

XIII. DESIGNATION HEARINGS

ITEM 1: 246 Atlantic Avenue

Call for disclosure of ex parte communication: Disclosure by several members.

Emily Stillings, MurphyStillings, LLC, testified to the architecture and history of this Moderne-style building, known as The Leonardo. Ms. Stillings pointed out the design features of this building. Ms. Stillings testified that the building met the following criteria for designation as a landmark:

Sec. 54-161 (1) Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, county, or town; and,

Sec. 54-161 (3) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or is a specimen inherently valuable of the study of a period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship,

Sect. 54-161 (4) Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized or who influenced his age.

Ms. Patterson asked for confirmation on proof of publication. Ms. Mittner provided confirmation.

A motion was made by Ms. Moran and was seconded by Ms. Damgard to make the designation report for 246 Atlantic Avenue part of the record. The motion was carried unanimously, 7-0.

Ms. Patterson called for any public comment on the designation.

Oliver Grace, 270 Algoma Rd., stated that his home was landmarked. He spoke about his home and other landmark properties that he owns in town. Mr. Grace said the evolution of the street had included multi-family buildings being demolished for the construction of single-family residences. He expressed concern about the subject property because it was surrounded by three buildings that were built on higher elevations. Those buildings' drainage pipes flowed into his lot, making it necessary to always run a sump pump underneath the buildings. He said the building had been modified adversely, placing window air conditioning units into the walls. He opposed the landmarking of property at 246 Atlantic Avenue.

Wes Blackman, a planner hired by Mr. Grace, shared his history and knowledge of the building. He opined that after reading the designation report for the property located at 246 Atlantic, he found that it was not a good example of Art Moderne. He referenced "A Field Guide to American Houses," where certain modernistic styles were identified. He demonstrated that the subject property did not meet the description of a Moderne style and

shared features that were not in line with the style. He indicated that the roof was a low-pitched hip roof, and the front, public-facing northern façade was not asymmetrical, which was an identifying feature of the Art Moderne style. He said there were no port-hole windows, which was another variant of the style. The conclusion was that this property was not a high-quality Art Moderne building; instead, it was a traditional-style four-unit apartment building that was built in 1951. He stated that in December 2020, the timespan identified on a Town of Palm Beach Historic Site survey prepared by Environment Services Inc. (ESI) for the Art Deco Moderne style was 1920-1940. This structure was identified as a Mid-Century Modern in appendix “A” of the same historic site survey. It was also identified as Mid-Century Modern on the latest master site file.

Jennifer Borg, 251 Atlantic Avenue, objected to the designation. She stated that several of the neighbors also objected to the designation. She stated the following people objected to the landmark designation:

Peter Kaupe, 266 Atlantic Avenue
Stephen & Suzanne Canton, 240 Atlantic Avenue
Gregory & Jessica Englesbe, 254 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Dadey, 267 Atlantic Avenue
Julian & Christy Bharti, 245 Atlantic Avenue

Ms. Borg was a member of the Palm Beach Historic Preservation Foundation. She shared her history in the Town of Palm Beach. She noted again that she believed the subject building was transitional. She said the few Art Moderne homes in Palm Beach that had been landmarked were constructed after World War I. This building was constructed after World War II. She stated that the purpose of the Landmarks Manual and the Town Code was to protect the town’s most significant architectural achievements and designate the worthiest landmarks. She submitted that the subject building was neither. She urged the commission to deny the request for designation.

Aimee Sunny, Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, provided some clarity about a letter referred to in previous comments. She provided that the date of construction for the building was in 1951, as stated on the building permits. The later report prepared by ESI, Inc. contained data from the property appraiser’s website rather than the building permit records. She spoke about the architectural style and concurred that it was an Art Moderne style building, not Mid-Century Modern. Ms. Sunny stated that Arthur LeBaron Weeks was an accomplished architect, and she was familiar with his local work. She said his buildings had a similar scale, design style, and characteristics. Ms. Sunny read a comment from Katie Jacob, author of The Moderne Exhibit at the Preservation Foundation. She shared an image that had been included in the exhibit, which was like the building being considered.

Clerk’s note: At this time, Ms. Albarran declared a conflict of interest with the proposed designation and left the dais during the discussion.

Ms. Stillings shared some information in response to the public comments.

Mr. Wong found the building to be endearing. He thought adding some color would enhance the building.

Mr. Ives did not see the issue concerning the style of the building. He also thought the architect of the building was known. He supported the designation report and thought this building represented an area in the Town during that time. He thought the building was a nice style example and supported the proposed designation.

Ms. Moran agreed with Mr. Ives. She appreciated the comments from everyone who spoke about the designation. She still questioned the style but agreed that the style represented a time in the Town.

Ms. Fairfax thanked Ms. Sunny and Mittner for clarifying the issues. She spoke in favor of having mixed-use buildings on the street. She discussed the façade easement program, which was available to the owner.

Ms. Herzig-Desnick wondered if it would be possible to landmark the front of the building only, not the rear of the building. Ms. Stillings responded that when assigning a landmark designation, it was the property being designated.

A motion was made by Ms. Moran and was seconded by Ms. Herzig-Desnick to recommend 246 Atlantic Avenue to the Town Council for designation as a Landmark of the Town of Palm Beach based on criteria 1, 3, and 4 in Section 54-161 and with the acknowledgment of owner's opposition of the designation. The motion was carried 6-1, with Ms. Metzger dissenting.