

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
COAS2202-10
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS
3758 California Avenue
April 26, 2022

ANALYSIS:

In compliance with Section 2.63.080 of the City of Long Beach Municipal Code (Cultural Heritage Commission) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings:

The subject site is located at 3758 California Avenue, on the east side of California Avenue between Bixby Road to the north and 37th Street to the south. An unnamed 15-foot-wide alley abuts the entire eastern boundary of the site. The subject site is located in the R-1-N zoning district. The property is also located in the California Heights Landmark District (Ordinance C-7538), which was established in 1990 (C-6704) and expanded by ordinance on August 29, 2000 (C-7702).

The property totals 6,370 square feet of area (50'-0" x 127.5') and is developed with a one-story, single-family residence and a detached two-car garage. The house was constructed in 1933 in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style. The residential structure features stucco exterior, red clay roofing tiles, wood windows, a front facing gable roof and a recessed porch centered under an arched entry way. A small wing wall and a large porte-cochère flank the home, which features a similar arch found on the front porch. The driveway is located along the south side of the lot and extends from the front property line to the detached garage. The 9-foot wide concrete driveway is flanked by a 12-inch tall concrete edge. A narrow walkway leading from the driveway to the front porch consists of several large oval pavers. The property is listed as a contributing resource to the California Heights Historic District.

The Applicant has completed several modifications ("unpermitted project") to the front yard area without obtaining approval through a Certificate of Appropriateness. The unpermitted modifications include the installation of a low perimeter wall constructed out of CMU bricks along the side and front property boundary line, the installation of a new concrete walkway and steps leading from the sidewalk to the front porch, the installation of a gate across the driveway, the installation of a gate across the porch, the removal of the 12-inch tall concrete curb/edge that flank the driveway, the widening of the driveway by installing pavers abutting the existing driveway, and repainting the house, garage and low wall a color inconsistent with the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style.

As noted in the timeline below, the property owner received numerous stop work notices to cease construction activities and obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work as is required before all exterior work can begin for historic district properties. However, construction continued without proper approvals.

Timeline of Correspondence to Property Owner

- January 24, 2022 - Building and Safety Bureau issued a stop work notice to the property owner for trenching along the perimeter of the front yard area without a Certificate of Appropriateness or building permit (Citation Number BADM271236).
- January 26, 2022 - Building and Safety Bureau issued the property owner a second stop work notice for the continued trenching. (under the same Citation Number BADM271236).
- January 27, 2022 - The property owner submitted two incomplete Certificate of Appropriateness applications requesting retroactive approval of in-progress front yard improvements and repainting.
- January 31, 2022 - Building and Safety Bureau sent out formal letter of violation to property owner.
- January 31, 2022 and February 3, 2022 - Planning Bureau issued two correction letters to the property owner addressing the incomplete applications and the reasons the modifications to the site could not be approved through a Certificate of Appropriateness, reiterating the requirement that a Certificate of Appropriateness must be obtained prior to pulling a building permit or commencing a scope of work impacting the exterior of a property in a historic district as is required pursuant to Long Beach Municipal Code 2.63.080.
- February 23, 2022 - Code Enforcement opened a case (Case Number CEAC279764) and issued a stop work notice to the property owner for painting the house without obtaining approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness is subject to compliance with Section 2.63.080 of the City of Long Beach Municipal Code (Cultural Heritage Commission) and the California Heights Historic District Ordinance. LBMC Section 2.63.080 establishes specific regulations that permit staff to consider and issue (minor) Certificate of Appropriateness applications.

In compliance with Section 2.63.080 of the City of Long Beach Municipal Code (Cultural Heritage Commission), the California Heights Historic District Ordinance, the Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines and the California Heights Design Guidelines, staff has analyzed the proposed project and found the project does not meet these requirements; therefore, it is appropriate to deny the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

FINDINGS: (from Section 2.63.080(D) of the Long Beach Municipal Code)

- 1. (It) will not adversely affect any significant historical, cultural, architectural or aesthetic feature of the Landmark or subject property within the Landmark District and that issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness is consistent with the spirit and intent of this chapter.**

The Applicant has already completed several modifications to the property located at 3758 California Avenue, which is a contributing structure in the California Heights Historic District, without first obtaining approval through a Certificate of Appropriateness that is now being requested retroactively. The scope of work includes the installation of a three-foot tall low perimeter wall along the side and front property boundary lines, a new concrete walkway and steps leading from the sidewalk to the front porch, a 6-foot tall gate across the driveway, a three-foot tall gate across the porch, the removal of the 12-inch tall concrete curb flanking the driveway, the widening of the driveway using pavers and applying a new paint color to the house and the new stucco wall.

