

**M E M O R A N D U M****COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF SANTA MONICA  
PLANNING DIVISION**

**DATE:** October 12, 2020  
**TO:** The Honorable Landmarks Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Staff  
**SUBJECT: 818 GRANT STREET, 20ENT-0130**

Public Hearing to consider Landmark Designation application 20ENT-0130 for the property located at 818 Grant Street to determine whether the multi-family residential building in whole or in part, should be designated as a City Landmark and, if so designated, whether an associated Landmark Parcel should be defined and described in order to preserve, maintain, protect, or safeguard the Landmark.

**PROPERTY OWNER:** LIVE XYZ LP  
**APPLICANT:** H. Joseph Soleiman, XYZ Rent

**INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

On May 14, 2020, H. Joseph Soleiman submitted Landmark Designation application 20ENT-0130 on behalf of the property owner. The item has been delayed until now due to meeting cancellations in response to the COVID-19 Safer at Home Order.

A Landmark assessment report was prepared for the subject building by Audrey von Ahrens, of GPA Consulting (GPA) (included with the application materials as Attachment B). The GPA report focuses on Criteria 1 and 4, and is not a full assessment of the property in relationship to the Landmark criterion. Jan Ostashay of Ostashay and

Associates Consulting (OAC) at the request of the City, prepared a Peer Review Assessment of the GPA report, provided as Attachment C. Based on the OAC peer review, the GPA application and report lacks sufficient evidence and compelling arguments to support the designation of 818 Grant Street property as a City Landmark under Santa Monica Landmarks Criterion 1 as an example of the social, economic, and architectural history of the City, and Criterion 4 as an excellent example of a 1920s courtyard apartment (SMMC 9.56.100(A)). Staff has analyzed the applicant's materials and the OAC peer review and recommends the Commission deny designation of the property at 818 Grant Street as a Santa Monica Landmark.

### **Historic Resources Inventory Status**

The 2018 HRI survey update identified the property at 818 Grant street as a potential City Landmark. The subject property has been previously identified through HRI survey efforts: first in 1994 and then in 2003 and 2010 as a contributor to a thematic "Apartment Courts" grouping, and in later survey updates in 2003 and 2010 with a similar identification. The 2018 survey update, in accordance with standard professional practice, removed the thematic groupings from the HRI and reviewed each property individually. As a result, this property was elevated to a 5S3 status code, identifying it as a potential City Landmark.

### **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

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 consecutive calendar days prior to the hearing. A copy of the notice is included as Attachment A.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Architectural Description**

The GPA report identifies the building at 818 Grant Street as a one- and two-story courtyard apartment building in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It consists of a one-story building flanking a linear court with a two-story building with exterior stair centrally

located at the end and axial viewpoint of the courtyard. A unique feature of the building is a vertical element, roughly 3-4 feet taller than the base building, on each side of the court entry. The exterior is clad in hand-troweled stucco with relatively minimal detailing-red tile coping at the parapet and at relatively minimal entry awnings.

### **Assessment of Integrity**

Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as the “authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period.” The National Park Service defines seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The building at 818 Grant Street appears relatively intact and while there has been maintenance performed over the years, and while there does not appear that there have been any major alterations to the building’s exterior, there are some important elements that have been replaced. The open stair at the rear of the courtyard leading to the second floor of the two-story building, which is a prominent characteristic, is non-original. Additionally all of the original wood windows, with the exception one window in each vertical element, have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Other repairs to the two-story building occurred after the Northridge earthquake, although it is unclear if and how those repairs modified the building exterior.

### **Historic Context**

There is little in the GPA report that provides context for the building, other than a brief statement that was included in the 2018 City Historic Context Statement included in the 2018 HRI Update:

“In the 1920s, there was a building boom in Santa Monica, which coincided with a rapid influx of blue- and white-collar retirees and widows to the city. To satisfy the increased demand, multi-family residential buildings proliferated in Santa Monica. These ranged from apartment/bungalow courts, duplexes and fourplexes, to large apartment buildings,

and were primarily located in the neighborhoods east of Euclid and north of California Avenues that had remained sparsely populated. Stylistically, the buildings ranged from groups of Craftsman kit homes arranged in a courtyard configuration on a parcel, to Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival-style apartment houses....Multi-family residences were owned by small mom-and-pop investors to large investment syndicates.”

Additionally, the GPA report contends that the property at 818 Grant Street courtyard apartment is a unique example that is increasingly rare in Santa Monica. However, there is no evidence provided for that assertion and in fact many such examples are extant throughout Santa Monica and the region.

### **Evaluation for Landmark Designation**

The Landmarks Ordinance requires the Commission to review the building’s eligibility as a landmark based on the six criteria discussed below. In order to be designated as a City Landmark, the Commission is required to find that the property meets one or more of these criteria.

While the GPA report finds the building at 818 Grant Street eligible under Criterion 1 that the building is an example of the social , economic and architectural history of the City and under Criterion 4 as an “excellent example of a 1920’s courtyard apartment”, there is no substantial evidence or compelling arguments to support those claims. Due to the lack of substantive evidence in meeting one or more of the Landmarks criteria, denial of the proposed designation would be consistent with the Commission’s past practice of evaluation of properties.

***(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.***

The subject property is a simple example of a courtyard residential apartment building, a somewhat ubiquitous building type in Santa Monica and the larger region. Therefore, the property does not appear to exemplify the cultural, social, economic, political or early

architectural development history of the City.

***(2) It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.***

The subject building at 818 Grant Street is a common courtyard residential structure, is simple in its overall design and includes common features style and era. The building does not possess particular noteworthy concepts of design, or of aesthetic or artistic interest or value. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

***(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.***

No evidence was provided to suggest that any of the prior owners or occupants of the property were persons of significance or made significant contributions to important events in local, state, or national history. Accordingly, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

***(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.***

The subject building is a typical example courtyard apartment building, simple in design and construction. Additionally, the building is not a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail, or historical type, and it does not embody distinguishing characteristics valuable to study. Therefore, the subject residence does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

***(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.***

The building was constructed by a local carpenter and building contractor, Wallace B. Huyck, who is not a notable builder. Therefore, the subject property is not considered a significant or representative example of the work of a notable architect and therefore does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

***(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.***

The subject building is on a typical lot in the Sunset Park neighborhood and does not have a unique location or singular physical characteristic, nor is it an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission determine that the property located at 818 Grant Street does not meet the criteria for Landmark based on the draft findings contained herein.

Pursuant to SMMC 9.36.180, the Landmarks Commission's determination regarding this application may be appealed to the City Council if the appeal is filed with the City Planning Division within ten (10) consecutive days commencing from the date that the decision is made by the Landmarks Commission.

### Attachments:

- A. Public Notice
- B. Applicant's Materials
- C. Peer Review Assessment, OAC, October 2020