



**City of Santa Barbara**  
Planning Division

**Memorandum**

**MEETING DATE:** April 27, 2022

**TO:** Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC)

**FROM:** Nicole Hernandez, City Architectural Historian

**SUBJECT:** Staff Evaluation of proposed alterations

**ADDRESS:** 903 Arbolado Road. Listed on the Historic Resources Inventory. Spanish Colonial Revival style house designed by Anna Louise Murphy Vhay in 1922.

**PROJECT:** The project proposes renovations and a 64-square-foot addition to an existing 3,572-square-foot single unit residence with an attached 274-square-foot one-car garage, 694-square-foot carport, 726-square-foot accessory structure (guest house), and 64-square-foot storage shed. The project includes a partial demolition to the carport, reducing its size to 420 square feet; repairs to existing windows, roof tiles, and stucco; renovations to the guest house; and installation of a new 30'x16' swimming pool.

This memo, prepared by the City Architectural Historian evaluates the proposed project on the historic resource by determining if the project follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The purpose of this staff evaluation is to assist the Historic Landmarks Commission, in the review of a project when no Phase 2 Historic Structures/Sites Report (HSSR) has been prepared and in order to guide applicants and Commissioners appropriately towards avoiding or lessening project impacts.

**Compliance With the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

*The project meets Standard 1. The property has been used as a residence since 1922 when it was designed as the residence by Anna Louise Murphy Vhay. It will still be used as a residence and the proposed addition and alterations require minimal change to distinctive features, so that it will still be able to convey its original appearance so that the project meets Standard 1.*

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

*The project meets Standard 2. The project proposes to remove part of the carport that was added in 1948 and designed by noted architect Lulah Maria Riggs. However, the carport addition obscures part of the original Vhay design.*

*Removal of a portion of the carport which is not a distinctive feature of the original house will restore the spatial relationship of the house to the 1922 appearance. No character defining features from the 1922 house are being removed as part of the project. All of the rest of the distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize the property will remain including:*

- *Roofs covered in terra cotta tiles with emphasis on the terra cotta tile edge that creates a decorative edge from the roof to the wall.*
- *Emphasis on expansive planer wall surfaces punctured by carefully placed recessed openings.*
- *A combination of complex voids and masses creating an interplay of volumes.*
- *Doors open to iron Juliette balconies. The sets of casement doors recess at the wall plane with a stucco return and no trim. Windows are paired casement windows with lights divided by horizontal mullions.*
- *Expressive front entry surround with iron and glass doors.*
- *Santa Barbara native sandstone features throughout the landscape*

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

*No conjectural features are proposed for the building.*

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

*No changes to the house have acquired significance in their own right. The carport, although designed by noted architect, Luta Maria Riggs in 1948, obscures the original 1922 Vhay design and does not rise to the level of architectural significance that it would qualify as historic in its own right. Luta Maria Riggs also designed the original wood balcony to be enclosed with wood under divided light windows. The wood divided light windows have been replaced with aluminum windows. The change window change does not rise to the level that it would qualify as historic in its own right.*

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

*The project meets standard 5. The project is proposing to restore all the original windows, roof tiles and stucco, retaining the distinctive materials, features, and finishes.*

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

*Should any of the windows or roof tile be found to be beyond repair, it will be replaced to match the original in design, color, texture and materials.*

*The project proposes to replace the aluminum windows on the front elevation to return the windows to how they looked in the Riggs 1948 drawing, with wood divided lights above the wood panels that replaced a balcony in 1922 by Vhay. The storyboard photograph has a tree that obscures the treatment of doors to the balcony and is not sufficient evidence to accurately duplicate the feature. However, there is documentary evidence of how the windows were enclosed in the 1955 drawings. The design intention is to improve the elevation by removing the aluminum windows and respect both Riggs touch on the building as well as Vhay's by returning the window to Riggs' design.*

*Other non-original windows are being replaced with compatible windows to compliment the original windows.*

*The wood plank clad doors of the garage will match those of the 1922 house as seen in the story board created by Vhay.*

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

*The project meets Standard 7. All work proposed will be use the gentlest means possible to ensure no damage to historic materials. The project proposal includes the use of sandblasting as a method to prepare isolated areas of decomposing surface on the over 100 year old stucco for patch repairs. In general, all stucco surfaces' old paint will be removed using a low abrasive, low pressure water wash, supplemented by scrubbing with soft natural bristle brushes. Organic plant material and stain may be removed using poultices and appropriate solvents. The stucco finish itself will be preserved, and repairs will be made to the stucco around the windows and doors by patching and replacing it to match the existing stucco. The project team will reference the National Park Service Preservation Brief 22 on Stucco on best practices.*

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

*This Standard is not applicable.*

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

*The project meets Standard 9. The addition is on the least visible elevation and will not impact the integrity of the public streetscape. The proposed addition will be subordinate to the original house in the minimally visible north side. The street view of the proposed addition is limited and preserves neighborhood character. The location and massing of the addition are peripheral to the main house's two-story facade and are sited to have a minimal street presence. The proposed design incorporates the material and unique aesthetics of the historic residence so that it is compatible to the existing resource in materials, features, size and scale and proportion and massing to the original house. Because the addition is replacing aluminum windows and doors with new windows and doors it will be differentiated from the restored wood windows and doors of the original house yet still be compatible with the original wood windows of the house.*

*The reduction of the size of the carport will allow the original composition of the 1922 house to be revealed. The wood plank clad doors of the garage will match those of the 1922 house as seen in the storyboard.*

*All other alterations are compatible with the Spanish Colonial Revival style house.*

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

*If the addition were removed, the essential form and integrity of the building and the environment would be unimpaired as the addition is on the rear of the house and will not impact the integrity of the character defining features of the house.*

**ARCHITCTURAL HISTORIAN SUMMARY COMMENTS.** No Historic Structures/Sites Report is necessary at this time as the proposed addition and alterations do not have a negative impact on the house which will remain in-tact on the streetscape and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The project may therefore qualify for a categorical exemption with a less than significant impact to the resource, if the HLC consent reviewer agrees with the above evaluation and conclusions. Should the project significantly change, a Historic Structures Report may be required.