



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF REQUEST BY THE PROPERTY OWNERS TO RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL THE DESIGNATION OF THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES TO THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AND ADOPTION OF FINDINGS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATION PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1609:

1. The George Riddell Miller Home (contributor to Wilson Island Historic District) Located at 617 E Carmen Avenue.
2. The Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building Located at 2049 Broadway.

Staff Recommendation: Approve and forward to the City Council

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Local Register nominations Attachments

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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May 20, 2019

FROM: DANIEL ZACK, AICP
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SUBJECT:
CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF REQUEST BY THE PROPERTY OWNERS TO RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL THE DESIGNATION OF THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES TO THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AND ADOPTION OF FINDINGS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATION PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1609:

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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission find that the George Riddell Miller Home and the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building are eligible for listing to the Local Register of Historic Resources, as meeting the applicable criteria for buildings, structures, objects, or sites greater than 50 years of age in FMC 12-1607(a)(1). Additionally, each property is significant under Local Register Criteria i and iii. Staff also recommends that the Commission review and comment on the conceptual rehabilitation plans for the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building as it considers the property for Local designation. If the Commission concurs with the staff recommendation, the property will be forwarded to the Fresno City Council for designation pursuant to FMC 12-1609. As required by the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, notice of this hearing considering designation of the properties was published in *The Fresno Bee* on May 10, 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The owners of the George Riddell Miller Home and the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building have requested in writing that their properties be considered for listing in Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources. The George Riddell Miller Home located at 617 E Carmen Avenue was constructed in 1919 as a one-story single-family residence in the Craftsman architectural style, within the 6-block area of Wilson's North Fresno Tract known locally as the "Wilson Island." It meets Criteria i and iii for designation in the Local Register for buildings, structures, objects, or sites greater than 50 years of age as it: is associated with Fresno's early expansion northward within the "Wilson Island" of Wilson's North Fresno Tract in the Tower District (i) and embodies the district characteristics the Craftsman architectural style and represents the work of a local master builder, E.J. Farr (iii). The Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building located at 2049 Broadway was constructed in 1920 as a three-story commercial/industrial building in the Lowell Neighborhood. It meets Criteria i and iii for designation in the Local Register for buildings, structures, objects, or sites greater than 50 years of age as it: is associated with early 20th century commercial and industrial development in the Lowell Neighborhood in Fresno (i) and has distinction as an Industrial - Industrial Loft property type (iii). The owners of the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company have also requested that their conceptual rehabilitation plans be reviewed and commented on by the Historic Preservation Commission as it considers the property for Local designation.

BACKGROUND

The George Riddell Miller Home (1919) consists of a one-story single-family residence with attached carport and a detached one-car garage, constructed in the Craftsman architectural style, within the 6-block area of Wilson's North Fresno Tract known locally as the "Wilson Island." The period of significance identified for this property is 1919-1953, the period during which George Riddell Miller and his wife Elsie Gertrude Miller lived in the home.

The George Riddell Miller Home is a contributor to the Wilson Island Historic District. The Resolution designating the Wilson Island Historic District to the Local Register of Historic Resources as a Local Historic District was adopted by Fresno City Council on October 29, 2009 pursuant to FMC 12-1607(b) under Criteria i, ii, iii and iv. The "Wilson Island" is located within Fresno's Tower District and encompasses 80 properties which are within the larger Wilson's North Fresno Tract, a subdivision first developed in 1908 by Rosanna C. Wilson and her son A. Polette Wilson. It is one of the most architecturally distinct neighborhoods in Fresno, with a mix representing the major styles prevalent during the period of 1910-1954. Several of the homes in this

6-block neighborhood were designed by prominent local and regional architects (and/or building firms). From an earlier era when people lived in more socially mixed neighborhoods, the Wilson Island represents a move to a new “suburbia,” based to some extent on social standing and education.

The George Riddell Miller Home is eligible for listing in the City of Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources. The property is greater than 50 years of age and possesses integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association (FMC 12-1607). Additionally, it is significant under Local Register Criterion i because it is associated with Fresno’s early expansion northward within the “Wilson Island” of Wilson’s North Fresno Tract in the Tower District and Criterion iii because it embodies distinctive characteristics of the Craftsman architectural style and represents the work of a master local building, E.J. Farr.

The Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building (1920) consists of a three-story commercial/industrial building, constructed of reinforced concrete with brick infill, in the Lowell Neighborhood. A one-story caretaker’s studio was constructed within the rear portion of the rooftop of the building in 1940. The period of significance identified for this property is 1920-1956, the estimated period during which the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company owned and operated the building.

The subject property located at 2049 Broadway was previously evaluated in 2008 through the “North Park Area Historic Context and Property Survey” prepared by Galvin Preservation Associates Inc. for the City of Fresno. The property did not appear to be eligible for National, California, or Local Register listing through this survey evaluation.

Upon further research, the Bixler Vapor Drying Cleaning Company Building is eligible for listing in the City of Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources. The property is greater than 50 years of age and possesses integrity of location, design, feeling, and association (FMC 12-1607). Additionally, it is significant under Local Register Criterion i because it is associated with early 20th century commercial and industrial development in the Lowell Neighborhood in Fresno and Criterion iii because it has distinction as an Industrial - Industrial Loft property type.

