

**M E M O R A N D U M**  
**CITY PLANNING DIVISION**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**CITY OF SANTA MONICA**

**DATE:** October 12, 2020

**TO:** The Honorable Landmarks Commission

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**SUBJECT:** Certificate of Appropriateness 20ENT-0160, 401 Ocean Avenue, consideration of an amendment to Certificate of Appropriateness 18ENT-0142 which included the rehabilitation and restoration of the existing residence known as the Henry Weyse/Charles Morris House, a designated City Landmark, a new four-story residential building and associated landscape improvements. Proposed is the inclusion of a new/ additional new/additional entry door at the recessed porch facing Ocean Avenue, and a new/ additional fence at the corner of the property, including the west and north frontages.

APPLICANT: 401 Ocean Avenue, LLC c/o Mark Tabit

PROPERTY OWNER: 401 Ocean Avenue, LLC

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

On June 11, 2018, the Landmarks Commission approved 18ENT-0142 which included the rehabilitation, and restoration of the existing residence known as the Henry Weyse/Charles Morris House, a designated City Landmark, a new four-story residential building and associated landscape improvements (Attachment C STOA 18ENT-0142). Proposed is the inclusion of a new/additional front door at the Ocean Avenue frontage, and a new/additional fence along the west and north frontages of the property, encompassing the yard around the Landmark structure.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice of this hearing was provided as required by Section 9.56.170(c) of the Landmarks Ordinance, with notice sent to all owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius and a newspaper notice published in the Santa Monica Daily Press at least 10 days prior to the hearing.

## **ANALYSIS**

There are two components to the request; an additional front door facing Ocean Avenue and the addition of a perimeter fence that would encompass the area around the Landmark structure. These proposed elements are independent of one another and therefore will be analyzed separately.

### ***New/Additional Front Door***

During the development of the proposal that culminated in the Commission approval of 18ENT-0142, great care was taken in consideration of treatment of the Henry Weyse/Charles Morris House (Landmark) as well as all components on the property. When reviewing the design proposal, the original drawings were reviewed in order to ensure that, where possible, original window openings would be consistent with the original design (refer to page 30 of 85 of Attachment E).

As in most rehabilitation projects, there is a mixture of repair, restoration, and modification to suit current needs or use. To that end, the window at the center of the second-floor façade was modified to a door opening to enable the area above the porch to be utilized as a deck, which was not part of the original design. The railing was reviewed and revised in accordance with Landmark Commission comments from the Preliminary Review in May and September 2017. Additionally, a window was added to the recessed front porch area, similar in size, proportion and design to the original windows (not a full height window). This additional window was included in order to provide additional light into the living room area and was deemed appropriate.

The Henry Weyse/Charles Morris House was built in 1910 as a single-family residence, designed by prominent Santa Monica architect Robert D. Farquhar, and was designated as a City Landmark in 1990. While the interior of the building has been modified over the years and, while it has not always been used as a single-family residence, the front of the building has nevertheless presented the appearance of a single-family residential building. The proposed modification to add an additional front entry door may change the sense of the building, making it visually appear as a multi-family building. And while the entry is recessed behind the prominent porch, it appears prominent even as viewed from Palisades Park across the street.

Included in the approved Certificate of Appropriateness was a provision for the Landmark structure to be modified to accommodate two residential units; one on the ground floor and another on the second floor. During the construction document process, the design was modified to accommodate side-by-side or townhouse style units. The approved plans included a new primary entry at the south side elevation (facing interior lot line) thereby maintaining a single entry along the front facade in order to preserve the historic characteristic of the prominent single-family residence as originally designed.

While the additional door has been well-designed to be disguised as a window, it significantly changes the sense and appearance of the Landmark as a single-family

residential structure. This is not in keeping with Standard 3 which states “Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time place and use,” and Standard 5 “Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques of examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved. The porch and recessed entry is one of the most significant features that conveys the property’s historic significance as a prominent single-family residence on a prestigious site within the early development phase of the Palisades Tract. As such, the additional door would not meet these Standards.