The California Heights Historic District Ordinance, which was established in 1990 (C-6704) and expanded by ordinance in 2000 (C-7702), identifies that “the district has unity, and cohesion, based on similarity of housing types with consistent scale and setbacks, a gracious streetscape with magnificent street trees and vintage streetlights”. The California Heights Historic District Ordinance was established “to ensure that construction in the district preserves and enhances its architectural continuity. The district guidelines pertain to “buildings of all occupancy and construction types, sizes and materials and pertain to construction on the exterior of existing buildings as well as to new, attached or adjacent construction”. These guidelines apply to “alterations of exterior color or exterior materials, “alterations and/or relocation of walkways and driveways” and “alteration or addition to fencing”.

Some of the modifications have been found to be consistent and can be approved and some of the modifications are not consistent with the spirit or intent for preservation of the structures or site features for LBMC Section 2.63.080(D) and are recommended to be denied. The California Heights Historic Design Guidelines provide specific guidance on modifications such as front yard fencing/walls, driveway expansions, new walkways, new gates and paint colors.

A new three-foot tall CMU wall and gate was installed along the perimeter of the property within the front yard area. This new stucco wall was finished and painted to match the house and the gate is comprised of wood planks painted brown. The California Heights Historic District Ordinance requires that all changes within the district comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation and Rehabilitation (“The Standards”). Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2 states that “the historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces or spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.” A majority of the properties within the District have a clear line of sight from the street to the historic house without visual obstructions such as a fencing or walls in the front yard. The installation of a three-foot tall concrete block wall and gate located within the front yard setback diminishes the spatial relationship between the streetscape and the historic home by blocking the

view of the historic house. No evidence was provided to demonstrate that the property originally had a block wall or gate located within the front yard area which would have resulted in a replacement or restoration effort rather than new introducing a feature to the property that did not exist historically (Rehabilitation Standard Number 3).

Most of the properties along California Avenue and within the district feature narrow driveways that extend to the detached garage which is located at the rear of the lot. Historically, this property featured a narrow concrete driveway flanked by 12-inch tall concrete curbs. One of the concrete curbs was removed and new pavers were installed to substantially widen the driveway an additional four to five feet in width. Pavers were utilized to expand the driveway, which are not an appropriate material for a Spanish Colonial home. The Design Guidelines recommend the use of poured concrete if such an expansion were permitted.

The expansion to the driveway does create a significant change to the site which does adversely affects the historic value of the property and is not compliant with Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2, which states that “the historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces or spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.”

Staff recommends permitting the driveway expansion to not more than 18-inches in width and to replacing the pavers with concrete which would align better with the preservation efforts of the California Heights Historic District Ordinance and the California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines.

2. (It) will remedy any condition determined to be immediately dangerous or unsafe by the Fire Marshal and/or Building Official.

There is a stop work notice from the Building Official due to work being conducted on the subject property without the required Building Permits. There is also an active code enforcement case at this site. The property owner installed a three-foot tall low perimeter wall along the side and front property boundary lines, a new concrete walkway and steps leading from the sidewalk to the front porch, a 6-foot tall gate across the driveway, a three-foot tall gate across the porch, removed the 12-inch tall concrete edging flanking the driveway, widened the driveway and the changed the paint color of the house and stucco wall without the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness or the required Building Permits.

