



**CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date:** March 1, 2011  
**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council  
**From:** Susan Healy Keene, AICP, Director of Community Development  
**Subject:** Discussion Regarding Architect Paul Williams  
**Attachments:** Excerpt from Wikipedia.org Containing Information Related to Paul Williams, FAIA

**INTRODUCTION**

At the request of Councilmember Mirisch, the subject item has been placed on the agenda for general discussion.

Attached to this report is an excerpt from Wikipedia.org, which also contains links and references for additional information on the subject architect.

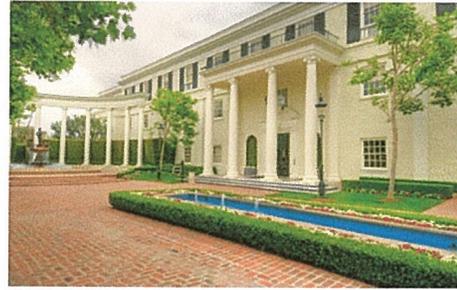
**DISCUSSION**

According to the referenced website, Paul Williams designed over 2,000 residences, including some for famous celebrities. In addition to his residential accomplishments, Williams also designed or contributed to the design of many commercial and governmental buildings (some examples provided in attachment).

In a book prepared Williams' granddaughter, there are at least 75 buildings designed and constructed in Beverly Hills, including approximately 65 residential buildings and nine commercial buildings:

- Beverly Wilshire Hotel
- Saks Fifth Avenue
- Platinum Equity
- Beverly Hills Hotel

Williams became a certified architect in 1921 and is credited as being the first African American architect certified west of the Mississippi River. He won the AIA Award of Merit for his design of the building that now houses Platinum Equity (360 N. Crescent).



Photographer David Horan, 2010. Source <http://www.paulrwilliamsproject.org/gallery/1930s-office-buildings/>

While Beverly Hills does not have a local historic preservation ordinance, a survey conducted in 1985-1986, and updated in 2004, concluded that this Williams designed building appears eligible for listing under the National and California Registers.

A private residence located at 711 N. Crescent has been listed on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) since November. While this property is not listed on the California Registry, there is sufficient information available that if a discretionary application were filed, staff would need to evaluate the structure's potential historic significance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Importantly, this review only occurs if a discretionary application is filed.

Recently, two structures in the city were demolished that some in the broader Los Angeles community have argued were significant historic resources, including the Friar's Club and the John Lautner's Shusett House on Monte Leon Lane. Neither of these properties was evaluated under CEQA because there was no discretionary replacement project filed and the issuance of the demolition in Beverly Hills is an administrative action.

Similarly, if demolition permits only were filed to remove any of the Williams designed structures identified in this report, including the Platinum Equity building, the city, under current regulations, would be obligated to issue that permit.

In contrast, the City Council recently held an appeal hearing for a new development on Durant Drive. A key component of that project was consideration of its historic significance, a discussion that was permitted only by the fact that there was a discretionary application filed for that property.

As for the Williams designed, or contributions to, buildings located in Beverly Hills, some may have greater historical significance than others based on state-established criteria. At present, no Williams designed building (in Beverly Hills) is listed in the National and California Registers and there is no local ordinance that would require an evaluation of significance, unless a planned demolition is proposed as part of a discretionary replacement project.

The City Council has previously discussed establishing a local preservation program, most recently on August 31, 2009, however, other projects have risen higher on the property list. At present, establishing a local preservation ordinance is listed as a 'B' Priority on the Planning Division's Work Plan. Starting in April or May, the City Council will be reviewing budgets and work plans for each department.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The recommendation contained in this report has no direct fiscal or budget related impact.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss the subject request.

Susan Healy Keene, AICP

Approved By

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Healy Keene". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the printed name and the "Approved By" text.

