



Community & Economic Development Department
3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 | Phone: (951) 826-5371 | RiversideCA.gov

Planning Division

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: JUNE 17, 2026
AGENDA ITEM NO.: 5

PROPOSED PROJECT

Case Numbers	PC-2026-00388 (Historic Designation)	
Request	To consider a Historic Designation request for designation of Lionhead as a City Landmark	
Applicant	Jen Mermilliod of JM Research & Consulting on behalf of Malissa McKeith	
Project Location	2881 Rumsey Drive, situated on the east side of Rumsey Drive between Caramel Way and Victoria Avenue	
APN	223092031	
Ward	3	
Neighborhood	Victoria	
Historic District	Not Applicable	
Historic Designation	Not Applicable	
Staff Planner	Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer 951-826-5507 swatson@riversideca.gov	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Board recommend that the City Council:

1. **DETERMINE** that Planning Case PC-2026-00388 (Historic Designation) for the designation of the Lionhead as a City Landmark is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Rule) and 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment), as the proposal will have no significant effect on the environment, identifies the structure as a cultural resource, and preserves the historic character of a cultural resource; and

2. **APPROVE** Planning Case PC-2026-00388 (Historic Designation), based on the facts of findings, and designate the Lionhead as a City Landmark.

BACKGROUND

Lionhead

Lionhead is located at 2881 Rumsey Drive in the Victoria neighborhood of the City. Constructed in 1926, the property was designed and constructed by architect Henry L.A. Jekel for developer and orchardist Howard G. Heisler. The estate includes a two-story Spanish Eclectic residence, detached gatehouse, perimeter walls, landscaped grounds, and remnant features associated with an earlier citrus grove development, including portions of a historic well/cistern and perimeter wall dating from approximately 1890–1904.

The residence reflects the highly ornamental and picturesque qualities of the Spanish Eclectic style popular in Southern California during the 1920s, blending influences from Spanish, Mediterranean, Moorish, Byzantine, and Italian Renaissance architectural traditions. The property was prominently developed as a hillside estate within the Victoria Heights subdivision and became associated with Riverside's citrus-era residential expansion during the early twentieth century.

Howard G. Heisler

Howard G. Heisler was a developer, orchardist, civic leader, and prominent figure associated with both Laguna Beach and Riverside during the early twentieth century. Originally from New Jersey, Heisler first came to California as a surveyor for the federal Department of the Interior before becoming active in real estate development and citrus cultivation.

Heisler is most closely associated with the development of Laguna Beach and its emerging "Art Colony," though he spent approximately seven years in Riverside between 1926 and 1933. During this period, Lionhead became a center for social gatherings, civic meetings, and entertainment. Heisler remained active in numerous organizations, including the Riverside Chamber of Commerce, Victoria Avenue Citrus Association, Riverside Lions Club, and Riverside Community Players. He also worked on regional water and conservation issues affecting Riverside agriculture and development.

Following the death of his wife, Lucinda Heisler, in 1932, Heisler sold the property and returned to Laguna Beach, where he later served multiple terms as city councilmember and mayor.

Henry L.A. Jekel

Henry L.A. Jekel was a prominent Southern California architect active during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born in Buffalo, New York, Jekel established a prolific architectural practice that contributed significantly to the built environment of Southern California, particularly in Riverside, Los Angeles, and Orange counties.

Jekel became closely associated with Riverside beginning in the early 1920s and designed a variety of residential, civic, institutional, and commercial buildings that reflected the architectural tastes of the period. His work incorporated Victorian, Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean influences, though he became

particularly known locally for his Spanish-inspired designs. Notable works associated with Jekel include the nearby Benedict Castle as well as numerous residential and commercial commissions throughout Southern California.

ANALYSIS

The applicant is requesting approval of a Historic Designation to designate Lionhead as a City Landmark. The applicant has provided an architectural description, statement of significance, photographs documenting the architecture and site setting, and primary and secondary source documentation supporting the nomination. (Exhibits 2 and 3).

Architectural Description

Lionhead occupies an elevated terraced knoll on the east side of Rumsey Drive north of Carmel Way and retains a prominent hillside setting overlooking the surrounding neighborhood. Originally developed within a mature citrus grove, the approximately one-acre property includes the primary residence, a detached gatehouse, perimeter walls, patios, terraces, mature landscaping, a well/cistern feature, swimming pool, and associated site improvements. The residence is approached by a circular driveway and pedestrian walkways that wind through landscaped grounds containing mature palm, cypress, avocado, and citrus trees.

The two-story residence was constructed in 1926 in the Spanish Eclectic style and is composed of irregular intersecting masses arranged in an asymmetrical plan. The masonry structure rests on a raised concrete foundation strengthened with subgrade piers and is clad in smooth Spanish-finish stucco. A series of combined hipped and gabled roof forms clad in red Mission barrel clay tile cap the structure and terminate in open eaves with exposed carved rafters, decorative beam ends, and original copper gutters and downspouts. The varied roof heights and cantilevered upper-story forms contribute to the building's highly picturesque appearance.