3. (It) will comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preservation, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

The proposed modifications are not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

- Use – The site is currently developed with single-family residential uses and the use will not change.
- Character – The property is developed with a single-story, single-family residence and a detached garage. The house was constructed in 1933 in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style and features stucco walls, red clay roofing tiles, wood windows, a wing wall and a porte-cochère attached to house. The front yard was previously open, absent of front yard fencing, landscaped with turf and featured a narrow walkway leading from the driveway to the front porch. A narrow driveway located along the south side of the lot and extends from front property line under the porte-cochere, to the detached garage at the rear. The property was characterized with the historic building as the main focal point with a large open front yard absent of fencing which allowed direct view to the historic building. Several modifications within the proposed scope of work for the Certificate of Appropriateness have already been completed that adversely affect the character of the site. The three-foot tall perimeter wall located along the side and front property boundary lines obstructs view of the historic building and results in being the primary focal point of the historic property. A new concrete walkway and steps leading from the sidewalk to the front porch, the three-foot tall gate located across the porch, and the installation of pavers used to widen the driveway adversely affect the character of the property by introducing new features not historically found on the property. Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2 states that “the historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces or spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.” These modifications are in direct conflict with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as they replace rather than repair features and modify important spaces and spatial relationships.
- Changes to Historic Features – The application includes several modifications to the historic features of the house and site that are not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. These modifications include the removal of a small walkway, the widening of the existing driveway with inappropriate material and the repainting the house in a dark, non-compatible deep burnt orange (rust) stucco color. Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2 states that “the historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces or spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.”
- Distinctive Features – The house was constructed in 1933 in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style and features stucco walls, red clay

roofing tiles, wood windows, a recessed porch highlighted by a large arch and a porte-cochère. The front yard was previously open, absent of front yard fencing, and was landscaped with turf. The modifications are not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards which aim to preserve historic value of the property and of the district. The three-foot tall perimeter wall being requested for COA approval is newly located along the side and front property boundary lines and obstructs view of the historic building and its distinctive features. The approval of the wall would eliminate character defining feature thus diminishing the importance of open front yards within the district as a whole. The new wall and gate located across the porch become the primary focal point of the historic property and diminish the importance of the 1933 Spanish Colonial Revival home and its unique features.

- Deteriorated Historic Features –There are no deteriorated historic features on the subject site.
- Damage to Historic Materials –New paint was applied to the exterior of the house which is not consistent with the exterior colors historically found on Spanish Colonial architectural styled buildings. Furthermore, several of the modifications that have been completed can be reversed without causing damage to historic materials.
- Archeological Resources – Any archeological resources found will be protected and preserved. No resources are known. No major excavations or grading is proposed.
- Historic Materials that Characterize the Property – The Spanish Colonial Revival home is considered the contributing resource on the lot which features stucco walls, red clay roof tiles and decorative arched walls. No historic materials that characterize the primary dwelling will be removed or damaged.
- Form and Integrity – The property was characterized with the historic building as the main focal point with a large open front yard absent of front yard fencing which allowed direct view of the historic building. This modification will cause significant damage to the essential form and integrity of historic property and the integrity of the District. The three-foot tall front yard wall creates a physical separation between the sidewalk and the front yard area which is not found on the immediate adjacent properties or in the district as a whole. The approval of the wall would eliminate the character defining feature thus diminishing the importance of open front yards within the district as a whole.

The California Heights Historic District Ordinance requires that all changes within the district comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation and Rehabilitation ("The Standards"). Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2 states that "the historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces or spatial relationships that characterize

a property will be avoided.” A majority of the properties within the district have clear line of site from the street to the historic house without visual obstructions. The installation of a three-foot tall concrete block wall located within the front yard setbacks diminishes the spatial relationship between the streetscape and the historic home by blocking the view of the historic house. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to demonstrate that the property originally had a block wall located within the front yard area which would have resulted in a replacement or restoration effort rather than new introducing a feature to the property that did not exist historically (Rehabilitation Standard Number 3).

Most of the properties along California Avenue and within the district feature modest, narrow driveways that extend to the rear of the lot. Historically, this property featured a narrow concrete driveway flanked by 12-inch tall concrete curbs (edges). Historically, access to the porch was taken from beneath the porte-cochère. At some point a walkway which consisted of large landscape pavers was added that led from the driveway in front of the porte-cochère to the front porch. The removal of the 12-inch tall concrete curb and pathway and installation of pavers to widen the driveway is a significant alteration that introduces a new material not originally found on the property and relocates original features found on the site. The main focal point of the front elevation becomes the widened driveway which take away focus from the historic resource. These visual changes adversely affect the spatial relationships that characterize the property and introduces features not originally found on the site thus, is not compliant with Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation and Rehabilitation specifically Preservation Standard Number 2 and Rehabilitation Standard Number 2 and 3.

4. (It) will comply with the Design Guidelines for Landmark Districts, for a property located within a Landmark District.

