Summary Title: Historic Designation of 1005 University Ave.

Title: Approval of a Recommendation from the Historic Resources Board to Designate 1005 University Avenue as a Category 2 Structure on the City's Historic Inventory and Record of Land Use Action

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Planning and Community Environment

RECOMMENDATION
The Historic Resources Board (HRB) and staff recommend that the City Council approve the designation of the residence at 1005 University Avenue as a Category 2 historic building based upon the findings in the Record of Land Use Action (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND
The property owner is requesting Historic Inventory designation of the subject property to facilitate restoration of the house after a fire in September 2010 caused significant damage to the roof and interior. Municipal Code section 16.42.040 allows any individual to propose historic designation, and specifies that the Council will make a final decision on the designation following recommendation from the Historic Resources Board. The criteria required to support a historic designation include the extent to which the structure is (1) identified with the lives of historic people or events in the city, (2) particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state or nation; (3) an example of a type of building which was once common, but is now rare; (4) connected with a business or use which was once common, but is now rare; (5) connected with an important architect or building; and/or (6) contains elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship. The owner has proposed a Category 2 designation for this building, which is defined as any building or group of buildings of major regional importance, meritorious works of the best architects or an outstanding example of an architectural style or the stylistic development of architecture in the state or region. A major building may have some exterior modifications, but the original character is retained.

Upon designation the owners of this home would be allowed to restore it using the California Historical Building Code where needed to preserve character-defining historic features. Designation would also provide the property owner with partial relief from the City’s other building codes, including required Green Building measures, to the extent full compliance with other codes would impact historic features.
The house is a large early example of Craftsman bungalow design, an American style that had its origins in the British Arts and Crafts movement. That movement was a response to the Industrial Revolution’s replacement of traditional all-around craftsmen by factory workers organized under the efficiency principle of the division of labor. The American Craftsman style featured hand-made artisanship which helped revive the concept of the dignity of labor and it used local natural materials which reflected a renewal of the Romantic period’s valuation of the natural world that would later lead to the birth of environmentalism.

The house at 1005 University was initially constructed in 1901 by one of Palo Alto's most important pioneer builders, James W. Wells. Located prominently on a corner lot, the house is the second oldest residence on University Avenue after 509 Hale Street (1897) across the street and is one of the oldest Craftsman houses in the City. Preservation of the house would help maintain the earliest residential character of University Avenue that is represented by a group of circa 1900 homes on the 800, 900 and 1000 blocks.

HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD RECOMMENDATION
The HRB, at its meeting on June 1, 2011, found that the structure meets the historic designation criteria outlined above and unanimously recommended that the City Council designate the house in Category 2 as requested by the owner. Application materials provided for the HRB’s review and attached to the HRB staff report include a circa 1903 photograph of the house as originally built, a brochure by the local nonprofit PAST Heritage summarizing the history of the house, and a State of California Department of Parks and Recreation form (DPR 523) for 1005 University prepared for the property owner by a consultant who meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Qualification Standards for Architectural Historians. The DPR form concluded that the house appears eligible for the historic California Register under Criterion 3 (Design/Construction). During the HRB’s discussion of the proposed designation Board Members commented that the builder, James W. Wells, was very significant and that the house maintains its original character although there have been some changes over the life of the building. In addition, the HRB motion on June 1, 2011 also included a statement concluding that the minor additions to the rear of the house and other minor modifications included as part of the proposed restoration project would maintain the Municipal Code’s definition of a Category 2 building.

RESOURCE IMPACT
There is no direct impact on City resources associated with the recommended action.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
The recommended action furthers the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies encouraging the conservation and preservation of Palo Alto’s historic buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
Historic designation of a property is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Section 21065. The proposed renovations of this property, which are not subject to Council approval, are categorically exempt from CEQA.

**Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Record of Land Use Action (PDF)

Prepared By: Lata Vasudevan, Planner

Department Head: Curtis Williams, Director

City Manager Approval: James Keene, City Manager
On July 25, 2011 the Council approved the designation of the residence at 1005 University Avenue as a Category 2 historic building on the City’s Historic Inventory, making the following findings, determination and declarations:

SECTION 1. Background. The City Council of the City of Palo Alto (“City Council”) finds, determines, and declares as follows:

A. On April 26, 2011, Cody Anderson Wasney, on behalf of Norman Beamer and Diane Tasca, requested Historic Resources Board review for the designation of the residence at 1005 University Avenue as a Category 2 historic building on the City’s Historic Inventory, as provided in Municipal Code Chapter 16.49 (“The Project”).

B. Following staff review, the Historic Resources Board (HRB) reviewed the project on June 1, 2011, and recommended approval of the Category 2 designation (5-0-1-1). The HRB’s actions are contained in the City Council Staff Report #1801.

SECTION 2. Environmental Review. The historic designation of a property is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per Section 21065.

SECTION 3. Designation Findings

A. Pursuant to Palo Alto Municipal Code section 16.29.040, the following criteria shall be used as criteria for designating historic structures/sites to the historic inventory:

1. The structure or site is identified with the lives of historic people or with important events in the city, state or nation;
2. The structure or site is particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state or nation;
3. The structure or site is an example of a type of building which was once common, but is now rare;
4. The structure or site is connected with a business or use which was once common, but is now rare;
5. The architect or building was important;
6. The structure or site contains elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship.

The project meets criteria 2, 3, 5 above for the following reasons:

- The residence is one of several bungalows in the shingled Crafts style that is representative of the very early 1900’s period of Palo Alto;
- The residence is a very early 1900s example of Craftsman style architecture in the City’s original grid that has become increasingly rare in Palo Alto because several similar structures have been demolished in the past; and
- The builder, James W. Wells, was one of Palo Alto’s pioneer residents and one of the most important builders in early Palo Alto.

B. The definition of Category 2 must be met to allow the designation of the house.

Category 2 Definition: "Major building" means any building or group of buildings of major regional importance, meritorious works of the best architects or an outstanding example of an architectural style or the stylistic development of architecture in the state or region. A major building may have some exterior modifications, but the original character is retained.

The project meets the Category 2 definition for the following reasons:

- The building is one of the earliest examples of a Craftsman bungalow in the region;
- The building demonstrates the attention to quality and detail of James W. Wells, one of the most important builders in early Palo Alto;
- Although the building has undergone some exterior modifications, the original character has been retained; and
- The building has been found by a qualified historic consultant to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 3 (Design/Construction).

SECTION 4. Project Approval Granted. Application 11PLN-00174 is approved to designate 1005 University Avenue as a Category 2 historic building on the City’s Historic Inventory.
PASSED:
AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:  APPROVED:

_________________________________________________________
City Clerk  Director of Planning and Community Environment

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

_________________________________________________________
Senior Asst. City Attorney