

# Agenda Report

December 9, 2013

**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 WOTKYNS-RICHLAND LANDMARK DISTRICT (LD-20)**

## **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 Wotkyns-Richland Landmark District meets the criteria for designation as a Landmark District as specified in §17.20.040.F of the Pasadena Municipal Code;
3. Approve the landmark district designation and the zoning map overlay for the Wotkyns-Richland Landmark District, LD-20; and
4. 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-20 Overlay Zone, including a provision that views from the Arroyo Seco of the rear of the properties are not public views that would be subject to historic preservation ordinance requirements.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On July 15, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that the proposed Wotkyns-Richland Landmark District meets the criteria for designation in §17.62.040 Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) and unanimously recommended approval of the designation.

The Commission further recommended that the implementing ordinance for the landmark district state that views from the Arroyo Seco are not public views that would be subject to historic preservation ordinance requirements.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

At a public hearing on September 11, 2013, the Planning Commission found that the proposed zone change to create a landmark district is consistent with the General Plan and the purposes of the zoning code, certified the final petition with the signatures from at least 51 percent of the property owners and voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve designation of the Wotkyns-Richland Landmark District.

The Commission further recommended that the implementing ordinance for the landmark district state that views from the Arroyo Seco are not public views that would be subject to historic preservation ordinance requirements.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Wotkyns-Richland 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 (60%) have indicated support in writing for the designation (no formal opposition was received). Because there is a potential for views of the houses from the Arroyo Seco, both the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission have also recommended that the ordinance establishing this district contain language that exempts any views from the Arroyo Seco from the requirements of the historic preservation ordinance.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Since 1989, the City has formally designated nineteen landmark districts. On May 6, 2013, the City received the application and a petition from six property owners, to designate the subject parcels as a landmark district. The district was previously identified in the City's 2004 study of Period Revival Architecture as being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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

Boundaries: The proposed boundaries of the district include, address numbers 1 – 8 Richland Place, and numbers 1119 and 1125 Wotkyns Drive (see Attachment A). Within these boundaries there are ten properties. Further analysis and justification of these boundaries is provided below.

Construction Dates: Eight of the houses were built in the 1920's; with the remaining two being built in the late 1930's.

Architects and Builders: Significant architects with designs in the district include Wallace Neff, Garrett van Pelt, Palmer Sabin and Reginald Johnson.

Zoning: All properties within the proposed district are zoned RS-4. The RS-4 district is a single-family residential zoning designation.

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 custom single-family residences built between 1920 and 1939 which represent architectural styles and the work of significant architects from the Period Revival Era. The Period Revival era is characterized by a shift from the Arts & Craft movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to a focus on classical, colonial and regional architectural styles such as Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and English and Italian precedents. The City completed a study of this period in 2004 and at that time identified the proposed district as being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Criteria for Designation**

The Wotkyns-Richland 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;

*The proposed district boundary encloses a distinguishable grouping of intact houses that represents significant architectural styles from early in the City's history. The boundaries were identified in the City's 2004 study of Period Revival Architecture. All of the single-family houses in the district were built between 1920 and 1939, which has been identified as the district's period of significance, and all remain intact on their street-facing elevations.*

- 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 cohesive collection of houses in architectural styles identified in the historic context report "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942." All of these properties retain integrity of design (all of the character-defining architectural features are intact), materials (all of the original cladding materials, doors and windows appear to be intact), workmanship (the decorative detailing on all of the houses appears to be intact), and feeling. Within the larger neighborhood, the district is distinguished by the intact materials and the quality*

*of the architectural detailing, and has the feeling of a cohesive period revival neighborhood.*

**Support from Property Owners:**

At its September 11, 2013 meeting, the Planning Commission certified the final petition from property owners within the district boundary. In the petition, 60% (6 out of 10) of the property owners have signified their support for district designation in writing, which exceeds the minimum 51% requirement. Staff has not received any formal opposition to this landmark district.

**RESULTS OF DESIGNATION:**

The landmark district designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood through design review. The code requires architectural design review 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.

**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:**

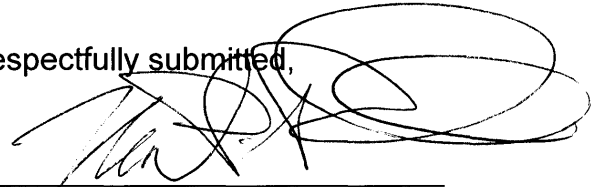
The General Plan – Objective 6: Promote preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings and revitalization of traditional neighborhoods and commercial areas.

The zoning of the area is RS4 (Single-family Residential). The LD-20 zone is proposed as an overlay to the current zoning. The application is consistent with the purposes of the zoning ordinance, which includes several goals to preserve residential neighborhoods.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

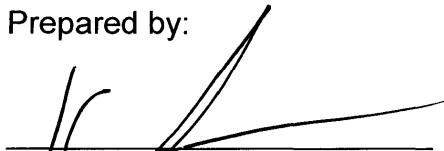
In some instances, owners of designated properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract, which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted a local Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

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