

MAR 01 2024

Office of the City Clerk

Dear Mayor, Council and Staff,

I agree that it is timely and appropriate to look at the role of the Mills Act, especially with purchase prices of historic homes becoming substantial. Two concerns were expressed when the FLW house application came before the Council. First, that funding for area schools would be impacted negatively from the property tax break. We are not sure what that tax break would be, as you know. However, even a generous discount in taxes would not significantly impact school budgets. Additionally, the remaining property tax received by the county would be much greater than paid by the former owners.

Second, that the tax break would exceed the cost of restoration/rehabilitation of the building. I previously sent you a letter of 12.6 with ideas on how to solve that issue. In the case of the FLW home, the location and materials dictate a very expensive upkeep over 10 years, no matter the number given in the application for initial repairs.

And then there are the recorded discriminatory comments about how this owner can afford upkeep without the Mills Act because of his wealth. We know that he has done a beautiful job of restoring L'Auberge and the Carmel Beach Hotel (at much greater expense than the Mills Act provides, by the way). People know he will take care of the FLW and aren't we fortunate for that! So let's penalize him, denying him the Mills Act that the former owner received without hesitation???

However, this is about the building, not the owner. How would the residents, and YOU, feel if we had to watch this famous building deteriorate? We have examples of historic buildings which have not been maintained—the Jeffers log cabin and 2 homes owned by the city!

You may wonder why the CPA is passionate about maintaining a “modern” house. We would not want to see this house on Casanova, no matter who built it. But location, location, location, it is designed to fit beautifully where it is, to the credit of its architect.

Your city lawyer has told you at least twice that the applications reviewed by the HRB last year must be reviewed based on the guidelines applicable at that time, not what you may decide for future applications. Mr. Pastor might be justified in suing the city for discrimination. However, the city should not act out of fear of a lawsuit, but be guided by what is right, just, and fair....to approve this application.

Less than 10% of our housing stock is historic, let's protect these special places in perpetuity and encourage rather than discourage potential buyers of historic buildings!

Sincerely,

Karyl Hall, Carmel resident  
Co-Chair, Carmel Preservation Association

3.1.24