The principal façade faces west/northwest and is dominated by a projecting rotunda-like entry mass capped by a radial hipped tile roof with cupola and weathervane. The rounded entry element incorporates arched leaded-glass casement windows arranged in a stepped configuration beneath clerestory openings and decorative wood detailing reminiscent of an open belvedere. A deeply recessed carved wood entry door is set within a stuccoed surround accented with hand-painted decorative stenciling.

Fenestration throughout the residence consists primarily of wood-framed multi-light casement windows in rectangular, square, and arched configurations. Several windows incorporate decorative leaded and colored glass designs, including prominent fixed picture windows featuring heraldic lion and fleur-de-lis motifs. Decorative wrought iron grilles, diamond-patterned stucco recesses, balconettes, and cantilevered upper-story masses further articulate the façades and reinforce the eclectic Mediterranean character of the design.

Exterior living spaces are integrated throughout the residence and include brick patios, pergolas, balconies, terraces, and rooftop deck areas. A partially enclosed brick service patio adjacent to the kitchen is defined by curved stucco and exposed brick walls, while a larger patio adjoining the living room and sunroom features pergola elements supported by stuccoed corbels and wrought iron posts. On the rear elevation, an elevated patio extends nearly the full width of the residence and is enclosed by

decorative concrete balustrades with double balusters, square posts, urns, fountains, and lionhead wall features. A cantilevered balcony supported by carved wood posts and beams shelters portions of the rear patio and visually connects the upper and lower levels of the residence.

The interior retains a high degree of historic integrity and contains extensive original materials and finishes associated with the 1926 construction. Character-defining interior features include plaster ceilings with exposed beams and hand-painted decoration, carved wood detailing, mahogany stair railings and trim, built-in cabinetry, arched openings, original wood doors and hardware, decorative ironwork, historic wood and tile flooring, and original tile, fixtures, and fittings within bathrooms and service spaces.

Located near the front perimeter wall at the northwest corner of the property, the detached gatehouse was constructed concurrently with the residence and designed in a matching Spanish Eclectic style. The small structure features stucco walls, a combined hipped-and-gabled red tile roof with exposed shaped rafters, multi-light wood windows and French doors, and a recessed entry porch with arched openings overlooking the circular driveway.

Additional site features contribute to the historic estate character of the property, including the curving stucco and exposed brick perimeter wall along Rumsey Drive, decorative gates, brick walkways, terraced landscaping, mature vegetation, and a concrete well/cistern feature that predates construction of the residence. A swimming pool and related hardscape improvements added in 1959 occupy the northern portion of the property and include compatible balustrades, fountains, and landscaped terraces.

Alterations to the property include a 1966 second-story addition above the attached garage, modifications to the sunroom during the 1970s, and construction of a rear elevator, gym addition, rooftop deck, and detached shed completed in 2010. Since 2009, substantial restoration and rehabilitation work has been completed, including repair of plaster finishes, restoration of historic windows, refinishing of interior materials, replacement of mechanical systems, and rehabilitation of landscape and site features. Despite these changes, the property retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Statement of Significance

Lionhead is historically and architecturally significant as an outstanding example of Spanish Eclectic residential architecture in Riverside. Constructed in 1926, the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of the style through its asymmetrical massing, stucco exterior surfaces, red clay tile roofs, decorative ironwork, carved wood detailing, and integration of architecture and landscape design.

The property is further significant as the work of noted architect Henry L.A. Jekel, whose designs contributed substantially to the architectural development of Riverside and Southern California during the early twentieth century. Lionhead is considered one of Jekel's most refined and cohesive residential designs and demonstrates a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic expression.

Despite later alterations, Lionhead retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance. The residence, gatehouse, site features, and landscape

collectively reflect the prosperity, architectural tastes, and residential development patterns associated with Riverside's citrus-era expansion during the early twentieth century.

TITLE 20 EVALUATION

Under Title 20 (Cultural Resources), "Landmark" means: "Any improvement or natural feature that is an exceptional example of a historical, archaeological, cultural, architectural, community, aesthetic or artistic heritage of the City, that retains a high degree of integrity." Based on the applicable criteria from Chapter 20.50 of Title 20, Lionhead qualifies for Landmark Designation as follows:

FINDING: Criterion 3: Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

FACTS: The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style and represents an excellent example of high-style residential architecture from Riverside's citrus-era development period. Constructed in 1926, the residence displays the defining characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style through its asymmetrical massing, irregular composition of intersecting forms, low-pitched red clay tile roofs, smooth stucco wall surfaces, decorative carved wood detailing, exposed rafters, arched openings, ornamental wrought iron features, leaded glass windows, balconies, patios, pergolas, and integration of architecture with the surrounding terraced landscape.

The residence further reflects the picturesque design principles associated with the Spanish Eclectic style through its varied roof forms, cantilevered upper-story masses, prominent entry rotunda, decorative fenestration, and extensive use of Mediterranean and Moorish-inspired detailing. The detached gatehouse, perimeter walls, patios, terraces, fountains, mature landscaping, and remnant citrus grove features collectively reinforce the estate-like architectural composition and historic setting of the property.

