



September 7, 2017

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**RE: Robert and Josephine Chuey House, 2460 Sunset Plaza Drive
(Richard Neutra, 1956-57)**

Dear Ms. Moreno and Mr. MacGeachy:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, I am writing to share information on the architectural and cultural significance of the Robert and Josephine Chuey House, located at 2460 Sunset Plaza Drive in the Hollywood Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. We provide this additional information to help ensure that prospective buyers are fully aware of the building's potential historic significance and any requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). We also want to make sure you and others are aware of available economic incentives that can help with the preservation of the property. Given that it is currently marketed as a teardown, the Conservancy and others are concerned about the future of this important residence as it may be at risk for demolition.

This masterwork of modern residential architecture, commissioned by the noted poet Josephine Ain Chuey and painter Robert Chuey, was designed by master architect Richard Neutra and constructed between 1956-57. The two-and-a-half acre hilltop property is perched on a ridge at the top of Sunset Plaza Drive. The Chueys carefully analyzed the site with Neutra to determine the precise orientation for the 1,896 square foot house. It served as an intellectual and cultural gathering place for years as the setting for parties, poetry readings and the showing of Chuey's paintings. It is also here that Josephine, as an early follower of the psychologist Timothy Leary, participated in LSD experiments.

The design of the house encouraged a lively social life, with the living room serving as a focal point. With its floor to ceiling glazing, it is situated to provide unobstructed views of Sunset Plaza Canyon and the Los Angeles basin to the south, and opens onto an expansive deck that appears to float over the hillside. Robert Chuey's studio is another dramatic space, with a 10-foot-high ceiling. The house bears the hallmarks of the International Style, with its smooth, stucco surfaces, wide roof overhangs that accentuate the home's strong horizontal lines, expansive use of glass, and living spaces that graciously extend to the outdoors. The pair of



reflecting pools that frame the living room and deck to the east and the extended beam “spiderleg” are trademarks of Neutra’s International Style residences.

As an internationally renowned master architect, Richard Neutra helped develop the style of California Modern and was an immense influence on American designers. His surviving works are highly regarded and considered some of the most significant of the twentieth century. Many of his commissions, including the Chuey House, perfectly meld the interior and exterior of a space such that it would, as Neutra stated, “place man in relationship with nature; that’s where he developed and where he feels most at home.” In 1949, Neutra was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. He was one of the few architects to ever achieve this level of notoriety and recognition so early on for his then-and-emerging architectural legacy.

The Chuey House has long been noted for its architectural and cultural significance, and has been profiled in various books on the work and career of Richard Neutra, including Thomas S. Hines’ 1982 book *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture*. Most recently, the Chuey House was the subject of an August 28, 2017 article in *Architectural Digest*, [Richard Neutra’s Chuey House Is in Danger of Demolition](#), which laments that it “has been listed as a development opportunity in Los Angeles, with a price tag of \$10.5 million and not a single reference to its architectural significance.”

The Conservancy believes that the Chuey House qualifies as a historical resource for the purposes of future project review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) should there be a future lot subdivision, demolition and/or major alteration to the residence. CEQA provides a process by which to evaluate a proposed project and the consideration of a range of preservation alternatives.

Any future owner can take advantage of a variety of construction and/or financial incentives, including the Mills Act property tax abatement program and code flexibility under the California Historical Building Code. The Conservancy also maintains a Professional Services Directory of building professionals familiar with historic rehabilitation and restoration work that can provide guidance and expertise to potential buyers. The directory is available at our website at <https://www.laconservancy.org/find-professional>.

About the Los Angeles Conservancy:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with 6,000 members throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (213) 430-4203 or afine@laconservancy.org should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Adrian Scott Fine
Director of Advocacy

cc: City Councilmember David Ryu, Council District 4