# Attachment 1

## Paul Williams (architect)

Paul R. Williams	
	
Personal information	
<b>Born</b>	February 18, 1894Los Angeles, California
<b>Died</b>	January 23, 1980 (aged 85)Los Angeles, California
Work	
<b>Buildings</b>	1925 28th Street YMCA, Los Angeles 1935 Rene Faron Residence 1938 First Church of Christ, Scientist (Reno, Nevada) 1939 Saks Fifth Avenue, Beverly Hills 1940 Pueblo del Rio Housing Development (joint venture) 1948 Golden State Mutual Life 1949 and 1963 Perino's Restaurant (alterations of existing buildings) 1951 Williams Residence 1953 Imperial Courts Housing Development, Los Angeles 1958 Los Angeles Superior Court 1961 LAX Theme Building (joint venture) 1961 La Concha Motel 1962 St. Jude Hospital, Memphis 1963 First AME Church, Los Angeles 1964 Beverly Sunset Medical Center

*for others with the same name, see Paul Williams (disambiguation)*

**Paul Revere Williams, FAIA** (February 18, 1894 – January 23, 1980) was a Los Angeles-based, American architect. He practiced largely in Southern California and designed the homes of numerous stars including Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball/Desi Arnaz, Lon Chaney, and Charles Correll. He also designed many public and private buildings.<sup>[1] [2]</sup>

### Childhood and academic career

Orphaned at the age of four, Williams was the only African American student in his elementary school. He studied at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design and at the Los Angeles branch of the New York Beaux-Arts Institute of Design Atelier, subsequently working as a landscape architect. He went on to attend the University of Southern California, School of Engineering designing several residential buildings while still a student there. Williams became a certified architect in 1921, and the first certified African American architect west of the Mississippi.

He married Della Mae Givens on June 27, 1917, at the First AME Church in Los Angeles. They had three children: Paul Revere Williams, Jr. (born and died June 30, 1925, buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Los Angeles); Marilyn Frances Williams (born December 25, 1926); and Norma Lucille Williams (born September 18, 1928).

## Career

Williams won an architectural competition at age 25 and three years later opened his own office. Known as an outstanding draftsman, he perfected the skill of rendering drawings "upside down." This skill was developed so that his clients (who may have been uncomfortable sitting next to a black architect) could see the drawings rendered right side up across the table from him. Struggling to gain attention, he served on the first Los Angeles City Planning Commission in 1920. From 1921 through 1924 Williams worked for Los Angeles architect John C. Austin, eventually becoming chief draftsman, before establishing his own office. Williams became the first African-American member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1923.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1939, he won the AIA Award of Merit for his design of the MCA Building in Los Angeles (now headquarters of the Paradigm Talent Agency).

A. Quincy Jones (1913–79) was an architect, who is claimed to have hired Williams and later collaborated with him on projects in Palm Springs, including the Palm Springs Tennis Club (1947) and the Town & Country (1948) and Romanoff's on the Rocks (1948) restaurants.<sup>[3]</sup>

During World War II, Williams worked for the Navy Department as an architect. Following the war he published his first book, *The Small Home of Tomorrow* (1945), with a successor volume *New Homes for Today* the following year. In 1957 became the first African-American to be voted an AIA Fellow.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1951, he won the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Man of the Year award and in 1953 Williams received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP for his outstanding contributions as an architect and member of the African-American community. Williams also received honorary doctorates from Howard University (doctor of architecture), Lincoln University of Missouri (doctor of science), and the Tuskegee Institute (doctor of fine arts). In 2004, USC honored him by listing him among its distinguished alumni, in the television commercial for the school shown during its football games.

Williams was posthumously honored in 2008 with the Donald J. Trump Award for his significant impact on the evolution, development and perpetuation of real estate throughout Greater Los Angeles. The award was accepted by his granddaughter, Karen Hudson. Donald Trump presented the award to Hudson via video presentation.

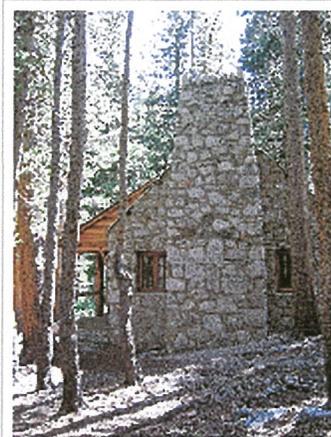
Williams famously remarked upon the bitter irony of the fact that most of the homes he designed, and whose construction he oversaw, were on parcels whose deeds included segregation covenants barring blacks from purchasing them.