Additionally, original interior character-defining features that are still extant and contribute to the architectural significance include barrel ceilings with plastered beams, corbels, and hand-painted frescos; wood beamed and coffered ceilings with hand-painted stenciling; plaster wall finishes; a curving Lamoia mahogany staircase and balustrade; built-in wood cabinetry; arched hallways, doorways, and alcoves; pocket doors, wood doors, and baseboards of Lamoia mahogany; decorative wrought iron features; original door and window hardware; walnut, bleached walnut, black walnut, bird's eye maple wood and tile flooring; iron registers and grilles; and original bath tile, fixtures, and fittings. These surviving materials and finishes demonstrate a high degree of craftsmanship and retain important aspects of the residence's original design intent.

FINDING: Criterion 4: Represents the work of a notable builder, designer, or architect, or important creative individual.

FACTS: The proposed designation satisfies Criterion 4 because the property represents the work of notable architect Henry L.A. Jekel, an important designer whose work contributed significantly to the architectural development of Southern California during the early twentieth century. Jekel was a prolific architect associated with numerous residential, commercial, civic, and institutional projects throughout Riverside, Los Angeles, and Orange counties, and became particularly known for his Spanish-inspired architectural designs during the 1920s.

Lionhead is considered one of Jekel's most refined residential commissions in Riverside and is unusual in that Jekel reportedly both designed and constructed the residence. The property demonstrates a high level of craftsmanship, cohesive architectural composition, and integration of site and structure. The property reportedly reflects an unusual degree of creative freedom afforded to Jekel during both the design and construction process, resulting in a highly individualized and expressive interpretation of the Spanish Eclectic style.

The residence demonstrates Jekel's mastery of Spanish Colonial Revival Mediterranean-inspired residential architecture through its sophisticated massing, ornamental detailing, integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, and careful relationship to the sloping hillside site. As a highly intact and architecturally distinguished example of Jekel's work, the property retains the ability to convey the architect's original design intent and artistic vision.

Although the property has undergone alterations over time, including additions completed in 1966 and 2010, the modifications have generally remained compatible with the original architectural design and do not substantially diminish the property's integrity. The residence retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association sufficient to convey its architectural significance.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

A public hearing notice was mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the site. As of the writing of this report, no responses have been received by Staff regarding this proposal.

APPEAL INFORMATION

Actions by the Cultural Heritage Board, including any environmental finding, may be appealed to the City Council within ten calendar days after the decision. Appeal filing and processing information may be obtained from the Planning Division by calling 951-826-5800.

EXHIBITS LIST

1. Aerial/Location Map
2. Historic Designation Application
3. Current Photos

Prepared by: Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer
Approved by: Laurel Reimer, City Planner



PC-2026-00388
Exhibit 1 - Aerial/Location Map

0 100 200 Feet



Cultural Resources Nomination Application

☒ City Landmark

☐ Structure of Merit

Please check the Designation for which you are applying

IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: Lionhead
2. Historic Name: The Howard Heisler House
3. Street address: 2881 Rumsey Drive
City Riverside State CA Zip 92506
4. Assessor Parcel number: 223-092-031
5. Present Legal Owner: Malissa McKeith
City Riverside State CA Zip 92506
6. Present Use: Single-family residence
7. Original Use: Single-family residence

Date form prepared: March 13, 2026

Preparer: Jen Mermilliod, JMRC

Sponsoring Organization (if any): _____

Address: 4076 Brockton Avenue, Suite 201

City, State and Zip: Riverside, CA 92501

Phone: (951) 233-6897

DESCRIPTION

8. Legal property description: 1.04 ACRES IN POR LOT E MB 004/092 VICTORIA HEIGHTS,
PAR 2 AND POR PAR 4 (R.S. 031/012), AND POR LOT 1 (TR NO. 27804-R, MB 284/4-5)
SEE ASSESSORS MB 223-09

Include approximate property size (in feet): Street Frontage 200 Depth 200

9. Architectural Style: Spanish Eclectic

10. Construction Date: Estimated _____ Factual X
Source of Information: _____ Assessor's Records _____ Building Permit _____ Sanborn Map
_____ Publications _____ Oral Interviews X Newspapers

