

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

July 18, 2005

To: City Council  
From: City Manager  
Re: Designation of 636 N. Holliston Avenue as a Landmark

At a continued public hearing on May 23, 2005 regarding the designation as a landmark of 636 N. Holliston Avenue, a 1937 bungalow court, the City Council asked that the staff research whether there were other similar 1930s-era bungalow courts in the City. The question posed by the Council was whether the property on Holliston is significant as the last bungalow court to be constructed in the City and if so, should it be designated as a landmark in addition to its status as a contributing historic resource in the pending North Holliston Landmark District.

In June 2005 staff researched this issue and found that there are at least 150 bungalow courts in the City. This study focused in particular on 69 bungalow courts throughout the City that were constructed between 1930 and 1942. Among these 69 courts, staff found that 23 of them built after 1931 had some or all of the characteristics of the bungalow court at 636 N. Holliston. Although some single-family houses and post-war apartment complexes have been demolished in recent years, no courts have been demolished during the past decade.

As part of this study, staff also compared and contrasted the bungalow courts constructed between 1910 and 1931 to these later courts (1930-1942). In general, it appears that the later bungalow court is transitional in design from the small-scale bungalow court to the two-story garden apartment or courtyard apartment.

Construction of the bungalow court property type in Pasadena appears to have occurred in two distinct phases. The first phase includes the courts constructed between 1910 and 1931; thirty-seven courts from this time period are already listed in or formally determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The design of these courts is pre-modern with styles of the Arts and Crafts and Colonial/Spanish/English Revival periods. The second

phase of the bungalow-court property type is from 1937 to 1942;<sup>1</sup> approximately 50 of these courts exist in the City. These courts are Modern (or variations of Modern) in their design vocabulary. The Holliston Court (constructed 1936-37) is associated with this second phase of bungalow courts.

Although many bungalow courts constructed in the mid-30s to early-40s have site plans like the earlier courts, other courts from this period have different site plans. All of the courts that staff observed, however, possess the common characteristics of small-scale multiple-unit residential buildings with front entries that open onto a shared public green space. While some of the earlier courts include a two-story building usually placed at the rear of the property, many of the later courts tend to have an asymmetrical plan of one and two-story buildings on either side of a common garden. Also from this period, a few bungalow courts have front units facing the street that partially enclose an interior courtyard. While a handful of the earlier courts provide on-site parking, all courts after 1930 have on-site parking (usually one space per unit). Staff found one court with carports between residential units and two courts with garages and a parking court in front of the bungalows.

### Conclusion

Of the 69 bungalow courts that staff surveyed, 23 have design characteristics comparable to Holliston Court. Some of them have more attention to design detail and a higher degree of architectural integrity than Holliston Court. At least 12 courts from the post-1931 period are excellent examples of the later phase of bungalow-court development. Attachment A includes photographs and addresses of ten of these courts, some of which were designed by well-known architects (e.g., Harold Bissner, Garret Van Pelt, and George Lund). These properties have a high degree of architectural integrity and staff believes that these properties, unlike the Holliston Court, meet the criteria for individual designation as landmarks.

Publications of the National Register of Historic Places provide guidelines for evaluating properties using accepted professional methodology, which are a reliable basis for designating a property as a landmark. National Register guidelines (Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation) state:

*... all that possesses age is not necessarily significant, and what is significant can only be determined in relationship to the historic development from which it emerged and in relationship to a group of similarly associated properties....Common sense and professional*

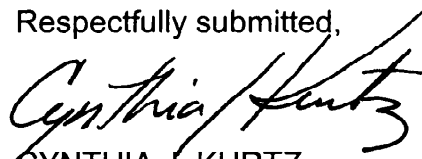
---

<sup>1</sup> Sources (maps, permits) indicate a gap in construction of courts for five years – 1932 through 1936, when there were fewer than two courts per year on average. This period separates the two phases of court housing.

*judgment must be exercised to determine what kinds of information will be most applicable to a given property, to what extent the context or property needs to be researched, and when sufficient information and a reasonable argument have been provided to support a property's eligibility.*

The study of the post-1931 bungalow courts followed the methodology of the National Park Service and led staff to the conclusion that Holliston Court should not be designated as a landmark. The more appropriate designation for the Holliston Court is as a contributing property to a landmark district, which is a grouping of properties that lack individual distinction but collectively possess similar attributes to make the district an important historic resource.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Kurtz', written in a cursive style.

CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager