history of the neighborhood and legacy of Miner Smith's work. Landmark designation strengthens the neighborhood by preserving history at the neighborhood scale. Designation as a historic landmark helps to raise public awareness about the City's history, historic preservation program, and encourages public participation in learning about the historic resources in the City. The nomination will also assure the structure is maintained in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The nomination also promotes the goals of the Historic Preservation Element, specifically addressing Policy 2.7, through the landmarking of private buildings. Landmark status will protect the building, preserve its cultural and architectural value and reinforce the value of historic preservation for the public.

DESIGNATION FINDINGS: (from Section 2.63.070(D) of the Long Beach Municipal Code)

A. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

The building is not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the City's history.

B. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in the City's past.

The building is not associated with the lives of persons significant in the City's past.

C. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or it represents the work of master or it possesses high artistic values.

The subject property, 244 Mira Mar Avenue, was designed and constructed in 1921 by artisan builder Miner Smith. The building is eligible under Criteria C because of its unique craftsmanship and architectural detailing. This building

was constructed early in the period of several “Bungalow Mansion” buildings Smith constructed mostly in the Belmont Heights neighborhood. The building also illustrates how Smith’s buildings continued to expand his stylistic features which he incorporated into each home he built. His signature architectural features are visible in this building including planter niches in the porch piers, stone tree trunk rails at the porch and a wainscot stone detailing. While Miner Smith went on to build homes in other areas in Southern California, these buildings are unique to Long Beach and were built during a period of growth and expansion in the City.

D. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history.

The subject property is ineligible for designation pursuant to Criteria D, for landmark designation, as it is not a likely source for future information related to history or pre-history.