11. Architect's Name: _____ Builder's Name: _____

12. Condition: X Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Deteriorated
_____ No longer in existence

13. Alterations: _____

14. Surroundings:

_____ Open Land X Scattered Buildings _____ Densely Built-Up

15. Use type:

X Residential _____ Industrial _____ Commercial _____ Civic
_____ Other

16. Is the structure on its original site?

X Yes _____ No _____ Unknown
If moved, approximate year _____

17. Related features and/or out-buildings: _____

SIGNIFICANCE

18. Historical Attributes:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Unknown | ☐ Government Building | ☐ Folk Art |
| ☒ Single Family | ☐ Educational Building | ☐ Street Furniture |
| ☐ Multiple Family | ☐ Religious Building | ☒ Landscape Architecture |
| ☐ Ancillary Building | ☐ Railroad Depot | ☒ Trees/Vegetation |
| ☐ Hotel/Motel | ☐ Train | ☐ Urban Open Space |
| ☐ Bridge | ☐ Rural Open Space | ☐ Canal/Aqueduct |
| ☐ Farm/Ranch | ☐ Industrial Building | ☐ Dam |
| ☐ Military Property | ☐ Public Utility Building | ☐ Lake/River/Reservoir |
| ☐ CCC/WPA Structure | ☐ Theater | ☐ Ethnic Minority Prop. |
| ☐ Engineering Structure | ☐ Highway/Trail | ☐ Civic Auditorium |
| ☐ Amusement Park | ☐ Woman's Property | ☐ Monument/Mural/Gravestone |
| ☐ Cemetery | ☐ Hospital | ☐ Stadium |
| ☐ Mine | ☐ Community Center/Social Hall | |
| ☐ Commercial Building, 1-3 stories | ☐ Commercial Building, over 3 stories | |
| ☐ Other: | | |

19. Architectural Description

See DPR Forms, attached

20. Statement of Significance

See DPR Forms, attached

21. Bibliography

See DPR Forms, attached

22. Photographs

See DPR Forms, attached

23. Letter from property owner (if other than applicant)

See Letter, attached

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____

HRI# _____

Trinomial _____

CHR Status Code 3S

Other Listings _____

Review Code _____

Reviewer _____

Date _____

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) _____

Lionhead _____

P1. Other Identifier: _____

*P2. Location: _____

☐

Not for Publication

☒

Unrestricted

*a. County

Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Riverside East Date 1967 T 2S ; R 5W ; SW 1/4 of NE 1/4 of Sec 35 ; S.B. B.M.

c. Address 2881 Rumsey Drive City Riverside Zip Code 92506

d. UTM: (give more than one for large and/or linear resources)

Zone _____

;

mE/ _____

mN/ _____

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel#, directions to resource, elevation, etc. as appropriate)

APN: 223-092-031

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

See Continuation Sheet.

P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2 – Single Family Property

P4. Resources Present:

☒

Building

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Site

☐

District

☐

Element of District

☐

Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date,

Acession #) View to northeast

Photo taken on October 7, 2025

*P6. Date Constructed / Age and Sources:

☒ Historic

☐

Prehistoric

☐

Both

1926 Newspaper Account

*P7. Owner and Address:

Malissa McKeith

2881 Rumsey Drive

Riverside, CA 92506

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, org., and addr.)

Jennifer Mermilliod

JM Research & Consulting (JMRC)

4076 Brockton Avenue, Suite 201

Riverside, CA 92501

*P9. Date Recorded: March 13, 2026

*P10. Survey Type

Intensive-Level



*P11 – Report Citation (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") Mermilliod, Jennifer (JMRC). 2026. Cultural Resources Survey & Mills Act Application: Lionhead, 2881 Rumsey Drive, Riverside, Riverside County, CA.

Attachments:

☐

None

☐

Location Map

☐

Sketch Map

☒

Continuation Sheet

☒

Building, Structure, and Object Record

☐ Archaeological Record

☐

District Record

☐

Linear Feature Record

☐

Milling Station Record

☐

Rock Art Record

☐ Artifact Record

☐

Photograph Record

☐

Other

Other (List) _____

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 2 of 7

*CHR Status Code 3S

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Lionhead

B1. Historic Name: The Howard Heisler House

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: Single-family Residence

B4. Present Use: Single-family Residence

*B5. Architectural Style: Spanish Eclectic

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations and date of alterations)

See Continuation Sheet.

*B7. Moved? ☒ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features:

Gatehouse, Front Perimeter Wall, Well/Cistern, Mature Trees, Original Interior Features

B9a. Architect: Henry L.A. Jekel

B9b. Builder: Henry L.A. Jekel

*B10. Significance: Theme Architecture Area City of Riverside
Period of Significance 1926 Property Type SFR Applicable Criteria C

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

See Continuation Sheet.

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) None

*B12. References:

See Continuation Sheet.

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Jennifer Mermilliod

*Date of Evaluation: March 20, 2026



CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary #

HRI#

Trinomial

Page 3 of 7 *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Lionhead

* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod

*Date March 13, 2026

☒ Continuation

☐ Update

***P3a. Description:**

This Spanish Eclectic style single-family residence (1926) faces west/northwest from an elevated knoll on the east side of Rumsey Drive, north of Carmel Way. The two-story masonry structure is laid on an irregular plan with intersecting masses, including cantilevered upper portions supported by carved wood beams, resting on a raised, concrete wall foundation structurally fortified with subgrade piers (2009). A low-pitched, combined hipped-and-gabled roof topped with red Mission barrel clay tiles ends in open eaves with mixed depth and exposed, heavy rafters with decorative carved ends and original copper half-trough or cornice line eave gutters and square downspouts. The central portion of the main roof ends in a front-facing gable end with minimal eave and cornice line gutter, and a south-facing gable end with extended shaped rafters shades a one-story, rear corner sunroom. A half-round Romanesque-like apse forms a central entry and staircase rotunda topped by a radial hip roof with moderate, rounded open eaves with carved rafters and copper trough gutter and cupula with weathervane. Walls are sheathed with Spanish finish stucco.