The current property owners intend to rehabilitate the property while retaining and restoring the historic character of the commercial/industrial building, with the assistance of the California Historical Building Code and with the opportunity to receive potential relief from City of Fresno property development standards. The owners of the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company have requested that their conceptual rehabilitation plans be reviewed and commented on by the Historic Preservation Commission as it considers the property for Local designation.

The conceptual rehabilitation plans envision a fresh look for this old building, making use of its “good bones” toward a clean, modern facility for business and residential uses. Conceptual plans would entail a remodel of the interior, providing 3-4 spaces for business on the first floor and potentially 14-15 apartments among the upper floors. With regard to the exterior, the building would be repainted and the existing fenestration on the façade would remain; however, windows along the upper stories would be replaced with new horizontally-oriented metal windows, influenced by the Streamline Moderne and International architectural styles. These windows would be accented by the installation of balconies made of steel materials. The existing caretaker’s studio on the rooftop of the building would be reconstructed and expanded, and clad in a cement-fiber siding type product; this space would provide access to the roof deck for tenants. New signage in the form of a

blade sign would be mounted on the southeast corner of the building.

Upon initial review of the conceptual plans for the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building, Staff finds that the elevations of this potential historic resource that are readily visible from the public right-of-way are the primary concern, which include the primary (east) and side (north and south) elevations. Street-facing elevations include the primary (east) elevation, which faces east toward Broadway, and the side (north) elevation which faces north toward E Voorman Avenue. The rehabilitation as proposed appears to comply with the Purpose and Façade Design Development Standards as put forth in the Development Code under Chapter 15, Article 15 for Downtown Districts. However, in reference to *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, Staff finds that the existing original multi-paned steel windows on the third story of the primary (east) elevation and on the second and third stories of the side (north) elevation are a prominent character-defining feature of the building, and that the installation of new windows that are inconsistent with their design would diminish the historic integrity of the property. Additionally, if balconies are installed, they should reveal and enhance the window design. A balcony with metal-framed cable railing may be the optimal selection.

The window replacement as proposed would not be in accordance with standard 9 of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* - which specifically refers to exterior alterations:

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Staff encourages discussion in pursuit of optimal design that enhances, and minimizes any potential adverse effects to, the historic character of the property as it is considered for Local designation.

The intention of this review and comment is 1) to obtain advice and guidance on retaining a sense of place for this historic resource while considering adaptation and innovation for present and future needs and 2) to gain a consensus on what is recommended, what is likely to be permissible, and what may require further discussion. This is not a formal project review, cannot result in an approval or denial, and may not be relied upon by an applicant for any purpose other than obtaining generally-applicable information about the historic review process.

Local Register Criteria and Protocols:

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance is located at Chapter 12, Article 16. Section 1607 outlines the criteria for designation of a resource to the Local Register of Historic Resources. A "historic resource" is "any building, structure, object or site" which is generally more than fifty years of age and "possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- (i) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (ii) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- (iii) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
- (iv) Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information in prehistory or history."

The City's criteria for assessing significance are patterned after the National Register of Historic Places (1966 as amended) which uses letters A-D for significance. Fresno's Local Register is also similar, although not equivalent, to the California Register of Historical Resources which uses a numbering system of 1-4 for criteria. Although the concept of "integrity" is not specifically defined in the City's Ordinance, it is implicitly understood to follow the National Register which defines "integrity" as "the ability of a property to convey its significance." "To retain integrity a property will always possess several and usually most, of the aspects." (How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," 1988: 44).

The process for designating a historic resource is outlined in FMC 12-1609. In brief, a request to designate a resource to the Local Register may be made by the Council, the Commission, the Secretary to the Commission, the property owner, or an authorized representative of the owner [12-1609(a)]. Applications for listing use the state protocol for survey forms with both a DPR 523A (Primary) as well as a DPR 523B (Building, Structure, Object Form) [12-1609(a)(1-9)]. A notice must be published in a local newspaper at least 10 days prior to the hearing and sent to the property owner as well. Commissioners must also physically visit the property prior to the Commission hearing [12-1609(c)(1)].

Attachments

Exhibit A: State of California Survey Forms for the George Riddell Miller Home 617 E Carmen Avenue Prepared May 7, 2019 by Laura Groves van Onna for the City of Fresno.

Exhibit B: State of California Survey Forms for the George Riddell Miller Home 617 E Carmen Avenue Prepared August 2, 2005 by Karana Hattersley-Drayton for the City of Fresno.

Exhibit C: State of California Survey Forms for the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building 2049 Broadway Prepared May 7, 2019 by Laura Groves van Onna for the City of Fresno.

Exhibit D: State of California Survey Forms for 2049 Broadway Prepared February 2008 through the "North Park Area Historic Context and Property Survey" by Galvin Preservation Associates Inc. for the City of Fresno.

Exhibit E: Conceptual Rehabilitation Plans Submittal from the owner representative of the Bixler Vapor Dry Cleaning Company Building located at 2049 Broadway, May 2019.