

# Agenda Report

February 1, 2016

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department  
**SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF A ZONE CHANGE TO DESIGNATE A LANDMARK DISTRICT OVERLAY FOR THE GREEN STREET VILLAGE LANDMARK DISTRICT (LD-23)**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Find that the application for a zone change to create a landmark district is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act, (Section 15308: Class 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment);
2. Find the proposed Green Street Village Landmark District meets the criteria for designation as a Landmark District as specified in §17.62.040.F of the Pasadena Municipal Code;
3. Find that the proposed zoning map amendment is consistent with the General Plan;
4. Find that the proposed zoning map amendment would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare of the City; and
5. Approve the landmark district designation and the zoning map amendment for the Green Street Village Landmark District, LD-23; and
6. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance within 60 days amending the official zoning map of the City of Pasadena established by §17.20.020 of the Pasadena Municipal Code to designate the landmark district with the LD-23 Overlay Zone.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On October 20, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that the proposed Green Street Village Landmark District meets the criteria for designation in §17.62.040.F of the Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) and unanimously recommended approval of the designation.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

At a public hearing on December 9, 2015, the Planning Commission found that the proposed landmark district meets the criteria for designation in §17.62.040.F of the Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) and that the proposed zoning map amendment to create a landmark district is consistent with the General Plan and would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare of the City and voted 7-1 to recommend that the City Council approve designation of the Green Street Village Landmark District.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Green Street Village Landmark District meets the criteria set forth in PMC §17.62.040.F.1 for designation as a landmark district. In addition, a majority of the property owners (57%) have indicated support in writing for the designation.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Since 1989, the City has formally designated 22 landmark districts. On August 28, 2015, Carolyn Gray, on behalf of supporting property owners in the proposed landmark district, submitted an application for designation of the Green Street Village Landmark District. The staff evaluated the district according to the landmark criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the district qualifies for landmark district designation.

### **Description of the Proposed Landmark District**

Boundaries: The proposed boundaries of the district include address numbers 951 through 1035 East Green Street (see Attachment A). Within these boundaries there are seven properties. Further analysis, justification, and recommendations regarding these boundaries are provided below. It should be noted that staff identified a larger area as being eligible to be included in the district; however, the applicant was not able to obtain sufficient property owner support for the larger boundaries.

Construction Dates: Three of the buildings were built in the 1920s, two were built in the 1930s one was built in the 1940s and one was built in the 1950s. A large, compatible addition to the 1940's-era building at 960 E. Green Street was constructed in the early 1960's. See Attachment B for construction dates of each specific property in the district.

Architects and Builders: Architects with designs in the district include Joseph F. Rhodes, Les G. Scherer, William D. Haldredge, Frederick C. Marsh, B.B. Homer, Louis du Puget Millar and Edward A. Hayes.

Zoning: All properties within the proposed district are zoned CD-5. The CD-5 district is a commercial/mixed-use zoning designation that refers to the Lake Avenue Subdistrict of the Central District Specific Plan.

General Plan: The General Plan Designation of all properties within the proposed landmark district is Medium Mixed Use.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The proposed landmark district is a grouping of commercial and mixed-use buildings built between 1927 and 1961 which represent eastward expansion from Old Pasadena of commercial uses and architectural styles from and compatible with the Period Revival era.

### **Criteria for Designation**

The Green Street Village Landmark District meets the criteria for designation in §17.62.040.F.1, PMC, as follows:

- a. Within its boundaries, a minimum of 60 percent of the properties qualify as contributing;

*All of the commercial buildings in the district were built between 1927 and 1961, the period of significance, and remain largely intact on their street-facing elevations.*

*Generally, buildings that retain most of their original features are contributing to a landmark district. Minor alterations, which may be reversed, typically do not render a building noncontributing. Buildings with two or more substantial alterations including openings with altered dimensions, new storefronts, exterior cladding/coating in a different material or finish, or modified roof form or material are typically noncontributing. Buildings built outside of the period of significance or that do not represent the general architectural character or historic context of the district are also noncontributing. Although built within the period of significance, the building at 1021 E. Green Street does not represent the general architectural character of the district and is, therefore, non-contributing to the district. As such, six of the seven properties within the district boundary are contributing, or 86%. This percentage meets the minimum required ratio of 60% contributing.*

- b. The grouping represents a significant and distinguishable entity of Citywide importance and one or more of a defined historic, cultural, development and/or architectural context(s) (e.g., the 1993 Citywide historic context, a historic context prepared in an intensive-level survey or a historic context prepared specifically for the nominated landmark district).

