

Agenda Report

TO: City Council

DATE: June 16, 2003

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed Zone Change for Properties Roughly Bounded by E. Washington Blvd., E. Mountain St., N. El Molino Ave., and N. Lake Ave., to Establish Washington Square Landmark District Overlay Zone (LD-4)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that, following a public hearing, the City Council:

1. Find that the application for a zone change is categorically exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act, (Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment).
2. Find that the proposed zone change is consistent with the General Plan and the purposes of the zoning ordinance.
3. Acknowledge the decision of the Historic Preservation Commission on March 3, 2003 that the proposed Washington Square Landmark District (Attachment 1) meets the criteria for designation as a landmark district, (§17.52.40 P.M.C).
4. Acknowledge that the petition with signatures in support of the landmark overlay district petition exceeds the 51 percent requirement in P.M.C. §17.52.050.
5. Based on these findings, approve the application for a zone change to add the LD (Landmark District) overlay district to the existing RS-6 (Single-family Residential), RM-16 and RM-32 (Multi-family Residential) and OS (Open Space), with the understanding that the reviews of alterations, demolitions, and new construction in the OS zone (Washington Park, a city-owned facility) shall be advisory to the City Council.
6. Modify the north-eastern boundary of the landmark district to remove the three northernmost parcels on the west side of N. Hudson Avenue because two of the three properties are non-contributing and out of scale with the historic character of

the landmark district and because inclusion of these properties does not appear to comply with the *National Park Service* standards for evaluating the boundaries of historic districts.

7. Approve a resolution (Attachment 3) to adopt the supplemental chapter for the Washington Square Landmark District in the City's *Design Guidelines for Historic Districts*. (Attachment 2).
8. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance amending the official zoning map of the City of Pasadena established by Section 17.08.040 of the Pasadena Municipal Code by adding the Washington Square Landmark District Overlay (LD-4).

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ADVISORY BODIES:

At a public meeting on March 3, 2003, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that the proposed district meets the criteria in §17.52.040 P.M.C. for establishment of a landmark district. In addition, at the request of a property owner, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended approval of the application as submitted; the staff had recommended excluding three properties on the west side of N. Hudson Avenue.

Following a public hearing on April 23, 2003, the Planning Commission found that the proposed zone change to create a landmark district is consistent with the General Plan and the purposes of the zoning ordinance and voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve the establishment of the Washington Square Landmark District and adopt the supplemental chapter (conservation plan). All of the public comments at the hearing were in favor of the landmark district. The Planning Commission agreed with the Historic Preservation Commission and also recommended approval of the application as submitted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This application for a zone change is to establish a Landmark District for 254 properties in north-central Pasadena. The district has an excellent collection of 1920's architectural styles, with 79% of the properties documented as contributing the area's architectural and historic integrity. Over 70% of the property owners have signed a petition in support of the district and a supplemental chapter for Washington Square in the "Design Guidelines for Historic District."

BACKGROUND:

Property owners in the district initiated the proposal to create a landmark district. If approved, this neighborhood will be the City's fourth landmark district, following Bungalow Heaven in 1989, Garfield Heights in 1999 and Banbury Oaks in 2002. The landmark district designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood through design review. The code requires design review for major

exterior alterations visible from the street. Demolitions, relocations and new construction are also reviewed in the districts.

Construction Dates: The houses in the district were built from 1885 to 1948, with the majority of the houses built between 1906 and 1937. The oldest house in Washington Square Landmark District (circa 1885) predates both the subdivision of the neighborhood and its 1904 annexation to Pasadena.

Architectural Styles/Building Types: The most prevalent architectural styles in the district are Craftsman, American Colonial Revival, English Tudor Revival and English Cottage Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival. The building types that define the area are single-family houses (with a few duplexes). The majority of the buildings are bungalows: one to 1 ½ story, with 5 to 6 rooms.

Boundaries: The district is generally bounded by E. Washington Boulevard on the north, Mountain Street on the south, N. El Molino Avenue on the west, and N. Hudson Avenue on the east (see Attachment 1). There are a total of 254 properties, of which 201 (79%) are contributing. Note that the proposed boundaries have changed slightly during the designation process. In November, the staff, using the standards of the National Park Service (Attachment 4), analyzed the boundaries proposed in the application by the residents of the Washington Square neighborhood.

After surveying the area, staff recommended a minor adjustment to the boundary at the northern end of N. Hudson Avenue, where there are two adjacent apartment buildings which bear no relationship to the historic character and scale of the Washington Square district and—to the north of these buildings—one Craftsman-style house. To maximize the number of contiguous contributing buildings and to maintain the continuity of the district, staff recommended excluding these three parcels in the designation to omit the apartment buildings.

The historic preservation ordinance (§17.52.040) specifies: “When considering applications to designate a landmark district, the commission shall apply the above criteria according to applicable National Register of Historic Places Bulletins for evaluating historic properties.” This evaluation, in the National Park Service’s National Register Bulletin #12 and #21 (Attachment 4) specifies: “Areas that have lost integrity because of changes in cultural features or setting should be excluded when they are at the periphery of the eligible resources.” The apartment buildings are at the periphery of the district, and they represent a distinct change in “cultural features” and “setting” from the district.