Original fenestration consists primarily of wood-framed, multi-paned single and French casement windows in square, rectangular, and arched sash. The most prominent windows are filled with leaded designs in clear and colored glass, including arched, fixed picture windows with lion/fleur-de-lis coat of arms on the front and rear elevations of the living room on the right façade. The rotunda is pierced by three arched casements of compatible leaded glass in stepped placement and is lined with wood-framed clerestory openings filled with vertical boards below the cornice line, mimicking the open-air scenic lookouts of an Italian Renaissance belvedere. A heavily carved wood entry door composed of thick, pointed square panels in alternating reveal is deeply recessed and the stuccoed jamb reveal decorated with hand-painted stenciling within a dropped hipped square mass with copper cornice line gutter integrated at the southerly base of the rotunda. Fenestration details in the cantilevered mass to the left, including a decorative wrought iron grille, an arched, diamond-paned leaded casement, and a stuccoed diamond-patterned recess, provide added privacy for the large original master bathroom. Two compatible single-paned tripartite windows reintroduce fenestration in the previously altered (1970s) sunroom. The three original rotunda windows were returned with the 2009 restoration of these original arched multi-colored rondel windows (two on the façade), along with another arched, fixed leaded glass window, in the cantilevered second story master bedroom addition (1966) over the original two-car attached garage with replacement paneled wood vehicular door (2010). Compatible wood-framed, six-light French casement and single-paned tripartite windows are employed in an added two-story rear elevator shaft and one-story gym (2010), which also features new French doors near an early-added diamond-patterned decorative iron grille over a single-paned double-hung window on the north elevation.

Patios, pergolas, and elevated balconies further articulate all elevations. Left of the main entry, a small brick patio partially enclosed with curved, stucco and exposed brick wing walls provides a direct service entry into the kitchen on the façade and features a wood door and screen, two leaded square casements, and a ribbon of three wood-framed, double-hung windows with two-over-two sash. Another brick patio on the façade fills the southwest elevation formed by the living room and recessed sunroom where a tall end-wall chimney with elaborate tiled gable cap and adjoined pass-through woodshed is anchored above the roofline by an arched flying buttress. Sparsely covered with a wood pergola supported by stuccoed corbels and columns spanned by wrought iron posts and chain on the southerly side, this patio leads to French doors that provide exterior entry to the sunroom. A wrought iron balconette on the rear elevation of the sunroom marks the location of a former French door and partially shelters the wood door to a semi-subterranean wine cellar. An elevated rear brick patio with a concrete balustrade of double balusters, square posts, wide top rail, and potted urns runs nearly the full length of the rear elevation with multiple garden entry points. French doors from the living and dining rooms lead to the rear patio, which is embellished by a brick tiled fountain and wall mounted lionheads, and partially sheltered by an extended linear cantilevered balcony with a dense, turned wood balustrade supported by carved post and beams. A matching ground floor railing below was added/modified with the elevator addition, and a compatible cantilevered, wrap-around rooftop deck added with the gym addition at the northeast corner features a matching replica railing and arched ground floor north elevation pergola closed to the façade with an X-pattern pierced screen in stucco. A small front balconette with matching wood balustrade and wood door marks the northerly extent of the original façade prior to the 1966 addition over the garage.

Plentiful original interior character-defining features and materials include: barrel ceiling with plastered beams, corbels, and frieze with hand-painted frescos; wood beamed and coffered ceilings with hand-painted stenciling; plaster wall finishes; curving staircase and balustrade of Lamoia mahogany; built-in wood cabinetry; arched hallway, doorways, and alcoves; pocket door, wood doors, and baseboards of Lamoia mahogany, wrought iron gate and ceiling light fixture in dining room; sliding Hollywood window screens; door and window hardware; walnut, bleached walnut, black walnut, and bird's eye maple wood and tile flooring; iron registers and grilles; and bath tiles, fixtures, and fittings.

The gatehouse (1926), a small secondary building of matching design originally used as a staff caretaker residence, is positioned near the front perimeter wall in the northwest corner of the property. Nearly rectangular in plan, the building rests on an elevated concrete wall foundation. In miniature to the main residence, the gatehouse is topped with a combined hipped-and-gabled roof covered in Mission barrel clay tile that ends in narrow eaves with exposed, shaped rafters and modern gutters over walls sheathed in stucco. Fenestration consists primarily of wood-framed, multi-paned single and double casement windows and multi-paned French doors; a 15-pane fixed window overlooks the circular vehicular drive on the southerly elevation, and a pair of double-hung windows are found on the rear. The main, recessed entry with wood door and screen at the southwest corner faces the street but features a square arch opening overlooking the vehicular drive and an arched opening overlooking Rumsey Drive. The elevated porch extends as a narrow walk along the southerly elevation to the brick, pergola-covered patio facing the main house on the southeast corner. Renovation and restoration work (2009) has included remodel of kitchen and laundry, replacement of the HVAC system, refinishing of hardwood flooring and retiling of bathroom flooring, interior plaster repair and reattachment, and replacement of the mudroom exterior door, interior closets, and bathroom pedestal sink and toilet.

