



AGENDA MEMO

CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE: AUGUST 1, 2007
DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ITEM DESCRIPTION: DIR-22243 - APPLICANT: CITY OF LAS VEGAS - OWNER:
NEON MUSEUM

**** CONDITIONS ****

The Planning Commission (7-0 vote) and staff recommend APPROVAL.

**** STAFF REPORT ****

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This request is to designate the La Concha Motel Lobby as an Historic Property within the City of Las Vegas on 1.14 acres at 770 Las Vegas Boulevard North (APN 139-27-812-043). Ward 5 (Barlow). The Neon Museum Board of Trustees owns the building and supports the nomination. The Historic Preservation Commission voted to approve the nomination for designation based on the buildings ability to meet the requirements for historic designation as listed in Title 19.06.090 I. Designation of Landmarks, Historic Properties and Historic Districts. Adoption of historic status will result in an H designation for the La Concha Motel Lobby and any subsequent and future additions constructed onto and/or attached to the building, requiring Historic Preservation Commission review prior to issuance of building permits or discretionary permits such as Site Development Plan Reviews and Rezonings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<i>Related Relevant City Actions by P&D, Fire, Bldg., etc.</i>	
4/1/92	City Council adopted the General Plan with Historic Preservation Plan component.
12/15/97	City Council adopted the City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Ordinance, subchapter 19.06.090 of the City of Las Vegas Zoning Code, which governs designation of historic properties, the Historic Preservation Commission and its duties.
6/6/07	City Council adopted the Historic Properties Preservation Plan Element as a component of the Master Plan 2020.
6/27/07	Historic Preservation Commission held a public hearing for historic designation of the La Concha Motel Lobby to the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register. Historic Preservation Commission approved designation.
06/28/07	The Planning Commission voted 7-0 to recommend APPROVAL (PC Agenda Item #51/cm).

APPLICATION REQUEST

Request to designate the La Concha Motel Lobby as an Historic Property within the City of Las Vegas on 1.14 acres at 770 Las Vegas Boulevard North (APN 139-27-812-043). Ward 5 (Barlow).

ANALYSIS

The La Concha Motel Lobby, located at 770 Las Vegas Boulevard North, has been determined eligible for listing on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as an Historic Property by the Historic Preservation Commission. The La Concha Motel Lobby is owned by the Neon Museum, a non-profit cultural facility.

The property meets the following requirements for Historic Property designation, as stated (in abbreviated form) in the City of Las Vegas Title 19.06.090, section I.2. Designation of Landmarks, Historic Properties and Historic Districts:

- An individual property, building, structure or archeological site may be designated as an Historic Property if it is less than fifty years old, but is an integral and critical part of an Historic District or demonstrates exceptional importance by meeting or exceeding the other criteria described in **Subparagraph (b)** below:

Subparagraph (b). It is determined to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character because:

- It is reflective of the City's cultural, social, political or economic past; and
- It is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history

The City of Las Vegas supports the preservation of historic resources with the following documents:

1) The City of Las Vegas *Priorities*:

- Revitalize and invigorate our mature areas and the urban core
- Support and encourage sustainability, livability, and pride in our neighborhoods

2) The City of Las Vegas *Master Plan 2020*:

Reurbanization

OBJECTIVE 1.4: To retain, where viable, historical structures which represent the architectural, cultural and social legacy of the City of Las Vegas.

Neighborhood Revitalization Area

GOAL 2: Mature neighborhoods will be sustained and improved through appropriate and selective high quality redevelopment and preservation.

Cultural Enhancement

OBJECTIVE 5.2: To promote cultural awareness and pride within the city.

3) The City of Las Vegas *Historic Properties Preservation Plan Element*:

Goal: Promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the public through the preservation, maintenance and protection of structures, sites and districts of significant historic, architectural, and archaeological interest within Las Vegas.

Objective 1: Promote the preservation, maintenance and protection of structures, sites and districts of historic interest within Las Vegas.

Objective 3: Promote and encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historic resources.

Objective 5: Facilitate coordination and cooperation between the Historic Preservation Commission and other city departments, local and regional historic preservation, archeological and museum organizations.

Historic Significance of the La Concha Motel Lobby:

History

The La Concha Motel was originally constructed in 1961 on the Las Vegas Strip, just south of the existing Riviera Hotel and Casino. The motel property included the free-form concrete shell lobby, and a rectangular two-story motel building attached to the rear of the lobby. The motel building was demolished in 2004 to make way for a new high-rise development, as yet unbuilt.

