

# Agenda Report

July 9, 2012

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Planning Department

**SUBJECT: COMMENT TO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER ON THE NOMINATION OF THE MARKHAM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT 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 nomination of the Markham Place Historic District for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On Monday, July 2, 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 nomination of the Markham Place Historic District at its August 3, 2012 meeting in Beverly Hills and has requested comments from the City's Chief Elected Official on the nomination.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City recently received notification from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) about the review of the Markham Place Historic District nomination—prepared and submitted by Pasadena Heritage—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 30, 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 August 3, 2012 at Beverly Hills City Hall).

The nominated historic district encompasses the bulk of the Governor Markham Landmark District, which was designated by the City Council on July 15, 2005. The proposed historic district excludes seven properties on the edge of the designated landmark district, presumably because the buildings on those properties were either non-contributing or not strong examples of the architectural styles represented in the district. The proposed historic district also adds properties that are not in the designated landmark district including Singer Park and several additional buildings owned by CalTrans along South St. John and Pasadena Avenues.

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

The regulations within Chapter 17.62 (Historic Preservation) of the Zoning Code already apply to privately owned property within the proposed historic district because those properties have already been designated by the City Council as a landmark district. As such, when these historic districts and properties are listed by the Keeper of the Register, there will be no change in the procedures for review of proposed exterior alterations to buildings within the district boundaries.

Because Singer Park is included in the proposed boundary, there will be changes to the review process for future modifications to the park. The Zoning Code currently requires design review of new buildings on city-owned property and Planning Department staff or the Design Commission conducts these reviews, depending on the size of the new building. When the historic district is listed, review of changes to historical aspects of the park identified in the nomination (lawn, mature trees, curving paths, pergolas, benches) would also require design review, potentially including advisory review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Changes to properties within the proposed boundaries that are owned by CalTrans will not require City review because the City does not have regulatory authority over the buildings owned by the State.

### **Comments on the Nomination**

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

1. The significance statement should provide further justification for the inclusion of buildings built after 1918 as contributing buildings.

*The nomination includes contributing buildings built between 1887 and 1929, but the significance statement only describes the significance of buildings built between 1887 and 1918. The nomination would be strengthened if additional justification of the significance of buildings constructed after 1918 were included.*

2. The nomination should provide further justification for the 1929 end date of the period of significance.

*Although the neighborhood was largely built out by 1929, as stated in the nomination, there are a few buildings within the boundaries from the period revival era—which is defined in the City's 2004 study of that period as ending circa 1942—that were built after 1929. It may be appropriate for those buildings to be contributing to the district rather than non-contributing as currently indicated in the nomination. One of the buildings identified as non-contributing to the historic district is contributing to the existing designated landmark district and this building is similar in character to the contributing buildings from the period revival era, retains integrity and should be contributing to the proposed historic district.*

3. Additional historical information about Singer Park and its significance should be provided to justify its inclusion in the proposed district boundary.

*City records indicate that the park was originally the grounds of the Emma R. Singer residence, which were designed by Thomas Chisolm (the original designer of Central and Memorial Parks). The site was originally comprised of two home sites: the corner site was the home of James Campbell and the adjoining property to the west was the home of George W. Stimson who owned and developed a portion of the proposed historic district that he named Carlisle Heights. Singer purchased the Stimson property and occupied the house and later purchased the Campbell property and demolished the house to expand her gardens. The property was donated to the City upon Singer's death along with a fund for maintenance and instructions for Chisolm to handle any redesign of the grounds that would be necessary to turn the property into a public park. In a 1948 article, Mira C. Saunders, a prominent nature writer that lived in Pasadena, referred to the park as "a miniature arboretum, lacking only the labels on the trees..." and an article in the 1923 Pasadena Star-News indicates that some of the trees on the property were planted by Chisolm "as far back as 1886."*

The comments above are intended to strengthen the justification of the boundaries and period of significance of the proposed historic district. Because the City will be

responsible for administering the review of any changes to buildings in the district that may be proposed in the future, it is important for these elements of the nomination to be fully justified. With these modifications being made, the nomination will present a stronger case for its listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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.

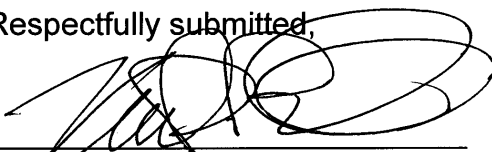
**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

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:**

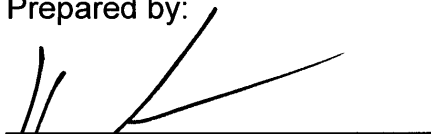
Designation of this property does not affect revenues to the City. In some instances, though, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. Eligible properties in the proposed historic district may already apply for Historic Property Contract because the proposed district is already designed by the City as the Governor Markham Landmark District. 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 Request for Comments
- B. Draft Comment Letter
- C. National Register Nomination Form