State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary # _____

HRI# _____

Trinomial _____

Page 4 of 7 *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Lionhead

* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod

*Date March 13, 2026

☒ Continuation

☐ Update

The terraced and sloping property is crossed by a vehicular circular drive topped with ca. 1990s pavers (originals may be extant beneath) and patterned brick pedestrian walkways with some replacements. Landscape design includes turf, shrubs, and mature trees, including original palm, cypress, and avocado species. Fruit trees planted in 2023 are found in the southerly area of the property, and a small grove (2022-23) is planted beyond the swimming pool (1959), which includes a brick patio and water feature with lionhead wall fountain and bordering balustrades that match the rear patio. The pool area underwent unspecific site modifications in the 1990s and the addition of a compatibly styled detached shed, wrought iron fence and gate with stuccoed, exposed brick columns, brickwork, and other site work (2010). An inactive concrete well/cistern water feature (ca. 1890s-1904) in the southwest area of the property and the front perimeter wall (ca. 1890s-1904/1926) along Rumsey Drive predate the residence as remnant features of an earlier citrus grove. The curving stucco and exposed brick wall features lantern-topped square posts, scalloped top capped with wrought iron finials, and paneled metal replacement gates (2009) where previously missing from original locations—two sliding motorized vehicular gates and two swinging pedestrian gates—both paneled and matching the replaced garage door. A modern stucco wall borders the property on the north, and a concrete block wall aligns the south side and the rear property line, where a recent acquisition and lot line adjustment (2019) has added an easterly .10-acre strip of mature trees.

***B6. Construction History**

1890s-1904 Well/cistern & front perimeter wall
1926 Original construction (house & gatehouse)
1935 Mudroom addition to gatehouse
1959 Swimming pool and related site work—fountain, paving, balustrade
1966 Bedroom addition over garage (remodeled 2010)
1970s Removal of sunroom windows
ca. 1990s Kitchen remodel; removal of most lighting fixtures
ca. 2007 Removal of many mature trees
2009-2026 Extensive restoration work
2010 Elevator, rear gym with wrap around rooftop deck and north pergola, detached shed

***B10. Significance:**

Originally deeply set back from the intersection of Victoria and Central Avenues, the property was subdivided as part of the Victoria Heights tract (1903). The single-family residence and gatehouse were constructed and the terraced and sloping grounds laid out in 1926 amid a mature orange grove planted by Cornelius Rumsey in 1903.

Residential development of the property was commissioned by Howard G. Heisler, who is most associated with the development of Laguna Beach and its "Art Colony." Heisler came to California from New Jersey as a surveyor for the federal Department of the Interior, only later becoming a developer and, once in Riverside, an orchardist. Heisler spent seven short, but active, years in Riverside (1926-1933) during which time, Lionhead was used extensively for entertaining large groups, social evenings playing bridge, and meetings of the various organizations in which he and his wife, Lucinda, were involved. Splitting his time between Riverside and Laguna Beach, Heisler maintained his membership in Orange County civic and other groups, eventually becoming a multi-termed councilmember (1934-1939) and mayor (elected 1938) of Laguna Beach, while taking an active role in promoting Riverside and local concerns. Heisler was effective in the Riverside Chamber of Commerce—particularly the citrus committee—and a director of the Victoria Avenue Citrus Association by 1926. He worked on solving Riverside Water Company and Tri-county Conservation Association water concerns, was involved in the Victoria Avenue Improvement District, and was a member of the Riverside Lions and the Riverside Community Players theatre group. Lucinda was also active in the Riverside community, serving on the board of Riverside Community Hospital, participating as a member of the Riverside Plant, Flower, & Fruit Guild, and supporting Riverside Community Settlement, Daughters of American Revolution and the Riverside Women's Club. Her death in February 1932 forced the sale of Lionhead and the departure of Heisler from Riverside for Laguna Beach in 1933.

The residence was designed by renowned master architect, Henry L.A. Jelke to fit within the citriculture setting of Victoria Heights. A German-born American architect active in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Jelke's prolific work helped shape the built environment of Southern California. Closely associated Riverside since 1921 his designs supported the city's early 20th-century growth, a key period of development. Jelke is credited with a number of residential, commercial, civic, and institutional buildings that reflected Victorian and Craftsman influences as well as prevailing revival and other styles of the period, demonstrating both versatility and responsiveness to regional tastes. In Riverside, he favored residential and commercial designs particularly in the Spanish tradition. His work contributed significantly to the development, architectural identity, and historic character of the city. Although fewer of his Riverside buildings are widely documented compared to his Los Angeles and Orange County work, those that remain contribute to the city's historic fabric and underscore his broader regional legacy.

