

Agenda Report

October 16, 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 CRAFTSMAN HEIGHTS LANDMARK DISTRICT (LD-26)**

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 Craftsman Heights 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 Craftsman Heights Landmark District, LD-26; 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-26 Overlay Zone.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On June 20, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that the proposed Craftsman Heights 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 July 26, 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 Craftsman Heights Landmark District. One Commissioner expressed concerns about the petition signatures and the Commission requested that staff verify the accuracy of all petition signatures prior to City Council review of the application. See the "Support from Property Owners" section on page 4 of this report for the results of this review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Craftsman Heights 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 (53%) have indicated support in writing for the designation.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1989 the City has formally designated 25 landmark districts. On March 15, 2017, Sandra Sanchez, on behalf of supporting property owners in the proposed landmark district, submitted an application for designation of the Craftsman Heights 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. Prior to the application being made, staff conducted an informational meeting, noticed to all property owners within the district boundary, at the Sanchez Residence, 574 Prescott Street on July 28, 2016.

Description of the Proposed Landmark District

Boundaries: The proposed boundaries of the district are roughly Prescott Street on the north; North El Molino Avenue on the east; Eldora Road on the south and North Los Robles Avenue on the west (see Attachment A). Within these boundaries there are 192 properties. Further analysis, justification, and recommendations regarding these boundaries are provided below.

Construction Dates: The majority of the contributing buildings (84) in the district were built in the Period Revival Era (1919-1942), with a minority (56) built during the Arts & Crafts Period (1895-1918). Twenty four properties were built in the post-WWII-era and two were built since 1986 (all non-contributing). See Attachment C for construction dates of each specific property in the district.

Architects and Builders: Significant architects/designers with buildings in the Craftsman Heights Landmark District include Foss Designing & Building Company, David M. Renton, Frederick Kennedy Jr., Glenn Elwood Smith and Buchanan & Brockway. A number of unknown architects are also listed on building permits for houses in the district.

Zoning: Most of the properties within the proposed district are zoned single-family residential (RS-6); however, some properties on or adjacent to North Los Robles and El Molino Avenues are zoned multi-family residential (RM-12, RM-16 or RM-32).

General Plan: The General Plan Designation of most of the properties within the proposed landmark district is Low Density Residential. Similar to the zoning information above, some properties along or adjacent to North Los Robles and El Molino Avenues are designated Low-Medium Density Residential, Medium Density Residential or Medium-High Density Residential.

ANALYSIS:

The proposed landmark district is a grouping of single- and multi-family residential buildings built between 1901 and 1936 which represent architectural styles and development patterns identified as significant in the City's studies "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942" and "Residential Architecture of Pasadena, CA 1895-1918: The Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement."

Criteria for Designation

The Craftsman Heights 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 (140) of the residential buildings in the district were built between 1901 and 1936, the period of significance, and remain largely intact on their street-facing elevations (73% 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 studies "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942" and "Residential Architecture of Pasadena, CA 1895-1918: The Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement."

Support from Property Owners:

The application includes a petition indicating that owners of 53% (102 out of 192) 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 has been received.

As indicated previously, a member of the Planning Commission expressed concerns about the validity of some of the petition signatures. Concerns included verification of owner names, particularly in cases where printed owner names are marked out and replaced with different names, verification of illegible signatures and validity of signatures from powers of attorney. The Commissioner provided a list of 16 specific properties that were of concern related to these issues.

To research these 16 properties, staff reviewed each of the concerns expressed and met with the landmark district proponents to discuss their methodology for obtaining signatures, as well as their recollection of those properties with ownership changes. Staff also researched current ownership of each of the properties with ownership questions. Staff determined that further information or documentation would not be required for illegible signatures or stated powers of attorney and that these signatures would be counted as affirmative votes. Since all property owners are notified of each public hearing and no opposition or other comments regarding invalid signatures were received from any of the property owners, staff finds that the landmark district proponents accurately represented these signatures. Staff requested that the landmark district proponents revisit 6 properties to obtain updated signatures of the owners listed in the current assessment roll for those properties. As of the date of this report, updated signatures were received for these 3 properties, resulting in valid signatures from 102 properties, which represents a majority of the 192 properties in the district boundary.

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.”

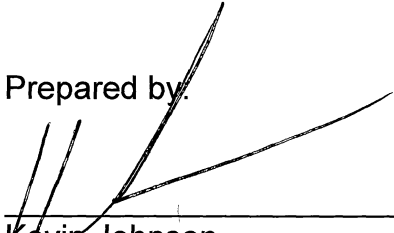
FISCAL IMPACT:

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 (3):

- Attachment A – Map of Proposed Landmark District
- Attachment B – Example Photographs of Buildings in Proposed Landmark District
- Attachment C – Inventory of Properties