

# Agenda Report

October 22, 2012

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department

**SUBJECT: COMMENT TO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER ON THE NOMINATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SANITARIUM HISTORIC DISTRICT AND THE MERWIN HOUSE FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the transmittal of the attached letter (Attachment B) from the Mayor to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in support of the nominations of the Southern California Sanitarium Historic District and the Merwin House for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On Monday, October 15, 2012, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve staff's recommendation.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The State Historic Preservation Officer has sent notification that the State Historical Resources Commission will review the nominations of the Southern California Sanitarium Historic District and the Merwin House at its November 9, 2012 meeting in San Diego and has requested comments from the City's Chief Elected Official on the nominations.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City recently received notification from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) about the review of the nominations of the Southern California Sanitarium Historic District and the Merwin House—both of which were submitted by the respective property owners—by the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC). In accordance with the requirements of the National Park Service, the SHPO routinely notifies local officials and property owners about nominations to the National Register.

The purpose of the notification is to allow time for public comment before the SHRC holds a public hearing on the nomination and the SHPO forwards a recommendation to the National Park Service.

SHPO also notifies historic preservation commissions in local jurisdictions—such as Pasadena—which participate in the Certified Local Government program. Letters from the SHPO (dated May 6 and 7, 2012) ask the City to provide comments on the nominations through the City's Chief Elected Official and City Council no later than 15 days before the meeting of the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) where the nominations will be considered (scheduled for November 9, 2012 at Balboa Park Club Ballroom, San Diego).

The Southern California Sanitarium Historic District encompasses the bulk of the Las Encinas Hospital property that has frontage along East Del Mar Boulevard and El Nido Avenue. The boundaries include three separate Assessor's parcels with addresses of 2810, 2900 & 2954 E. Del Mar Boulevard. A parcel owned by Las Encinas Hospital at 300 S. San Gabriel Avenue is not included in the nomination because it has residential buildings that are not associated with the historic context of the hospital. The Merwin House is at 267 W. State Street and is already designated by the City as a structure designed by Greene & Greene.

### **Results of National Register Listing**

The City Council approved an Amended Master Development Plan for Las Encinas Hospital in September 2009, which also included certification of an Environmental Impact Report. This approval recognized that the campus is eligible for listing in the National Register as a historic district and the conditions and mitigation measures that were adopted for the master plan will ensure that the new construction projects proposed on the campus will not adversely impact the historic district. A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for projects that have been approved through a Master Plan or Environmental Impact Report; however, the Las Encinas Hospital Master Plan requires design review of all phases of construction that were approved in the master plan. When the historic district is listed by the Keeper of the Register, an application for Certificate of Appropriateness would only be required for projects not identified in the approved master plan and that are visible from a public street.

The regulations within Chapter 17.62 (Historic Preservation) of the Zoning Code already apply to the Merwin House because it has already been designated by the City Council as a Greene & Greene property. As such, when this property is listed by the Keeper of the Register, there will be no change in the procedures for review of proposed exterior and interior alterations to the building or site.

## Comments on the Nominations

Staff has reviewed the nomination forms and recommends that the following comments be forwarded to the SHPO:

1. The description of the Merwin House should include a discussion of the site design and should indicate any specific site features are significant and contributing to the nomination.

*The Merwin House property has site features that may be historic and may contribute to the historic designation of the property. The nomination includes a site plan prepared by Greene & Greene and a photograph showing a rock retaining wall along the southern property line. These site features should be discussed in the nomination form to ensure future stewardship of those resources that are significant.*

2. The Southern California Sanitarium Historic District nomination should include a map that numbers each building and the list of contributing and non-contributing buildings should be numbered to correspond to the map.

*The nomination form lists each building in the district by name and references photographs that were not provided to the City for this review. Those that are unfamiliar with the site and the names of the buildings may find it difficult to identify buildings in the future. To ensure a clear understanding of the location of each of the buildings listed in the nomination, a map that includes a number for each building should be included and the list of buildings in the nomination form should be numbered to correspond to the map.*

3. Consider removing the parcel with address of 2954 E. Del Mar Boulevard from the boundaries of the historic district because it does not include any contributing features.

*The parcel is at the eastern end of the site along El Nido Avenue and includes two multi-unit residential buildings constructed circa 1979, along with associated circulation and parking. These buildings are not contributing to the district and, therefore, should not be included in the boundaries.*

The comments above are intended to enhance the future management of the district and property in the future. Because the City will be responsible for administering the review of any changes that may be proposed, it is important that consideration be given to enhancing the nomination form to address these comments. With these modifications being made, City staff will be able to more easily identify buildings and contributing features of each property and advise the property owners of proper review procedures.

These comments have been included in the draft letter in Attachment B.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

Advisory recommendations on National Register nominations are exempt from environmental review. The listing of properties and districts in the National Register is categorically exempt from CEQA under class 8, actions by regulatory agencies for the protection of the environment.

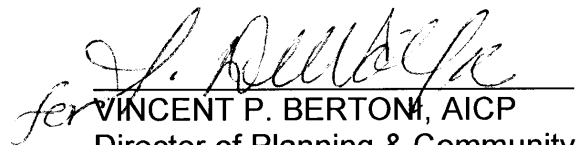
**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The General Plan – Objective 6: Promote preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings and revitalization of traditional neighborhoods and commercial areas. In total, this action will support preservation of three historic districts and ten individual properties.

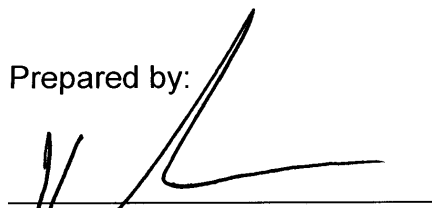
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Designation of these properties does not affect revenues to the City. In some instances, though, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The Merwin House is already eligible to apply for Historic Property Contract because it is already designated by the City as a Greene & Greene property. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. SHPO Requests for Comments
- B. Draft Comment Letter
- C. National Register Nomination Forms