*The district is significant because it represents a collection of commercial buildings that represent the expansion of commercial buildings and activity eastward from Old Pasadena beginning in the 1920s.*

*A comprehensive study of the commercial and industrial development of Pasadena has not been conducted; therefore, there is no complete historic context with which to evaluate the historic significance of the proposed district. What is clear upon review of existing documentation is that the primary commercial center of Pasadena was in the area now known as Old Pasadena and that as residential development expanded further from this primary center, commercial and industrial expansion followed suit along major corridors. The City's 1993 historic context report, Architectural/Historical Development of the City of Pasadena, states:*

*By the 1920s most streets were seen primarily as arteries for motor vehicles...Commercial zones began to string out along major commercial routes rather than clustering around transportation nodes. From this the automobile-oriented commercial strip emerged.*

*Based on a review of Sanborn Maps (Attachment D), it appears that this was generally the case on East Green Street. The 1931 map appears to indicate initial commercial expansion into this area with scattered houses and vacant lots on the majority of the street.*

*Vernacular masonry buildings were a common type of commercial architecture from this period, although Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco influences were also prevalent. While earlier commercial buildings exhibited the exuberant architectural styles of the Victorian era, the vernacular masonry commercial & mixed-use buildings of the 1920's were more subdued and generally had flat roofs, large glazed storefronts with recessed entries and solid bulkheads on the ground floor. Mixed-use buildings generally had evenly spaced rectangular window openings on the upper floor(s). The buildings along this portion of Green Street reflect this more subdued character, while also incorporating influences of the Period Revival era, which, for residential development, generally occurred between 1918 and 1942 and reflected interest in revivals of American and regional European architectural styles..*

### **Support from Property Owners:**

The application includes a petition indicating that owners of 57% (4 out of 7) of the properties within the district boundary signified their support for landmark district designation in writing, which exceeds the minimum 51% requirement. Since the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on October 20, 2015, staff has not received any formal opposition to this landmark district. One property owner has verbally indicated concern about the district designation impacting possible future development plans, but has not submitted formal written opposition to the designation.

## **RESULTS OF DESIGNATION:**

Typically, landmark district designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood by requiring submittal of an application for Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes that are visible from the street. This particular district differs; however, from most other landmark districts in the City in that it is located within the boundaries of the Central District Specific Plan, which requires design review for all exterior alterations to buildings, regardless of whether or not they are historic. Exterior changes, including demolitions, relocations and new construction, proposed to affect designated or eligible historic resources in the Central District must be found to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in addition to the design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan. Reviews of alterations and demolitions of non-contributing structures are required, as well as of contributing structures; however, according to the guidelines, more changes are permitted on non-contributing structures because they have few, if any, features that need to be preserved.

Within the proposed district boundary, there are three properties that have been previously identified as being eligible for individual historic designation: 975, 1030 and 1035 East Green Street. For these properties, the review process for exterior modifications would not change. The remaining properties were not previously identified as being eligible for individual historic designation (three—951, 960 and 985 East Green Street—were assigned National Register of Historic Places status codes of 6L, which denotes ineligibility for historic designation, but that they should have "special consideration in the local planning process") and, therefore, the review process for exterior changes to these buildings would change slightly if the landmark district is approved in that an additional finding of consistency with the Secretary's Standards would now be required for exterior changes.

Guidelines: The design guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings apply to reviews of all projects affecting designated or eligible historic structures in the Central District.

The landmark district designation also allows owners of properties to apply for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) which allows a reduction of property tax in exchange for the continued preservation of the property. Typical Mills Act improvements have included (but are not limited to), repair and replacement of original architectural features, new roofing and gutters, electrical and plumbing upgrades, termite repair, water damage, and painting.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

Class 8 exempts from environmental review actions taken by regulatory agencies to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.

The establishment of a landmark district will include procedures by which new structures, or changes to existing structures that contribute to the historic character, or environment, of the district, are reviewed for consistency with the character of the district.

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The General Plan Land Use Element – Guiding Principle 2: “Pasadena’s historic resources will be preserved. Citywide, new development will be in harmony with and enhance Pasadena’s unique character and sense of place. New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will be compatible with, and differentiated from, the existing resource;” and Goal 8: “Preservation and enhancement of Pasadena’s cultural and historic buildings, landscapes, streets and districts as valued assets and important representations of its past and a source of community, identity, and social, ecological, and economic vitality.”

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

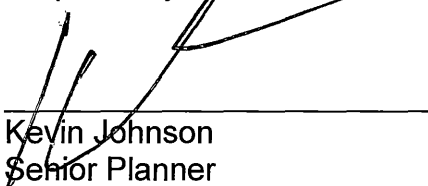
In some instances, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted the local Mills Act ordinance. As a result of this program, the reduced property tax amount which comes out of the City's local share amount from the State, is a small percentage of the City's overall property tax revenue.

Respectfully submitted,




VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP  
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Development Department

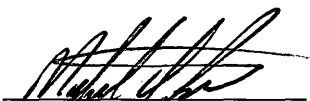
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Attachments (2):

Attachment A – Map of Proposed Landmark District  
Attachment B – Inventory of Properties