

February 3, 2025

To: The City of Santa Clara, Historical and Landmarks Commission
From: Lorie Garcia, City Historian, Historical Advisor to HLC

Memo re: Park Court

(In case there is any confusion, I wish to state that this memo is not to be construed as my comments on the proposal for 807 Park Court scheduled for HLC review on February 6, 2025.)

Dear Chair Leung and HLC commissioners,

The fact that a proposal with a Park Court address is scheduled for the Commission's review on Thursday, February 6th, has resulted in my decision to send you this memo about a project I have been working on for several months that is focused on Park Court. As of now, the only person in Planning who is aware of it is Sheldon Ah Sing, whom I informed of what I was doing last summer.

As the City of Santa Clara's Historic Preservation Ordinance only requires review of a proposed project that is within 200 feet of a listed historic resource and in Park Court only six properties have been added to the City's list of Historically Significant Resources, this leads to only limited protection for Park Court. Thus, due to its high level of integrity and the Court's unique architectural and historical significance to the City of Santa Clara as the only area in Santa Clara that was part of the Better Homes in America -Small House Movement, I am in the process of writing a Context Statement for Park Court.

The importance of Park Court lies in the following:

Almost completely developed during 1925, The Park Court Subdivision is significant as **the first automobile-suburb** in the City of Santa Clara and was created to meet the needs of the burgeoning working class. The homes constructed for this group of people were modest but contemporary for their time. Most of the first residents were laborers or employed in the nearby businesses.

Construction of the homes in the Park Court Subdivision was part of the Better Homes in America-Small House Movement. Throughout the 1920s, the small house movement was an important national trend, that that contributed to the development and the patterns of suburban neighborhoods. The small houses from the Better Homes in America program represent a time when "improving the quality of American domestic life took on special importance" and the small house from the 1920s is important to American architectural history.

Endorsed by the Government, the Better Homes in America program became the Government's voice to encourage quality housing through good design and suitable materials program and Secretary of Commerce. Herbert Hoover backed the program, since it aligned with his goal to

promote the construction of quality small houses and homeownership for the working class. At the start of the program in 1922, he said that “A hundred years from now your descendants will still be reaping the harvest of your labor for BETTER HOMES IN AMERICA”.

To illustrate the importance of this campaign, President Warren G. Harding kicked off the first Better Homes Week in October 1922 and until 1928 there was an Annual Better Homes in America Week. Builders noticed that they could profit from filling entire neighborhoods with small houses and once built, they could open model houses of their own for the community to tour during the National Better Homes Week. With extensive advertising in local newspapers and much fanfare, Cities across America, such as Santa Clara, participated in Better Homes week with publicity and activities focused on their specific areas. Several of the houses on Park Court are featured in advertising for Better Homes Week in 1925 and 1926, and it is important to note that it adds to the significance of the house if it was also a model house during Better Homes Week.

Members of the A.I.A. formed the ASHSB (Architects’ Small House Service Bureau) and participated in the Better Homes in America program, by designing and providing architectural plans for small houses. Advertisements from 1925, show that locally, the renowned architectural firm of Wolfe and Higgins designed a few of the Park Court houses, none of which are currently on the City’s significant property list.

Reflective of the Better Homes in America Movement, Park Court is an intact collection of small houses that demonstrate principles of the small house movement from the 1920 s. Many of the Park Court homes are still in relatively original condition and while few have individual distinction as a whole Park Court provides a significant and distinguishable historic district in the City of Santa Clara and also is its only intact 1920-30s subdivision. The visual continuity and individual integrity of the neighborhood captures a time frame important to the City, of its development and of its working-class residents and reflects the popular styles of domestic architecture in Santa Clara during the first decades of the Twentieth Century, including Bungalow, Cape Cod and Colonial Revival.

The Context Statement should be finished in a couple of months and if you’d like I’d be more than happy to send a copy to HLC when I submit it.

Sincerely, Lorie Garcia,

City Historian, City of Santa Clara

From: Planning Public Comment

Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 3:37 PM

To: 'Megan Carter' [REDACTED] Planning Public Comment

<PlanningPublicComment@santaclaraca.gov>; Rebecca Bustos <RBustos@SantaClaraCA.gov>; Alex Tellez <atellez@Santaclaraca.gov>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Support for Proposal at 807 Park Ct on HLC 2/6/25 Agenda

Good Afternoon,

Your email has been received in the Planning Division. Please note, your comments will be part of the public record on this item.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your input.

Regards,

Elizabeth Elliott | Staff Aide II

Community Development Department | Planning Division

1500 Warburton Avenue | Santa Clara, CA 95050

O: 408.615.2450 | D: 408.615.2474

www.SantaClaraCA.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Megan Carter [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 7:19 PM

To: Planning Public Comment <PlanningPublicComment@santaclaraca.gov>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Support for Proposal at 807 Park Ct on HLC 2/6/25 Agenda

[You don't often get email from [REDACTED] Learn why this is important at [REDACTED]

To the members of the Historical & Landmarks Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed addition at 807 Park Court which is on your

2/6/25 agenda.

I am the owner of 794 Park Court, which is a Mills Act house. Although 807 Park Court is within 200 feet of my property, 807 is not part of the historic Park Court development. It is across Alviso Street from the cohesive 1920s portion of Park Court where my house is located. It is clearly set apart from the historic Park Court 1920s subdivision and the house is from a later date.

In speaking with the Vitarellis about their proposal, it is clear that this construction would allow them to improve the functionality of their home and provide for the future needs of their family, including aging in place.

807 Park Court, while on Park Court, is very obviously not part of the historic Park Court development given both its location and appearance. Because of this I do not believe the proposed changes will detract from the historic nature of my property or the rest of the street. I support this project.

Best regards,

Megan Carter
794 Park Court

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Written Comment on Architectural Review - File # PLN24-00585
Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025 8:57:33 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

FYI

Steve Le | Senior Planner
Community Development Department
1500 Warburton Avenue | Santa Clara, CA 95050
O:408.615.2450 | D: 408.615.2468
Email: Sle@santaclaraca.gov



From: Morgan Goldstein [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 2:58 PM
To: Planning <Planning@santaclaraca.gov>
Subject: Written Comment on Architectural Review - File # PLN24-00585

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Good afternoon,

I would like to submit a written comment regarding both the Historical Landmarks Commission's and the Development Review Hearing's upcoming Architectural Review of the property at 807 Park Court. Please see my comment below:

My home on Linden Drive looks out directly at the both the property at 807 Park Court and the southern side of the historic Park Court neighborhood. As such, I am very familiar with the aesthetic character of the neighborhood, and know that any development done in this area will have an immediate impact on the view from my home.

There are several two-story homes in the vicinity of 807 Park Court and in close proximity to the historic Park Court neighborhood. I have reviewed the plans for 807 Park Court's proposed development and am confident that the final structure will fit in with the existing neighborhood character. I strongly support these proposed plans, and encourage both the Historical Landmarks Commission, and the Development Review

Board to allow this project to move forward.

All the best,
Morgan Goldstein

Address: 60 Linden Drive, Santa Clara, CA 95050