

Strategy for Reassessing and Renovating a Historic Residence in Carmel-by-the-Sea

Working plan for the Dorothy Green Chapman / Rowan Maiden House - historic status, design review, future renovation, ADU, and project team.

Background

In 2019, the owners began working with architect Daryl Woods on a renovation and submitted a design review application based on the understanding that the house was not listed as a historic resource. During the review process, the City raised historic-preservation concerns and the property was placed back on Carmel's Historic Resources Inventory. The application was later withdrawn, and the project was put on hold for approximately five years.

During that period, Daryl Woods passed away. The owners are now ready to restart the project. One possible architect is Jonathan Strnad, who inherited or continued work from Daryl Woods and is already familiar with the house and the prior design effort. His continuity with the original project is valuable, although his level of experience with Carmel historic-resource approvals should be confirmed.

Primary Objectives

- Evaluate whether there is a credible basis to remove the property from Carmel's Historic Resources Inventory.
- Preserve the important surviving elements of Rowan Maiden's work while gaining greater flexibility in design decisions.
- If removal from the Inventory is not practical, revise the prior design so it can proceed successfully under Carmel's historic-preservation rules.
- Explore conversion of the later garage enclosure into an ADU.
- Revisit the rooftop-deck concept in a way that avoids the conflicts identified in the 2020 historic review.

The goal is not to erase Rowan Maiden's work. The goal is to identify what is genuinely historic, preserve what is important, and avoid allowing later nonhistoric alterations or overly rigid interpretation to dictate the entire future of the property.

Recommended Overall Approach

The project should proceed on two tracks in parallel for a period of time rather than treating historic de-listing as an all-or-nothing prerequisite.

- **Track A - Historic-status review:** determine whether the house still meets Carmel's significance and integrity requirements and whether removal from the Inventory is professionally supportable.
- **Track B - Design revision:** assume the house remains historic and develop a revised project that preserves the important Maiden fabric while avoiding the features that created the previous conflict.

Phase 1 - Reconstruct the Historic and Permit Record

Before a new Design Study application is filed, the complete property and historic record should be assembled. The key question is not simply whether the house was designed by Rowan Maiden, but why the City previously

treated the property as nonhistoric and what later caused the City to reverse that position.

- Any earlier determination showing that the property was not historic or had been removed from the Historic Resources Inventory.
- The July 2020 historic eligibility evaluation and any DPR 523 forms.
- Margaret Clovis's Phase I and Phase II reports.
- The 1994 permit and drawings for enclosing the original carport as a garage.
- Original 1949 Rowan Maiden plans, elevations, and historic photographs.
- All City correspondence, staff notes, meeting materials, and consultant comments from the 2019-2020 review.
- The withdrawn DS 20-285 plans and all revisions.
- Any document explaining the basis for the later re-listing of the property.

The existing 2020 Phase Two report is already important because the City's consultant expressly stated that the 1994 carport enclosure had not acquired historic significance. That creates a useful distinction between the original Maiden design and later nonhistoric work.

Phase 2 - Retain an Independent Architectural Historian

An independent architectural historian should be engaged before substantial new design work begins. The historian's first assignment should be a focused records review and preliminary opinion, not necessarily a full-length report.

The initial opinion should address:

- **Criterion Two - Important Person:** whether the association with Dorothy Green Chapman is strong enough to support eligibility and whether this house is meaningfully associated with the period or activities for which she is considered important.
- **Criterion Three - Architecture:** whether the house, as altered, remains a sufficiently representative work of Rowan Maiden and/or Usonian or Organic architecture.
- **Historic integrity:** whether the property still retains enough integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, setting, and location to convey the significance claimed for it.
- **Prior removal and later re-listing:** whether the City's later determination adequately explains why the earlier conclusion was wrong or why conditions materially changed.

If the historian believes removal is strongly supportable, the owners can decide whether to pursue that process. If the historian believes the house clearly remains eligible, the project can shift immediately toward a compliance-based redesign rather than spending time and money on a weak de-listing effort.

Phase 3A - If Removal from the Historic Inventory Is Credible

If the independent historian believes there is a strong case, the removal process should be explored before committing to a full new Design Study. Because an Inventory property is generally presumed historic, removal should be treated as an evidence-driven process rather than a policy argument.

The core argument should be that the property must be evaluated as it exists today, including the 1994 garage enclosure and any other alterations, and that the current house must still retain sufficient integrity to convey the significance for which it is listed.

A land-use attorney may be useful at this stage for a limited strategic review: examining the old record, reviewing the historian's opinion, identifying procedural issues, and making sure the administrative record is preserved in case an appeal is later necessary.

Phase 3B - Restart the Architectural Work

In parallel, the architectural work should restart at the concept level. Jonathan Strnad is a logical person to contact because he is familiar with Daryl Woods's work and the house. Familiarity with the prior drawings can save time and preserve useful design thinking.

