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## Planning commission rejects bid for historic landmark designation, applicants appeal

By Sora O'Doherty



Fully glazed window walls at the southwest corner, looking southeast.

was an architect of local significance and that the home is a well-preserved example of the Second Bay Tradition, and Orinda staff and the Historic Landmarks Committee agreed. However, the planning commission struggled to find that Hamilton was significant, finding that he only worked on five homes in Orinda, and that none of the homes he had designed anywhere had been given historic landmark recognition. The commissioners also questioned the timing of the application, wondering why the applicant brought it forward when the home is still in need of repairs.

In order to be designated as an historic landmark, a property must meet at least three conditions set forth in the city code. The planning commission found that 12 Charles Hill Circle met only one condition, and therefore did not qualify for historic landmark status. The sole condition that the commission found applicable was that the building contains elements of architectural design, detail and materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.

The applicants had also advanced the work of renown landscape architect Lawrence Halprin on the property, but the commissioners considered that his contribution had not been significant and that much of the landscaping was no longer present.

At the hearing before the HLC, neighbors of the applicants argued that the applicants were trying to prevent them from completing restoration of their properties on the grounds that it would affect the historic status of the applicants' home. Although staff did not dispute that the applicants had made that effort, they did repeatedly note that the historic designation would have applied solely to the applicant's property, and that it would not have influenced decisions on the neighbor's property. However, there is an outstanding issue of whether or not the applicants could force their neighbors to be subjected to more costly procedures for environmental impact reports under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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