

LOCAL NEWS

Where are Riverside's landmarks? New book unveils the answer

By **ALICIA ROBINSON** | arobinson@scng.com | The Orange County

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When most people think of Riverside city landmarks, they probably think of downtown's historic courthouse, the Mission Inn or maybe the Riverside Municipal Auditorium.

But also on the landmark list – and featured in a new coffee table book published by the city – are more than 40 homes in varying architectural styles as well as churches, schools, parks, bridges, a mausoleum and two significant trees.

With glossy color photos of each building or place arranged in the order in which they were named landmarks, “Riverside’s Landmark Legacy” is unlike most other books on the topic, which are either text-heavy history tomes or tourism pamphlets listing the locations of cultural spots.

“We have a lot of really unique buildings here in Riverside,” city Historic

That's what Gettis hopes the book will do. City officials created it a few years ago and recently updated it, drawing about \$32,000 from a historic preservation fund to pay for a 1,000-book print run. Sales of the book should raise about \$40,000 that would go back into the fund.

THEY WHO CAME BEFORE

Including two properties that were just approved for the list, the city has 134 historic landmarks. Applying for landmark status is free but requires paperwork detailing the history of the building or place, such as who built it and what significant events or people are connected with it.

For example, a palm tree at Victoria Avenue and Myrtle Street – city landmark No. 64 – was planted by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903.

The Ramona Drive home of Pat and Anita Silvestri, designed by architect Henry Jekel in 1928, is landmark No. 116. Its arched doorways, twisting exterior columns and leaded glass windows with a few shots of color are typical Jekel touches, but Anita Silvestri said another feature she loves about the house is “a sense of all the people that came before.”

Ernest and Louise Clarke, for whom the Spanish Colonial Revival home was built, left their own mark on city history: Ernest was longtime editor of the Riverside Daily Press, and Louise was one of the city's first female doctors and helped found Riverside Community Hospital.

Pat Silvestri said research for the landmark process took a few weeks and involved checking city archives and talking to a neighbor for details about who lived in the house before the Silvestris bought it 23 years ago.

SAVING HISTORY

Once a property is listed as a landmark, the city's cultural heritage board must sign off on big changes like building an addition or putting up a fence. Demolishing it could require an environmental study.

And even after the landmark plaque is installed, preserving the history it represents requires diligence. On a recent visit to the Santa Fe Depot – landmark No. 100 – Gettis was surprised to see a fence surrounding the 1924 Pueblo Revival building that now houses offices.

Though the fence fits with the depot's style, Gettis said, the city never issued a

Anita Silvestri said the landmark process can get city leaders – whose interest sometimes tilts toward new development – to recognize the places and people that helped shape the city over the years.

And without a way to protect them, “historical buildings get torn down or so totally remodeled that history is lost.”

Gettis hopes the book of city landmarks will make more people aware of Riverside’s cultural gems and perhaps inspire more people to apply for landmark status.

She told the photographers shooting for the book, “Go out and take pictures of these buildings that would make people want to go there.”

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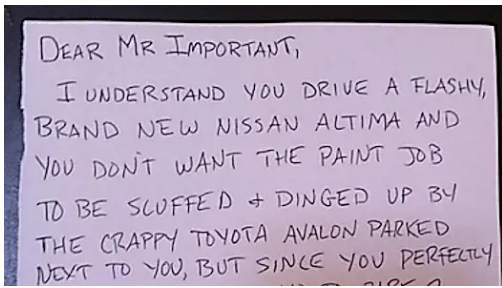
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Alicia Robinson covers cities and local government for the Orange County Register. She has also reported at the Press-Enterprise in Riverside, the Daily Pilot in Costa Mesa, and at small daily and weekly papers in the midwest, before she became an honorary Californian based on hours spent in traffic. Besides government and policy, she's interested in animals both wild and domestic, people who try to make the world better, and how things work.

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