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## Works

Williams designed more than 2,000 private homes, most of which were in the Hollywood Hills and the Mid-Wilshire portion of Los Angeles (including his own home in the Mid-City, Los Angeles, California, district). He also designed at least one home in the San Rafael district.

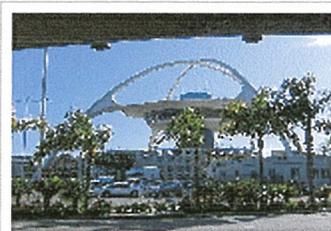
His most famous homes were for Hollywood celebrities, and he was well regarded for his mastery of various architectural styles. Modern interpretations of Tudor-revival, French Chateau, Regency, and Mediterranean architecture were all within his vernacular. One notable home, which he designed for Jay Paley in Holmby Hills,<sup>[4]</sup> and the current residence of Barron Hilton, was used as the 'Colby mansion' in exterior scenes for "The Colbys" television series. Williams' client list included Frank Sinatra (the notorious pushbutton house), Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Lon Chaney, Sr., Lucille Ball, Julie London, Tyrone Power (two houses), Barbara Stanwyck, Bert Lahr, Charles Cottrell, Will Hays, Zasu Pitts, and Danny Thomas. In contrast to these splendid mansions, Williams co-designed with Hilyard Robinson the first federally funded public housing projects of the post-war period (Langton Terrace, Washington, D.C.) and later the Pueblo del Rio project in southeast Los Angeles.



Lon Chaney High Sierra House designed by Williams - Inyo National Forest

Noted public buildings that Williams designed or contributed to (in Los Angeles, unless otherwise noted) include:

- Hollywood YMCA
- First Church of Christ, Scientist (Reno, Nevada)
- Los Angeles County Courthouse
- Los Angeles County Hall of Administration
- United Nations Building, Paris, France
- Roberts House Ranch, Malibu, CA (The remains of the burned down structures can be visited on the Sostice Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.)
- Saks Fifth Avenue Beverly Hills, Beverly Hills California



The Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport during daylight.

- Arrowhead Springs Hotel & Spa, San Bernardino, California
- Shrine Auditorium (Williams helped prepare construction drawings as a young architect.)
- Jet-Age Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) (In the 1960s as part of the Pereira & Luckman firm and with consulting engineers, Williams helped design this futuristic landmark.)
- The concrete paraboloid La Concha Motel in Las Vegas (disassembled and moved to the Neon Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada for use as the museum lobby 2006).
- Carver Park Homes Nevada <sup>[5]</sup>
- The La Concha Motel, Nevada <sup>[5]</sup>

Williams retired his practice in 1973. He died at age 85. He is interred in Inglewood Park Cemetery, Inglewood.

## Quotes

"If I allow the fact that I am a Negro to checkmate my will to do, now, I will inevitably form the habit of being defeated."

"Planning is thinking beforehand how something is to be made or done, and mixing imagination with the product – which in a broad sense makes all of us planners. The only difference is that some people get a license to get paid for thinking and the rest of us just contribute our good thoughts to our fellow man."

## Bibliography

- Paul R. Williams *Paul R. Williams: A Collection of House Plans* Hennessey & Ingalls, 2006 ISBN 0940512440, 9780940512443
- Karen E. Hudson, Paul R. Williams *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style* Rizzoli, 1993 Original from the University of Michigan Digitized Nov 12, 2007 240 pages
- Our Stories [videorecording]: the African American experience in northern Nevada. [Reno, NV]: Our Story, Inc.; SNCAT, c2008. Produced under a grant from the History Channel and a collaboration of Our Story, Inc. and Sierra Nevada Community Access Television (SNCAT); recorded at SNCAT. 3 videodiscs (ca. 240 min.) <http://www.sncat.org/archive.php>

