



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: JANUARY 22, 2019
FROM: RIVERSIDE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM WARDS: ALL
SUBJECT: ACCESSION OF HARADA HOUSE INTO THE RIVERSIDE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM'S PERMANENT COLLECTION

ISSUE:

Approve the accession of the National Historic Landmark Harada House into the Riverside Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council approve the accession of the National Historic Landmark Harada House into the Riverside Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

On January 14, 2014, the Metropolitan Museum Board (MMB), with eight (8) members present, unanimously recommended that City Council approve the accession into the Riverside Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection of the National Historic Landmark Harada House itself. The MMB made this recommendation after consideration of the unique importance of the site and after City Council formally accepted ownership of Harada House on October 21, 2003.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

In 1925, City of Riverside Ordinance No. 419 established a Municipal Museum for Riverside (now the Riverside Metropolitan Museum or RMM) and states that all gifts and donations made to the museum are to be filed with the City Clerk.

BACKGROUND:

Harada House was the subject of a noteworthy chapter in Riverside history. Japanese immigrant Jukichi Harada, aware of restrictive state laws preventing Asian immigrants from owning land, bought the house in 1916 in the names of his American-born children. He was challenged in court by neighbors who preferred exclusionary policies. However, in 1918, the rights of the Harada children, who were American citizens, were upheld in Riverside Superior Court (The

People of the State of California v. Jukichi Harada, et al.), and the family was allowed to remain in their home.

Harada House entered history once again during World War II when Japanese immigrants and Japanese-American citizens alike were forced away from their homes and incarcerated. This home was among the small percentage of Japanese-owned properties across the West forcibly vacated by their owners, cared for by friends and returned to the rightful owners intact upon the family's return. Sumi Harada returned to Harada House in 1945, and it remained her home until her death in 2000. The house was donated to the City by Harada family descendants.

In recognition of its significance to Japanese-American history as well as within the larger United States civil rights narrative, Harada House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1990. It is Riverside landmark #23 within the Heritage Square Historic District.

The delay between the City's formal acceptance of ownership of the house in 2003 and the present recommendation to complete the process of accession into the RMM's permanent collection is due to the current Museum management's effort to identify and resolve incomplete collections actions.

DISCUSSION:

Within the museum field and among specialists in historic house stewardship in particular, discussion in recent years has led to refinement of the considerations regarding whether or not a museum may include historic structures themselves in permanent collections, in addition to their furnishings. The conclusion that both buildings and landscapes may be accessioned into permanent collections is predicated upon their being "held for public benefit and interpreted to the public because of their historic, architectural or other cultural value." ("When Buildings and Landscapes Are the Collection," position paper published summer 2014 in *Forum Journal*, Preservation Leadership Forum.)

It is recognized that historic structures, like outdoor public art or historic monuments, are subject to weather-related threats and a pace of deterioration that collections preserved indoors do not experience. The professional decision to treat structures formally as artifacts aligns with the ethical and collections care positions espoused by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Accessioning explicitly activates an equivalent standard of care for both a building and its associated artifacts.

The term "accession" refers to the procedure of formally accepting an object into a museum's permanent collection, after which it is cared for and interpreted according to the highest standards to ensure its sustained preservation and public availability. Museums may hold collections with other designations than "permanent" and for which different standards of care and use may apply.

In accordance with ethical standards governing the management, care, interpretation, and disposition of permanent collection objects, historic structures that are accessioned are not capitalized, and proceeds from their disposition after deaccession may be used only for acquisition and direct care of permanent collections. An eventual deaccession of Harada House is not anticipated.

The Museum proposes accessioning Harada House on the grounds of its unique historic narrative and the association of the house with its entire known array of original furnishings and associated

artifacts. Unlike a historic house that may be preserved as an illustration of a general type or that may be furnished with period, but not original, furnishings, Harada House exhibits an extraordinary level of historic integrity with an unbroken historic record. Further, the judicial decision that underscores the historic social justice narrative centers on the house itself. Accessioning the house will bolster the current efforts toward preservation and rehabilitation, demonstrating the utmost in commitment to providing judicious and thorough care.

Therefore, the Museum requests that City Council approve the accession of this distinctive property into the Riverside Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. Accessioning Harada House does not create new financial obligations that have not previously been recognized. As an accessioned object, Harada House may be more competitive when the Museum or the Harada House Foundation seeks grant funding from non-city agencies and private funders.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Approved by: Lea Deesing, Assistant City Manager
Certified as to:
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Metropolitan Museum Board Minutes, with attachment – 1-14-2014
2. City Council Report – 10-21-2003