



**City of South Pasadena  
Planning and Community  
Development Department**

# Memo

**Date:** July 16, 2020

**To:** Chair and Members of the Cultural Heritage Commission

**From:** Kanika Kith, Planning Manager

**Re:** Additional Document No. 2 for **Item No. 6** – 1534 Ramona Avenue Landscape Improvements

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In addition to the four (4) written public comments provided in the previous Additional Document, one more written comment was received from Amber Haley. Her comment is attached to this document.

**Attachment:**

1. Written Public Comment from Amber Haley

**From:** [Amber Haley](#)  
**To:** [PlanningComments](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Item #6 - 1534 Ramona - A Historic Stimson Craftsman, In a neighborhood of other Stimson Historic Homes  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 15, 2020 4:29:47 PM

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South Pasadena Cultural Heritage Committee,

Thank you to all the South Pasadena staff for your help with the stop order and for your recommendation to appoint a sub committee to work with the architectural historian. We feel this is the right move and necessary.

We bought our home in this neighborhood that I cherished since we first moved to South Pasadena and started attending church at HFC. I discovered our Stimson home while it was being totally renovated by Joanne Nuckols. We purchased it before completion, taking a leap of faith that it would be restored beautifully and authentically, which it was.

Our first home in South Pasadena was in the Monterey Hills district. With only one child, we craved more of a neighborhood experience with kids running around and historic homes. We have found that here on Ramona. It is a way of life, we've come to love.

HFC purchased 1534 Ramona Ave, which is directly across from our home, after we bought ours, and we were assured multiple times that this equally historical home's character would be preserved. I think the exact words used by church leaders were they plan to be stewards of this historic home.

Irrigation was turned off and shrubs were cut to the ground and we were assured it would be replaced with drought tolerant plants and it never was. It's been an eye sore for quite some time. We

were assured that it would simply be a rectory and not a place for church functions, and that wasn't the case. With the recent removal of ALL the vegetation, we were told it was going to be landscaped but there was no plan and no mention of any other use. And now we are told that it's designed to be a public garden.

Current and former Ramona home owners worked very hard on an agreement with HFC to constrain the use of this lot as well as 1510 and 1512 Ramona. Assurances have been made and continually broken. Clearly the intent is to eventually purchase all of the homes on the east-side of this block of Ramona and transform these homes to expand their campus. While we cannot prevent the purchase of these historic homes that embody the character of our historic village, removing or modifying them is certainly not in the interest of preserving our unique heritage and will diminish our neighborhood.

This recent plan calls for a statue, a large fountain, and park benches. The historic curved walkway (recognized in the Parks and Rec Historic Record) has already been removed, replaced by three concrete walkways, which are ADA compliant, further indication of public use. We've already had a host of traffic and parking issues related to the HFC school. A public space will only exacerbate the problem.

So our fear is that left unchecked, the church will increasingly institutionalize the space expanding their campus despite the lot being zoned residential. Why? Because that's been the pattern. I want to note that the church removed a Stimson home in 1998, formally located at Fremont and Oak and replaced it with what is now the Connelly Center, a very institutional-looking building.

Actual plans are not presented, even when directly asked. Changes to what's been presented and agreed upon just happen, instantly changing the character of the neighborhood.

We believe they will keep moving towards their ultimate goal any way they can and just bet on the City not restricting them. So far

that has been a successful strategy. Though we certainly welcome HFC renovating properties they purchase, they do not have the right to transform residential properties with public use spaces and buildings.

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