

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: OCTOBER 7, 2002**

**FROM: CITY MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: NOMINATION OF ST. LUKE MEDICAL CENTER, 2632 EAST WASHINGTON BOULEVARD, FOR DESIGNATION AS A LANDMARK**

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## **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Acknowledge that the application for designation of St. Luke Medical Center, 2632 East Washington Boulevard, as a landmark is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Class 31);
2. Find that the original hospital block, convent and chapel of St. Luke Medical Center meet criteria A, D, E, and F for landmark designation in §2.75.130 of the Pasadena Municipal Code;
3. Find that the 1945 annex is of lesser importance than the grouping of the hospital block, convent, and chapel because its smaller scale, its subordinate location on a secondary elevation, and its simpler architectural detailing;
4. Omit the 1945 annex from the landmark designation;
5. Approve the attached resolution designating the original hospital block, convent and chapel of St. Luke Medical Center as a landmark (ATTACHMENT 1);
6. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached declaration of designation (ATTACHMENT 2); and
7. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council find that the original hospital block, convent, chapel, and rear annex of St. Luke Medical Center meet the criteria for designation as a landmark and approve the designation of this entire grouping of buildings—including the annex. This differs from the staff recommendation to designate only the original hospital block, convent and chapel as a landmark and to exclude the annex because of its location, its lack of stature and interest, and its potential to inhibit redevelopment alternatives.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### Nomination:

On June 25, 2002, staff received an application from Pasadena Heritage to designate the hospital block, annex, chapel and convent at St. Luke Medical Center as a landmark.

### Notification to Property Owner:

Staff sent notification of the decision by the Cultural Heritage Commission to forward the designation nomination to the City Council to Tenet Health System, Inc., the current owner of record, on August 26, 2002. Staff will continue to advise Tenet of the status of the designation review. Tenet has listed the St. Luke site for sale following the closure of the hospital in January 2001.

### Review by the Cultural Heritage Commission:

On August 19, 2002, following notification of surrounding property owners, the Cultural Heritage Commission held a public hearing to consider the request and recommended approval to the City Council. At the time of the public hearing before the Cultural Heritage Commission, the architect of record could not be confirmed for the latter additions to St. Luke Hospital, the annex and convent and chapel respectively. The Commission recommended that all four structures presented in the designation application by Pasadena Heritage be considered for landmark status. It also asked the staff to conduct additional research on the architect of the annex and report its findings at a later date. Subsequent research by staff confirmed that Gene Verge, Sr., is the architect of both the annex and chapel and convent additions.

### Description and Analysis:

The original 1933 hospital block at St. Luke Medical Center was designed in the Zigzag Moderne (Art Deco) style with Spanish Colonial Revival elements. The annex was completed in 1945, and is located directly south of the hospital block. The convent and chapel addition, built in 1947, is located immediately east of the hospital block. The two latter additions exhibit a simpler, "streamlined" design that was becoming increasingly popular during the 1940's. All four structures are designed in the same architectural style, and demonstrate the early and late phases of the Moderne Style.

The overall design of all four structures is characterized by building façades arranged in a dynamic manner of projecting and receding planes, and pilasters and buttresses defined by vertical lines and reveals emphasizing overall height and mass. The most prominent feature of the hospital complex is the projecting central pavilion of the original hospital block, which is accentuated by the stepped form of a domed tower, seven-stories in height. Other prominent design features include the bas-relief panels depicting the life of Christ on the hospital block and original stained glass windows in the chapel.

More information on St. Luke Medical Center and its architectural significance is presented; the statement of significance is attached (ATTACHMENT 3).

### Annex:

The annex is located directly south of the hospital block and was built in 1945. It is two-stories and height and has a flat roof to complement the design of the original hospital. The floor plan of the steel reinforced-concrete building resembles an “X”, permitting each wing to be serviced a central nursing station. The façade is arranged in a simple design with linear incising and grooves stressing the horizontality of the design. Recessed windows and the simplicity of design help make this addition highly compatible with the original hospital building.

During its review of the nomination, the Cultural Heritage Commission supported including the annex in the landmark designation. It decided that the annex is closely related by design and by date to the hospital, chapel, and convent, and that the annex retains its original character and integrity.

The Commission found that the hospital block, annex, chapel and convent at St. Luke Medical Center is a significant historic resource for four reasons:

- Its character, interest, and value as part of the heritage of the City because it demonstrates the stylistic development of the Moderne Style architecture in Pasadena (Criterion A, §2.75.130);
- Its exemplification of the Moderne Style of architecture (Criterion D, §2.75.130);
- Its exemplification of the best remaining architectural example in the neighborhood (Criterion E, §2.75.130);
- Its identification as the work of a prominent regional architect, Gene Verge, Sr., who designed several other major public and private buildings in Southern California (Criterion F, §2.75.130).

Staff recommends that the annex be excluded from inclusion in the historic landmark designation for three reasons:

1. It is in an obscure location—on a secondary elevation—behind the hospital block and obstetrics/surgery wing;
2. It is an accessory structure to the hospital block, lacking the monumental stature and interest of the hospital block, convent and chapel, and it was constructed after the main block and not part of the original plan;
3. It extends into an area where more open space may be needed for reuse of the St. Luke site. Retention of the annex may unnecessarily limit use of the site and pose a disincentive to preserving the most visible and prominent architectural components of the medical center--the hospital block, chapel and convent. The addition extends south from the hospital block into the center of the 12-acre parcel. Restoration and adaptive reuse of the hospital block, convent and chapel may be financially viable if the entire project site offers greater flexibility in site planning of future building.

Landmark designation:

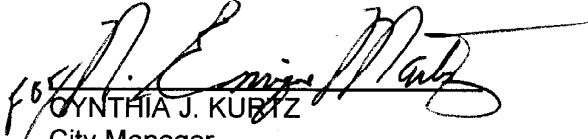
To date, Pasadena has designated 50 historic landmarks and treasures. The last designation was in 2001. If a property is designated as a landmark, exterior alterations or proposals for demolition are reviewed by staff or the Commission reviews exterior alterations or proposals for demolition for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Proposals that do not meet these Standards can be delayed for a maximum of 425 days while preservation efforts are considered. Proposals for alterations that meet the Standards are approved.

The designation has no legal effect on zoning, land use, or the sale of the property. The City applies the State Historical Building Code to work affecting designated landmarks. After the City Council approves the ordinance implementing the Mills Act program, owners of designated landmarks may apply to the City for a Mills Act contract.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

A decision on the designation will have a negligible effect on revenues to the City. The General Fee Schedule exempts designated landmarks from fees for Certificates of Appropriateness (permits) from the Cultural Heritage Commission (except for applications to demolish a building). The City does not, however, waive any other fees (e.g., plan check, construction tax) for projects affecting designated landmarks. Some staff time may be needed if there is a proposal to expand or alter the designated structures in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Prepared by:

  
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Associate Planner

Approved by:

  
Richard Bruckner, Director  
Planning & Development Department

- Attachments:
1. Resolution
  2. Declaration of Designation
  3. Statement of Significance
  4. Site Plan