In their reviews of the application, both the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission disagreed with this recommendation and recommended inclusion of these three parcels in their recommendations for designation.

Eligibility for Landmark District: This neighborhood has one of the best remaining groupings of 1920’s-era architecture in Pasadena. With 79% of the properties

documented as contributing¹, the district has a high level of architectural and historic integrity. This high percentage of contributing properties surpasses the 60% threshold in the new preservation ordinance, and the variety and quality of architecture meets the requirement for a grouping of properties “of citywide importance and with a historic context” in an intensive-level historic resources survey.

District Name: The neighborhood closely identifies with Washington Park. The park played an important part in the development and daily life of the area, hence the name “Washington Square.” Washington Park, at the southeast corner of East Washington Boulevard and North El Molino Avenue, was laid out during the 1920's. Landscape architects Theodore Payne and Ralph Cornell designed the park with many Craftsman-style features.

Guidelines: The *Design Guidelines for Historic Districts*, adopted by the City Council on September 16, 2002, apply to reviews of all projects in landmark districts. These guidelines, developed with the participation of local residents, are an elaboration of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, and they have examples and illustrations targeting local conditions. These guidelines also have a freestanding chapter for each landmark district. These chapters are equivalent to the conservation plans of the three existing landmark districts. Under the new ordinance, each district develops a new chapter for its area, and this chapter, once approved, is then added to the *Design Guidelines for Historic Districts*. The chapter for Washington Square is a reformatted version of the draft conservation plan which accompanied the petition circulated among property owners. (See Attachment 2.)

GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING CONSISTENCY:

The area is largely low-density residential except for 3 parcels of medium-density residential and 7 parcels in the North Lake Specific Plan area; all ten of which are in northeast corner of the district. The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and will advance the objectives of the Land Use Element. For example, it will lead to achievement of Objective 6, which “promotes preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings and revitalization of traditional neighborhoods.”

Most of the area is zoned RS-6 (single-family) except for 6 parcels in the northwest corner that are RM-16 or RM-32 (multi-family) and Washington Park (Open Space). The LD-4 zone is proposed as an overlay over the current zoning. The application is consistent with the purposes of the zoning ordinance, which includes several residential preservation goals.

¹ Contributing resource---a building, site, structure, or object adding to the historic significance of a property. [*National Register Bulletin, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (National Park Service, 1990; 2002).*]

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS:

Property owners held an initial community meeting on the proposal in January 2001. Many residents were involved in community outreach and neighborhood meetings. City staff notified all property owners, both within the district itself and within 300 feet around the district and invited them to a neighborhood workshop at the New Apostolic Church, 814 E. Claremont Avenue on November 19, 2002. Staff also posted notices in the neighborhood. About 40 residents attended the workshop. The March 3, 2003 Historic Preservation Commission meeting was also publicly noticed as a neighborhood workshop (required in §17.52.070 P.M.C.). Additionally, notices of the Planning Commission meeting on April 23, 2003 were mailed and posted.

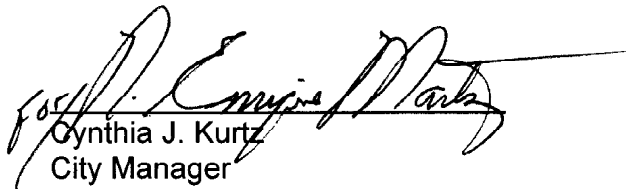
ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This zone change application is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act, (Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment).

FISCAL IMPACT:

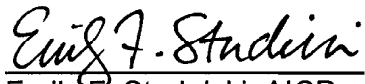
The City's General Fee Schedule exempts fees for design review in landmark districts. Fees will continue to be collected for all other entitlements, permits, and taxes. Based on the number of applications for Garfield Heights (a similarly sized district), only two or three applications per year are likely to be submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission for design review; the staff is responsible for conducting the remainder of the reviews. The overall cost of this service to the City should be minimal. Over the long term, as the City designates more landmark districts and regulates design review in National Register districts, the costs of providing this service free of charge are likely to become more substantial. Property owners in a landmark district may also apply to the City for a Mills Act contract. In that event, the City absorbs a minor loss of revenue from property taxes over a period of ten years or longer .

Respectfully submitted,



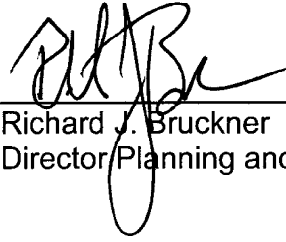
Cynthia J. Kurtz
City Manager

Prepared by:



Emily F. Stadnicki, AICP
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Approved by:



Richard J. Bruckner
Director/Planning and Development

Attachments:

1. Map of Proposed Washington Square Landmark District
2. Draft Chapter Amendment to the *Design Guidelines for Historic Districts*
3. Resolution of Adoption of the Washington Square Chapter Amendment
4. National Park Service's *Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*