



**City of South Pasadena
Planning and Community
Development Department**

Memo

Date: February 16, 2021

To: Chair and Members of the Cultural Heritage Commission

From: Kanika Kith, Planning Manager

Prepared By: Aneli Gonzalez, Planning Management Intern

Re: Additional Document for **Item No. 2** – 807 Bank Street (Project No. 2338-LHD)

Two (2) written comments in support to the project was received from Kenneth Breisch and Marie Palacios-Rios.

Written comments received are attached to this document.

Attachment:

1. Written Public Comments

Attachment 1
Written Comment

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Sunday, February 14, 2021 2:26 PM
To: PlanningComments <PlanningComments@southpasadenaca.gov>
Subject: Landmarks Agenda Item #2, Soward House

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Landmarks Agenda Item #2, Soward House

Kenneth Breisch, PhD
Associate Professor of Architecture
School of Architecture

[REDACTED]

USC School of Architecture

13 February 2021

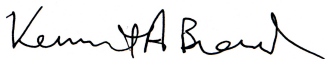
Honorable Landmarks Commissioners:

As an architectural historian, who has been teaching courses in American and Southern California architectural history and heritage conservation at the University of Southern California for more than two decades, I would like to express my support for the designation of the Mary Sowards House at 807 Bank Street as a South Pasadena Historic Landmark. I am also currently a member of the Santa Monica Landmarks Commission and am a past president of the Santa Monica Conservancy.

In my opinion the Sowards house represents an excellent example of the “modern ranch” house popularized in Southern by architects such as Cliff May during Southern California’s period of exponential growth and prosperity during the first decades after the end of World War II. Designed in 1958, its architect, Theodore Pletsch, has seamlessly woven together indoor and outdoor space, a significant characteristic of this style, which relates it to the type of Post War modernism that became nationally and internationally associated with the region during this period. Following the lead of architects such as Cliff May, Pletsch gracefully combined his open plan with more traditional materials, such as vertical, board and batten siding, and “used brick” to evoke the more romantic tradition of the California ranch house to create a setting for the kind of “comfortable” Southern California, middle-class lifestyle that was widely lauded in the architectural and popular press during this era, especially in publications such as *Sunset Magazine*. This character of Pletsch’s design, is enhanced by the quality of materials and workmanship, and seemingly effortless relationship that he created between the house, its site, and landscape, a wonderful achievement, given the moderate price of this residence. The modest demeanor of this home charmingly captures what we know of its original owner, Mary Sowards, a single woman and teacher at South Pasadena High School.

What I find particularly remarkable about this property is the intact nature of both its architecture and landscape. The absence of alterations and additions are exceptionally unusual for houses of this scale, as is the fact that this home has not been demolished and replaced by a newer and larger “McMansion”. The site overall maintains a strong sense of its original purpose and period of design. As a preservationist I find it increasingly frustrating that these types of properties, homes that so exemplify the aspirations of a large segment of the population are increasingly being lost. They form an integral reflection of our history and its suburban vernacular landscape, as do many other remnants of our often complex and sometimes difficult history. We need to recognize all aspects of this complexity, not just the great “masterpieces” of architecture, but also the less conspicuous “monuments” commemorating the everyday life of often unsung individuals that contributed to the well-being of our society. The Sowards house is an especially elegant example of this and certainly reflects an important contribution to the character of the South Pasadena neighborhoods that arose during the decades following the War. The current owners of this property should be applauded for taking their own initiative to nominate this property as an historic landmark and for their intent to preserve it.

Ken Breisch, PhD.



Associate Professor,
Graduate Programs Heritage Conservation

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From: marie Rios <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 15, 2021 9:12 AM
To: PlanningComments <PlanningComments@southpasadenaca.gov>
Subject: Landmark Status for 807 Bank St

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Marie Palacios-Rios

Concerning Agenda Item #2 -807 Bank St.

This is to support the nomination of the Mary E. Sowards House (1959) by Theodore Pletsch to city landmark status. I reside at 809 Bank St., just below this home and had the pleasure of being invited inside and getting a tour of this ranch style home. This provided me with a distinct appreciation of Mr. Pletsch's craftsmanship. The floor to ceiling windows with the outdoor decking, provide spectacular views of the San Gabriel Valley. The house design enhances the natural beauty of the location, providing a warm and comfortable living environment with lots of natural light.

The decor highlights the style of the original wood features, i.e. the kitchen cabinetry and built-in cabinetry in the living room and master bedroom. The individual uniqueness of each room lends to a natural flow throughout. The historical and architectural value of this home cannot be minimized. And because it is a one-of-a kind architectural modern style home, it merits your attention for city landmark status.

Marie Palacios-Rios
809 Bank St
South pasadena

Sent from my iPhone