## Notes

- [1] Hudson, Karen E., *Paul R. Williams Architect: A Legacy of Style*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, New York, 1993
- [2] Hudson, Karen E., *The Will and the Way: Paul R. Williams, Architect*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., NY 1994
- [3] Barbara Thornburg The man behind the look February 14, 2009 LA Times <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/valley/la-hm-shulaside14-2009feb14,0,5950054.story>
- [4] *Jay Paley Residence* (<http://www.paulwilliamsproject.org/gallery/1930s-houses/>), 2010.
- [5] Las Vegas Review Journal "Name the black architect who designed Carver Park's homes. Answer: Paul Williams who, White says, also designed the La Concha motel, homes in Berkeley Square -- a black housing area -- and other Las Vegas properties." Test your knowledge of black history in Southern Nevada Feb. 15, 2009 Las Vegas Review Journal <http://www.lvrj.com/living/39633212.html>

## References

- Hudson, Karen E. *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style*. New York: Rizzoli, 1993.(the author is Williams' granddaughter and curator of his estate)  
Architecture; Leavey NA737.W527H84 1993
- Hudson, Karen E., *The Will and the Way: Paul R. Williams, Architect*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., NY 1994
- Yenser, Thomas (editor), *Who's Who in Colored America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Persons of African Descent in America*, Who's Who in Colored America, Brooklyn, New York, 1930-1931-1932 (Third Edition)
- Sennot, Stephen (author), Samudio, Jeffrey B. (contributing editor), "Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture: Paul Revere Williams", Routledge, Taylor & Francis Publishers, January, 2004, 1,500 word biography of life and professional work

### Further reading

- *The Will and the Way: Paul R. Williams, Architect* By Karen E. Hudson, Paul R. Williams Edition: illustrated  
Published by Rizzoli, 1994 ISBN 0847817806, 9780847817801 64 pages

### External links

- Via Magazine profile: *Paul Williams, an Architect* ([http://www.viamagazine.com/top\\_stories/articles/architecture99.asp](http://www.viamagazine.com/top_stories/articles/architecture99.asp))
- SoCal History biography of Williams (<http://www.socalhistory.org/Biographies/pwilliams.htm>)
- USC Trojan biographical page ([http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/trojan\\_family/spring04/williams1.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/trojan_family/spring04/williams1.html))
- about African American Architects (<http://www.afamarchitects.com/Essays>)
- 1928 Paul Williams Renovation Photos ([http://jvca.com/architect/historic\\_renovation\\_paul\\_williams\\_estate\\_1928.htm](http://jvca.com/architect/historic_renovation_paul_williams_estate_1928.htm)), James V. Coane & Associates Architects
- Paul Revere Williams Project Website (<http://www.paulwilliamsproject.org/>)
- National Park Service brochure for Solstice Canyon (<http://www.nps.gov/samo/planyourvisit/upload/SolsticeCanyon.pdf>)
- Paul Williams (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=7956107>) at Find a Grave

## Article Sources and Contributors

**Paul Williams (architect)** Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=413583774> Contributors: 3.14159265, 777era, Alanachn, Angelo De La Paz, Badgermet, Ham001, Betacoveraad, Itell, Captrash, Chestapeck, Ch1k0fMidnight, Clrinsky, Clarisophie, Charre, Civitex, Dana boomer, Dasselbe, Dgmons, Docs, DukeOfDechesseStreet, Durgames2010, ElJHyatt, Eltrnas, Elmargis, Elpasa2, FndR, Opaer, Gansingen, Halodada11200, Hamster Sandwich, Hn12, Hago999, Igho, J.Lefancy, JJKKlata, JaxxleAsteria, Jbsamadio, Jshetelade, JustAGal, Katerbeams, Kamoko, Lemoyne, Ling-Nut, Lockley, Lock256x1, Lupo, Masterknight64, Namella J Kim, Oeymeron83, Philthecow, Pizzano, Porche White, Postiff, Quarzencraz, Raquache, Rick Block, Rjyano, Rozendornaf, SamMichaels, Slightlylaxk, Splendorofhairroots, Stoderby, Superima, TheDI, User2004, Whydack, Will Beback, 67 anonymous edit

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