With uncharacteristic freedom reportedly due to a lull in a concurrent local project, the nearby Benedict Castle, and lack of interference or input by an as-yet absentee owner in Heisler, the Rumsey Drive property was not only designed but also uniquely constructed by Jelke, suggesting Lionhead may be one of the purest local expressions of his ability and design intent. More than simply a blend of architectural or decorative elements, the highly ornamental Spanish Eclectic style draws from the broad context of Italian architectural evolution from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Romantic periods and borrows decorative details from the entire tradition of Spanish architecture, namely Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance, mixing various influences into a single design. Popularized locally after the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, it reimagined earlier Spanish Colonial structures that were themselves a mix of Italian, Spanish, and indigenous influences. While inheriting

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Lionhead

* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod

*Date March 13, 2026

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☐ Update

Italian symmetry, proportion, and classical orders, Spanish Eclectic departs from a strict adherence to structure. It prioritizes the picturesque, elevating asymmetrical appearance in the Italianate tradition of the Romantic Period. Commonalities with both the Spanish Colonial Revival and Spanish Renaissance Revival styles evoke features like stucco, low-pitched, red-tiled roofs, and asymmetry. The more academic, formal Spanish Renaissance Revival also brings a reliance on stucco but introduces Moorish-influenced delicate ornamentation and Gothic elements of the late-Medieval Period. Lionhead reflects this stylistic intent through skillful execution of character-defining features such as picturesque asymmetrical form; mixed height and cantilevered masses; low-pitched, red-tiled roof; dominant entry tower in Byzantine or Romanesque apse shape with belvedere-like features; stucco surfaces and pierced screens; balconies/balconettes and patios with turned wood and concrete balustrades; decorative, heavily carved doors; ornamental ironwork; and delicate detailing. Moreover, the property exemplifies the Combined Hipped-and-Gabled Roofs Subtype often found in landmark examples, which is characterized by rambling, compound plans, separate roof forms of varying height, and massing arranged in irregular or informal pattern and is.

Following Heisler, a series of subsequent owners made changes to the property, including the Minors (1933-1957), the Jones (1957-1966), the Nixens (1966-ca. 1996), the Difanis (1996-2003), the Millers (2003-2008), and the McKeiths (2009-present). The most substantial alterations include the replacement of the original rooftop garden with a master bedroom in 1966 and the addition of the gym with rooftop garden and elevator in the rear (2010); however, these as well as other small modifications, repairs, and substantial conscientious restoration efforts under the current ownership of the McKeiths since 2009 have been generally in keeping with original architectural styling, features, and materials, safeguarding integrity.

Lionhead is an excellent, high-style example of residential design, embodying both the Spanish Eclectic architectural style and Jekel's mastery of design. The property appears eligible for designation as a City of Riverside Landmark under Criterion 3: "Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship" and under Criterion 4: "Represents the work of a notable builder, designer, or architect, or important creative individual." Further, the property meets the threshold of design intent and integrity for listing under the related Criteria 3/C in the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places, respectively. Thus, the property has been assigned a California Historical Resource (CHR) Status Code of **3S: Appears eligible for NR as an individual property through survey evaluation.**

***B12. References:**

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Assessor's Map 284/4-5

Assessor's Property Report

Record of Survey 031/012

Tract Map 004/092 Victoria Heights (1903)

Tract Map 27804-R

Quit Claim Deed 2019-0289413 (APN 223-092-002)

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P5b. Additional Photographs:



Original southerly side and rear elevation, view NW



Elevator and Gym with Deck Addition (2010), view NW



Rear elevation and patio detail, view N/NW



Northerly side elevation and façade, view SE



Entry and fenestration detail, view N/NE



Façade massing and design detail, view SE

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Interior living room plaster, beams, flooring, window, view W



Interior dining room original ceiling and light fixture, view N



Interior rotunda stair, balcony, doorways, view NE



Gatehouse and grounds, view N/NW



Well/Cistern and grounds, view SW



Front perimeter wall detail (1890s-1904), view SW

Marylinda & Malissa McKeith
2881 Rumsey Drive
Riverside, CA. 92506
malissacurepres@gmail.com
213-300-3550

March 30, 2026

BY HAND DELIVERY

City of Riverside
Cultural Heritage Board

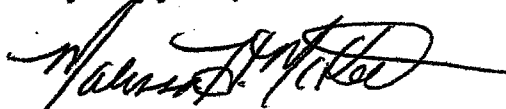
Re: Landmark Designation for Lionhead

This cover letter accompanies the Landmark Designation Application (Application) submitted by Jennifer Mermilliod, M.A., a preservation specialist and architectural historian, who has drafted the Application at our request for property located at 2881 Rumsey Drive, Riverside, CA. 92506, known as Lionhead. Lionhead was designed and constructed by Henry Jekel in 1926. We purchased the property in 2009.