If Jonathan does not have deep experience with Carmel historic-resource approvals, that does not necessarily disqualify him. A practical team structure could be:

- **Jonathan Strnad - Project Architect:** design continuity, existing house knowledge, preparation of the new project.
- **Independent Architectural Historian:** historic-status strategy, integrity analysis, review of character-defining features, and plan vetting.
- **Preservation Architect, if needed:** technical support for Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Historic Resources Board presentation.
- **Land-Use Attorney, as needed:** targeted advice before a removal filing, after a denial, or if state ADU law becomes a point of dispute.

How the 2020 Design Review Should Inform the New Design

The 2020 historic review did not conclude that the entire project was impossible. The 674-square-foot rear addition was largely viewed as potentially compatible because of its rear placement, visually subordinate relationship to the original house, compatible geometry, and use of glazing and clerestory elements. The major conflict was the 439-square-foot rooftop deck over the original historic house.

The rooftop deck was criticized because it was highly visible from the street, dominated the low-profile design, affected the character-defining roof, altered the massing, and became a primary visual element. This suggests that much of Daryl Woods's underlying design may still be worth revisiting if the roof-deck strategy is substantially changed.

Revised Rooftop-Deck Concept

A new concept could place the deck on top of the new addition rather than on the original Rowan Maiden roof, with access from the outside or from new construction. This may reduce the historic conflict because it separates the deck structurally and visually from the original roof form.

- Keep the deck visually subordinate to the original house.
- Avoid allowing railings or stairs to read as a new second story.
- Set guardrails back where possible so they are less visible from the public right-of-way.
- Keep access associated with new construction rather than cutting through original historic fabric.

- Have the historian review the concept before detailed design development.

Garage-to-ADU Strategy

The garage-to-ADU concept should be explored as a separate design and entitlement strategy. The existing historic report is helpful because it states that the 1994 carport enclosure has not acquired historic significance.

That creates a clear preservation narrative: the ADU would adapt a later, nonhistoric alteration rather than remove or substantially change original Rowan Maiden fabric.

- Determine whether the garage can be converted largely within the existing envelope.
- Minimize changes to original adjoining redwood siding, roof structure, windows, and other identified character-defining features.
- Study the garage-door opening, new entry, utility routing, fire separation, kitchen and bathroom requirements, and any need for exterior modifications.
- Avoid unnecessary expansion if an in-envelope conversion can work.
- Confirm how current California ADU law interacts with Carmel's historic-resource requirements before filing.

Phase 4 - Historian Review Before City Submittal

The historian should review the design repeatedly during concept development rather than only after the architectural set is complete.

- **Concept 1:** architect prepares early alternatives; historian identifies historic conflicts.
- **Concept 2:** architect revises; historian checks the proposal against the character-defining features and the Secretary's Standards.
- **Near-final concept:** historian prepares a written opinion or support memo for the preferred scheme.
- **City submittal:** the project reaches Carmel after the major historic issues have already been identified and addressed.

Role of a Lawyer

A lawyer does not need to lead the project from the outset. Legal assistance is most useful at specific decision points:

- Before filing a formal request to remove the property from the Historic Resources Inventory.
- If the Historic Resources Board denies removal and an appeal to the City Council is being considered.
- If Carmel takes a restrictive position on the proposed ADU and state ADU law may limit the City's authority.
- If the administrative process becomes inconsistent, procedurally irregular, or appears headed toward litigation.

Recommended Sequence

- **1.** Contact Jonathan Strnad and confirm interest, availability, and experience with Carmel historic-resource work.

- 2. Retain an independent architectural historian for an initial review.
- 3. Assemble the complete historic, permit, and 2019-2020 Design Study record.
- 4. Decide whether a formal Inventory-removal effort is professionally supportable.
- 5. Begin concept-level architectural work: preserve the strongest parts of the earlier rear-addition concept, remove the prior roof-deck conflict, study a deck over new construction, and study the garage-to-ADU conversion.
- 6. Have the historian vet each design iteration before significant drafting expense is incurred.
- 7. Use a land-use attorney only where the historic-removal, appeal, or ADU issues justify it.
- 8. File the new City application only after the historic and design strategies are aligned.

Strategic Position

The most credible position is not that the owners oppose preservation. The stronger position is that the original Rowan Maiden work should be accurately identified and protected, while later nonhistoric alterations should not be treated as though they were part of the 1949 design. The project should allow the property to evolve thoughtfully while preserving the architectural elements that genuinely convey Maiden's work.

Even if the property remains on the Historic Resources Inventory, the 2020 review suggests there is meaningful room to redesign the project successfully. A rear addition, a carefully separated rooftop deck over new construction, and adaptive reuse of the nonhistoric garage may together offer a viable path forward.

Working document - prepared as a project strategy and planning record. This document is not legal advice and should be reviewed with the appropriate historic-preservation, architectural, and legal professionals before formal City action.