

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2008**

**FROM: CITY MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF 467 E. WASHINGTON BLVD. AS A  
LANDMARK**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Acknowledge that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment (CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, §15308);
2. Receive the recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission that the property at 467 E. Washington Blvd. qualifies under Criterion C for designation as a landmark (P.M.C. §17.62.40 C) because the house embodies the distinctive characteristics of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century house in a vernacular Queen Anne style from the settlement period of the City's history;
3. Acknowledge that pursuant to Government Code §37361 the owner of the property (New Macedonia Baptist Church) has submitted a letter to the City Council asserting that landmark designation would create a substantial hardship on the religious congregation and deprive it of economic return on its property, the reasonable use of its property, or the appropriate use of its property in the furtherance of its religious mission (ATTACHMENT D); and
4. As required by Government Code §37361, find that designation would create a substantial hardship on the owner, and thereby not designate the property at 467 E. Washington Blvd. as a landmark.

## **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

On November 5, 2007, at a noticed public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the designation of 467 E. Washington Blvd. as a landmark and that the river-rock embankment wall along the sidewalk be included as a contributing feature to the designation. The Commission also acknowledged in its recommendation that the historic setting of the house has changed and it may be relocated on site or off site.

## **BACKGROUND**

The New Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church has owned the adjacent church (at 455 E. Washington Blvd.) for over 15 years. It recently acquired the property at 467 E. Washington Blvd. from a member of the church. In October 2006, the church applied for a conditional use permit to enlarge its facilities and to remove this house as part of its expansion. Subsequently, in July 2007, a nearby resident submitted an application (Attachment A) for landmark designation of the house at 467 E. Washington Blvd., which is currently vacant and boarded. Staff evaluated the property according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C., found that the house qualifies for landmark designation, and informed the applicant and the church on July 31, 2007.

On November 5, 2007, at a public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the application. At that time, the former owner opposed the designation, in part because of its possible impact on the proposed expansion of the church. After receiving comments from the public, both in favor and in opposition, the Commission recommended approval of the designation.

Originally the application for the conditional use permit specified removal of the house at 467 E. Washington Blvd. through demolition or relocation to allow for more on-site parking. After the Historic Preservation Commission recommended approval of the designation, the church proposed a revised its expansion plans to keep the house on site and to reduce the number of on-site parking spaces (by four or five spaces) through a variance for historic resources (§17.61.080 H P.M.C.). The staff is still evaluating this new plan, and a hearing on the applications for a conditional use permit and variance is expected in late February or March.

## **DESCRIPTION**

Built in 1887, the 1,530 square-foot house, is one-and-one-half stories tall and L-shaped in plan. It has a recessed front porch under the southwest portion of the main roof. It has a large front setback of over 80 feet, which is typical for houses in the original Painter and Ball subdivision (1881) in much of north Pasadena and Altadena.

## **ANALYSIS**

Because of its early construction in an area that was unincorporated at the time, there are no building permits on record. William G. Strang, a rancher and real estate developer, is the first documented owner of the house (1900 City Directory). A later newspaper article states that he moved here from Indiana in 1887, the same year the house was built; conceivably, therefore, Strang may have been the original owner of the house.

The recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission is based on a finding that the property at 467 E. Washington is eligible for designation under Criterion C, (§17.62.040 PMC):

(The property) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a historic resource property type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or is an exceptional representation of the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is significant to the city, or that possesses high artistic values that are significant to the city.

Under this criterion, the house at 467 E. Washington is significant as a vernacular example of the Queen Anne style (see photos in Attachment C) from the settlement period of the city. The house has many of the typical features of the Queen Anne Style, including the asymmetrical plan, cross-gabled roof, bay windows, variegated wood siding, eave brackets, carved porch posts, and scalloped aprons below the windows. The most notable change to the house is the loss in the 1920s of the original wrap-around front porch (Attachment D).

The house at 467 E. Washington, despite the loss of most of its original porch, is among the best examples of vernacular Queen Anne houses in the City. Most of the surviving vernacular-style houses from the earliest settlement period of the City (the 1880s) have been substantially altered, and the City has only a small number of these houses that retain a sufficiently high level of integrity for a historic designation.

Under certain conditions, state law (Government Code §37361) restricts landmark designations of non-commercial properties owned by a religious organization. The organization must file an objection to the designation and affirm that the regulatory authority of a landmark designation would create a "substantial hardship" and deprive it of "economic return on its property, the reasonable use of its property, or the appropriate use of its property in the furtherance of its religious mission." The claim of "substantial hardship" must

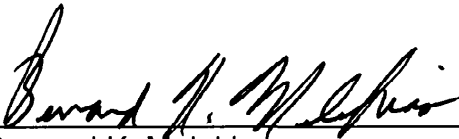
also be presented at a public hearing. There is, however, a prohibition in the state law against an override or review of the claim of hardship.

In this instance, the owner of the property (New Macedonia Baptist Church) has met the specifications in state law for restricting landmark designation of the property at 467 E. Washington Blvd. The congregation has submitted a letter to the City Council asserting that landmark designation would create a substantial hardship on the owner. The letter, which is available for public review, is part of the record of this application before the City Council, and the Council may not override the objection of the church.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

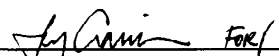
There is no fiscal impact from the recommended denial of the designation.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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City Manager

Prepared by:

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- ATTACHMENT A: Application
- ATTACHMENT B: Location Map
- ATTACHMENT C: Photographs of 467 E. Washington Blvd.
- ATTACHMENT D: Letter of Objection and Substantial Hardship from New Macedonia Baptist Church