

Agenda Report

April 24, 2017

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 THORNDIKE-MADRILLO LANDMARK DISTRICT (LD-24)

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 that the proposed Thorndike-Madrillo 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 Thorndike-Madrillo Landmark District, LD-24; 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-24 Overlay Zone.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On November 1, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that the proposed Thorndike-Madrillo 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 February 22, 2017, the Planning Commission acknowledged the determination of the Historic Preservation Commission that the proposed landmark district meets the criteria for designation in §17.62.040.F of the Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC), confirmed that the designation has written support from at least 51% of the owners of individual parcels in the district, found that the proposed zoning map amendment to create a landmark district is consistent with the General Plan and voted 6-1 to recommend that the City Council approve designation of the Thorndike-Madrillo Landmark District. In response to comments from a property owner on Madrillo Court indicating that the property owners on that street are not in favor of the landmark district designation, the Commission also requested that staff provide the City Council with definitive data regarding the eligibility of the Thorndike Road portion of the district only in the event that the Council wishes to designate only that portion of the district at this time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Thorndike-Madrillo 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 (62%) have indicated support in writing for the designation.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1989 the City has formally designated 23 landmark districts. On August 26, 2016, Abraham Chorbajian, on behalf of supporting property owners in the proposed landmark district, submitted an application for designation of the Thorndike-Madrillo 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 all properties on Madrillo Court and Thorndike Road (see Attachment A). Within these boundaries there are 37 properties. Further analysis, justification, and recommendations regarding these boundaries are provided below.

Construction Dates: One of the buildings in the proposed boundaries was built in 1927, two were built in 1950, 28 were built in 1951, two were built in 1961 and four were built in 1962. See Attachment B for construction dates of each specific property in the district.

Architects and Builders: Two of the buildings in the district were designed by a significant architect: Nyberg & Bissner; unknown architect Doug P. Wakeland designed four houses in the district. Significant landscape architect Courtland Paul is noted on a

building permit for one property as having designed site features of the property including “concrete and brick walks, garden walls and planters, property fence, and garden deck and shelter.” Staff is in the process of researching this further with Peridian Company, Courtland Paul’s successor firm. Several builders are noted on multiple permits: Coronado Enterprises, Beauman Company, Altadena Development Company and Wilson and Kleefeld, however, staff was unable to find sufficient information about these builders to determine whether they are significant.

Zoning: All properties within the proposed district are zoned RS-4, single-family residential.

General Plan: The General Plan Designation of all properties within the proposed landmark district is Low Density Residential.

ANALYSIS:

The proposed landmark district is a grouping of single-family residential buildings built between 1950 and 1962 which represent architectural styles and development patterns identified as significant in the City’s 2007 study “Cultural Resources of the Recent Past.”

Criteria for Designation

The Thorndike-Madrillo 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;

Most (36) of the residential buildings in the district were built between 1950 and 1962, the period of significance, and 28 remain largely intact on their street-facing elevations (76% contributing).

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 windows or doors, 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.

- 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 is a collection of residential buildings that represent architectural styles and development patterns identified as significant in the City's 2007 study "Cultural Resources of the Recent Past."

Support from Property Owners:

The application includes a petition indicating that owners of 62% (23 out of 37) of the properties within the district boundary signified their support for landmark district designation in writing, which exceeds the minimum 51% requirement. No formal opposition to this landmark district was presented at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on November 1, 2016; however, one property owner presented opposition to the landmark district at the Planning Commission meeting on February 22, 2017. The opponent was a property owner on Madrillo Court who indicated that all but one of the property owners on that street were opposed to the landmark district, and requested that that the properties on that street be removed from the district. Because no other property owners on the street spoke at the hearing and no written objections were submitted from them, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the landmark district as proposed, but requested that staff provide sufficient information to the City Council to demonstrate whether the Thorndike Road portion of the landmark district would qualify for designation on its own, in the event that the Council wishes to exclude the properties on Madrillo Court from the designation. This information is presented below:

Potential Exclusion of Madrillo Court

If the properties on Madrillo Court were to be removed from the landmark district, the number of total properties in the district would reduce from 37 to 29. Of those 29, 22 property owners have signed the petition supporting the designation of the district (76%) and 21 have been determined to be contributing (72%). Both of these percentages exceed the minimum required; therefore, the landmark district would qualify for designation if the properties on Madrillo Court were removed from the boundary. The properties on Madrillo Court could be added to the landmark district at a later date if a majority of the property owners sign a petition in support of the designation.

RESULTS OF DESIGNATION:

The landmark district designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood through the Certificate of Appropriateness process. The Zoning Code requires an application for Certificate of Appropriateness, reviewed by the Director of Planning & Community Development for minor projects such as the removal of non-original insignificant exterior features, the replacement of doors and windows that match the originals, alterations to garages, and side yard fences. Major projects, such as demolitions, relocations, significant exterior alterations, major changes to original windows and doors or their openings, changes to exterior cladding, and front yard

fences, require review by the Historic Preservation Commission at a noticed public hearing

Guidelines: The Design Guidelines for Historic Districts and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings apply to reviews of all projects affecting structures in designated landmark districts.

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.

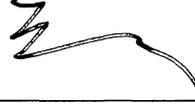
COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

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,



DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments (2).

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