The California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines states that “open front yards area without front fencing is a character-defining feature of the California Heights Historic District. As so few properties in the district have front fencing, the introduction of this feature would disrupt the visual continuity of the district”. The properties along California Avenue generally maintain wide open front yards with no front yard fencing. Although some Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style homes feature a courtyard enclosed with low walls in the front yard area, this feature was not documented to have been historically found on this property. The introduction of the three-foot tall concrete block wall located along the front and side property boundary lines within the front yard area visually obstructs the view of the historic resource and provides a false sense of history thus is not consistent with the design guidelines. The approval of a wall would eliminate character defining feature thus diminishing the importance of open front yards within the district as a whole.

The driveway is located along the south side of the lot and extends from front property line under the attached port-a-cochere to the detached garage at the rear of the lot. The narrow concrete driveway is flanked by a 12-inch tall concrete curb. The driveway was widened approximately four to five feet in width using pavers. The California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines states that “the width, location, and configuration of the existing driveway should be retained, as this will preserve the building’s relationship to its site and maintain the visual continuity of the district.” Additionally, “repaving driveways with a visually different material such as brick, pavers, or flagstone is not permitted.” The use of pavers and the resizing of the driveway is not consistent with the design guideline. As an alternative, a driveway expansion consisting of concrete and not more than 18-inches width is more compatible with the guidelines, would still grant the property owner with similar benefit and can be approved consistent with the guidelines.

A new concrete walkway and steps leading from the sidewalk to the front porch was recently installed in the center of the lot. The California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines states that, “walkways should not be relocated or resized...the location, width, and configuration of existing walkways should be retained, in order to help maintain the historic feel and visual cohesion of the district.” However, as the property never featured a walkway historically and this walkway is removable in the future, permitting the new walkway would allow a flexibility to the property owner and would not substantially adversely affect the historic resource.

The property currently features a six-foot-tall wrought iron gate that extends across the driveway located within the arched wall of the porte-cochère. The California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines state that “gates should be set back from the primary elevation (front wall of the house) and be made of material that is compatible with the style of the house.” A new six-foot-tall wood dual gate is proposed by the property owner be installed to align with the front of the porte-cochere in the same location as the wrought iron gates, and with this modification the gate would be consistent with the design guidelines and therefore could be approved.

A three-foot tall vinyl gate was previously installed across the porch without the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness. The California Heights Historic District Design Guidelines states that “Porches and entryways are visually dominant features on a historic building, especially residences...enclosing a porch area drastically alters the appearance of buildings and affects their historic character...enclosing the porch is not permitted.” The installation of a gate, no matter what material it is comprised of, located on the porch is not an appropriate modification for this prominent feature to the Spanish Colonial Revival house. Furthermore, the gate creates an obstruction of the decorative porch and diminishes the importance of the decorative arch roof over porch, which is not consistent with the Spanish Colonial Revival Style Guide.

The house previously featured cream-colored stucco exterior walls. The house and the three-foot tall stucco finished wall were recently painted in a deep red-orange (rust) color. The Spanish Colonial Revival Style Guide states that “historically Spanish Colonial Revival buildings were light in color, as they took inspiration from whitewash, stucco and adobe buildings of the Spanish Colonial era”. The buildings were painted “light, natural, neutral color for the exterior stucco, such as white, cream, beige, or tan”. The new stucco color is darker color than what would have been historically painted on this style of home and does not provide a contrast to the red clay tile roof, thus it does not conform to the Spanish Colonial Revival Style Guide.

The table below “Table A” provides a summary of the scope of work and staff’s recommendation for reference.

Table A – Approved Scope of Work

<u>Improvement</u>	<u>Approved</u>	<u>Not Approved</u>	<u>Approved with Modification</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Low Wall and Gate		X		Remove the wall and gate entirely
Widen Driveway			X	Allow an 18-inch expansion of concrete
Driveway Gates	X			
Porch Gate		X		Remove entirely
Walkway	X			
Paint Color		X		Re-paint to an appropriate color

The request for the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the driveway gates, new walkway and steps and the widened driveway, as recommended above and with modifications and described, can be approved. The request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to permit the low perimeter CMU wall and gate, the gate located on the porch and the stucco wall color are not consistent with the spirit or intent for the preservation of the structures or site features nor the California Height Historic District as a whole.