The La Concha Motel was designed by internationally known African American architect Paul R. Williams (1894-1980), one of the foremost architects of southern California who produced an incredible number of buildings over a career which spanned almost sixty years. Williams designed over 2000 private residences and many major buildings both in southern California and elsewhere.

Williams practice was based largely in Los Angeles and the Southern California area. He began his studies at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design, and the Los Angeles branch of the New York Beaux-Arts Institute of Design Atelier. He went on to attend the University of Southern California, designing several residential buildings there.

Williams served on the first Los Angeles Planning Commission in 1920, and became a certified architect in 1921. He was the first certified African American architect west of the Mississippi. He opened his own office at age 28, and was known as an outstanding draughtsman.

Williams was the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In 1939, he was awarded the AIA Award of Merit for his design of the MCA Building in Beverly Hills. In 1951, Williams won the Omega Psi Phi Man of the Year award, and shortly after that, in 1953, he received the Springarn Medal from the NAACP for his outstanding contributions as an architect. In 1957 he became the first African American to be voted an AIA Fellow. Williams also received honorary doctorates from Howard University, Lincoln University, and the Tuskegee Institute.

His most prolific work was designing private homes, most of which were in the Hollywood Hills and the Mid-Wilshire portion of Los Angeles. His most famous homes were for Hollywood celebrities. Modern interpretations of Tudor-revival, French Chateau, Regency, and Mediterranean were all within his vernacular. One notable home of Williams design was later used for exterior scenes of the Clampett mansion on televisions *The Beverly Hillbillies*. His client list included Frank Sinatra, Lon Chaney, Sr., Lucille Ball, Tyrone Power, Barbara Stanwyck, Bert Lahr, William S. Paley, Charles Cottrell, Will Hays, Zasu Pitts and Danny Thomas.

Among the buildings and projects designed (completely or in part) by Williams in Las Vegas are the Guardian Angel Cathedral (1963) on Cathedral Way, and the Berkley Square homes (1954) in West Las Vegas. The Berkley Square homes are currently being nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Elsewhere in Nevada, Paul Williams is credited with designing the Basic Magnesium Townsite Homes (1942) in Henderson, and in Reno, he designed several private residences in the 1930s, and the First Church of Christ Scientist (1938), now the Lear Theater.

Noted public buildings in California that Williams designed or contributed to include: the Shrine Auditorium, Hollywood YMCA, Los Angeles County Courthouse, Los Angeles County Hall of Administration, Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills, and the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Architecture

The La Concha is an excellent example of the Googie architectural style. This style became popular in the late 1950s when modernism had begun to shake off its formal ninety-degree angles in favor of more playful, organic and expressive forms. The Googie Style represents a time when the United States was enthusiastically anticipating the future. Many of these buildings were designed with exaggerated tail fin shapes, boomerang angles and free-flowing, parabolic concrete forms.

The Googie style of architecture began as commercial architecture designed to make the most of strip shopping centers and other roadside locations. It fit the needs of the new California "car culture" and the dreams of the even newer space age. Googie has also been known as Populuxe, Doo-Wop, Coffee Shop Modern, Jet Age, Space Age and Chinese Modern. It is also sometimes identified as part of a larger overall movement of space-age industrial design. The La Concha exhibits the Googie style with its exaggerated shell form, and thin, concrete structure seemingly held up by large plates of glass. The tips of the sweeping arches sour outward and upward, anchored by narrow points at the bottoms. As with other Googie buildings, the La Concha welcomes the future with eager anticipation.

Some of the more recognizable architectural elements of Googie architecture are upswept roofs, large domes, large sheet glass windows, starbursts, exposed steel beams, and flying saucer shapes. Googie architecture appears at once organic and abstract, with an improbable lightness. Often Googie buildings would incorporate the new materials of the time: sheet glass, glass blocks, asbestos, plywood and plastic. Other innovations allowed steel and cement to be used in new ways.

Although the Googie style of architecture was most prevalent in southern California, the La Concha is one of the best examples of the stylistic influence from Los Angeles culture. This influence helped to create some of Las Vegas best commercial buildings during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, many of the more traditional Modern buildings located on or around Main St. in downtown Las Vegas were discovered to have been designed by architects from southern California during an historic resource survey of the area in 2004. However, very few, if any, examples of Googie architecture exist in Las Vegas.

The La Concha Motel Lobby was moved to the Neon Museum Boneyard in December 2006 for eventual use as the museums lobby and visitor center once it is reassembled. The plans also include the creation of the Neon Boneyard Park.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS NOTIFIED 9

NOTICES MAILED 184 by Planning Department

APPROVALS 0

PROTESTS 0