### ***New/Additional Fence(s)***

Proposed is a new perimeter fence that would encompass the area of the property surrounding the Landmark. (see page 19 of 33 of Attachment B) for location and extent of the fence.) The proposed fence is set back 6.5 feet from the property line along the western frontage and along a portion of the northern frontage at a height of 3’-6”. A similar designed fence at 5’-0” in height is proposed to be incorporated at the re-constructed pergola located within street-facing the side yard., and then continue between the Landmark and new structure, to be 8 feet between it and the approved fence around the outdoor area for the new structure. The fence design is proposed as black wrought-iron and is a relatively open design.

The Henry Weyse/Charles Morris House (Landmark) is situated on the southeast corner of Ocean Avenue and Georgina Avenue, across from Palisades Park. It is substantially set back from the street with an open lawn, base planting and two mature Magnolia trees placed symmetrically on either side of the porch. While the features on property have not been identified in the designation, the open sensibility of this prominent corner property is an important characteristic of the original design and has been maintained over time.

The application includes images of properties along the street and of other designated Landmark properties with fence enclosures. The subject property is a prominent corner location across from Palisades Park with an open front yard that contributes to the overall historic setting and architectural qualities of the site and make it particularly unique. And while the proposed fence is visually open in appearance, it would considerably alter the visual appearance of the property and change its sense of openness and relationship to Palisades Park. Staff believes the proposed perimeter fence would alter the overall appearance of the site in a manner that would be contrary to its historic setting identified as a prestigious site during the early development phase of the Palisades Tract. For these reasons, staff does not support the inclusion of the proposed fence.

### **Consistency with Secretary of the Interior’s Standards**

The proposed work includes Rehabilitation as the primary treatment associated with the proposed project. The proposed work must be found to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Properties.

### ***New/Additional Front Door***

The New/Additional Front Door does not appear to be in keeping with Standards 2, 3 or 5:

*Standard 2: The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

*Standard 3: Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

*Standard 5: Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

The front porch and entry are important architectural features of the property that would be significantly altered with the addition of a second front entry door. These features convey the property's historic significance as a prominent single-family residence on a prestigious site within the early development phase of the Palisades Tract. And while the new door has been designed to be camouflaged as a window and may be reversible, it will inevitably change the appearance of the building from a single-family residence to that of a multi-family structure.

### ***New/Additional Fence(s)***

The proposed fence(s) does not appear to comply with Standards 2 and 3 (noted above.) The fence(s) would alter the open sensibility and appearance of the property and its relationship to Palisades Park in a manner that would be contrary to its historic setting identified as a prestigious site during the early development phase of the Palisades Tract.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

The project is subject to the provisions of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15331, CEQA contains a provision that projects that involve the maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources could be categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA if undertaken in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("the Standards").

As discussed, each of these proposed features would significantly alter important characteristics of the Landmark property, and therefore the project does not appear eligible for a categorical exemption from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Section 15331, Class 31 of the State Implementation Guidelines.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

As neither element appears to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, staff recommends that the Commission deny the proposal.

Alternatively, the Commission may consider a continuance of one or both of the proposed elements to enable the applicant team to make any necessary revisions the Commission recommends, OR approve one or both of the elements based on the materials included in the applicant's submittal.

## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FINDING**

1. The proposed work will detrimentally change, destroy or adversely affect exterior features of the Landmark or Landmark Parcel upon which such work is to be done in that the proposed new/additional door would significantly alter the appearance of the Landmark as a single-family residence, and the new/additional fence would significantly alter the open sensibility of the property and its relationship to Palisades Park. Therefore, neither element appears consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The proposed alterations would negatively affect the property's ability to convey its historic significance as a prominent single-family residence located on a prestigious site within the early development phase of the Palisades Tract, and therefore does not appear to warrant Certificate of Appropriateness approval.

### Attachments:

- A. Public Notice
- B. Applicant's Materials
- C. Statement of Official Action for 401 Ocean Avenue (STOA 17ENT-0077)
- D. Certificate of Appropriateness 18ENT-0142 (Staff Report)
- E. Project Drawings dated June 11, 2018 18ENT-0142