We are fully in support of the Landmark Designation. Lionhead is an impressive example of Spanish and Italian style architecture designed by renowned local architect, Henry L. A. Jekel, for Laguna Beach developer and Riversider, H.G. Heisler. The restoration of this residential gem was costly; however, its recognition as a Landmark by the City of Riverside would further the preservation of its unique history and design in the hope that Lionhead will remain standing in another 100 years. We have concurrently submitted a Mills Act Application and intend to also file an application to place Lionhead on the National Register of Historic Places.

Please contact Jennifer Mermilliod or us if you need additional information.

Very truly yours,



Malissa Hathaway McKeith

Enclosures

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 1 - Primary facade (west elevation), view looking northeast



Figure 2 - West elevation, view looking southeast

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 3 - Rear (east) elevation, view looking northwest



Figure 4 - Rear patio balustrade, view looking north

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 5 - Main entry, view looking north



Figure 6 - Perimeter wall at north gate with gate house, view looking north

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 7 - Perimeter wall with pedestrian gate, view looking west



Figure 8 - Perimeter wall at south gate, view looking east

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos

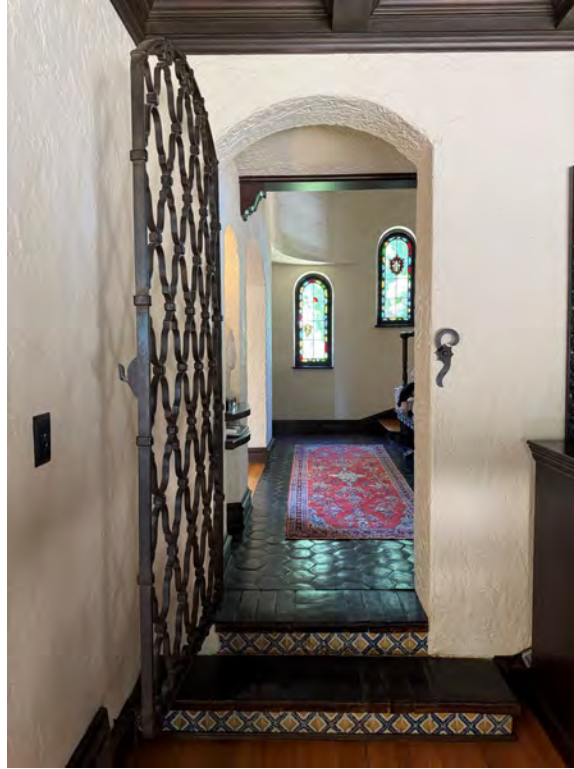


Figure 9 - Interior with original tile, windows, ironwork, and wall finish



Figure 10 - Example of interior iron work

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 11 - Master Bathroom with original tile and fixtures



Figure 12 - Master Bathroom with original tile and fixtures

Exhibit 3 – Current Photos



Figure 13 - Master Bathroom with original tile and fixtures



Figure 14 - Non-original kitchen



LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF LIONHEAD

PC-2026-00388 (HD)

Community & Economic Development Department

Cultural Heritage Board

Agenda Item: 5

June 17, 2026

AERIAL PHOTO/LOCATION



LIONHEAD



EXTERIOR PHOTOS



Perimeter wall and gate house



Exterior railings

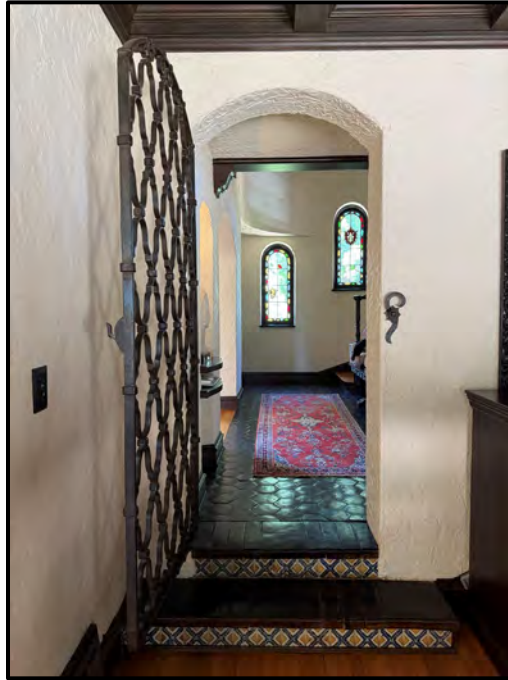


Main entry

INTERIOR PHOTOS



Master Bathroom



Interior iron work and tiles



Kitchen (non-original)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the **Cultural Heritage Board** recommend that the **City Council**:

1. **DETERMINE** that Planning Case PC-2026-00388 (Historic Designation) for the designation of the Lionhead as a City Landmark is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Rule) and 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment), as the proposal will have no significant effect on the environment, identifies the structure as a cultural resource, and preserves the historic character of a cultural resource; and
2. **APPROVE** Planning Case PC-2026-00388 (Historic Designation), based on the facts of findings, and designate the Lionhead as a City Landmark.

