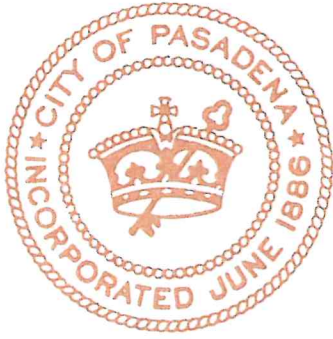




Agenda Report

August 17, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: **DESIGNATION OF THE MESITA ROAD LANDMARK DISTRICT AND A ZONING MAP AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH THE MESITA ROAD (LD-30) LANDMARK OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource and a zoning map amendment to establish a landmark overlay zoning district are 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), and there are no features that distinguish the project from others in the exempt classes, and therefore, there are no unusual circumstances, and no other exception to the exemption applies;
2. Adopt the findings in Attachment A to find that the proposed Mesita Road Landmark District meets the criteria for designation as a Landmark District and to approve the proposed Zoning Map Amendment; and
3. Adopt an ordinance to amend the official Zoning Map to establish the Mesita Road (LD-30) Landmark Overlay Zoning District.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On March 3, 2026, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) determined that the proposed Mesita Road Landmark District meets the criteria for designation and recommended, by a vote of 8-0, that the City Council adopt the environmental determination and landmark district designation.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On June 10, 2026, the Planning Commission (PC) recommended, by a vote of 5-0, that the City Council adopt the environmental determination and approve the Zoning Map

Amendment to establish the Mesita Road Landmark District (LD-30) Overlay Zoning District.

BACKGROUND:

On June 10, 2025, Katja M. Guenther, on behalf of supporting property owners in the proposed landmark district, submitted an application for Eligibility Review of the designation of the Mesita Road Landmark District. The staff evaluated the district according to the landmark district designation criteria and on September 2, 2025 issued a Notice of Decision that determined that the district meets the applicable criteria for approval. Prior to the decision being made, staff conducted an informational meeting, as required by the Zoning Code, which was noticed to all property owners within the district boundary, on August 27, 2025.

On December 31, 2025, the applicant submitted an application for Formal Review of the designation of the Mesita Road Landmark District. Staff reviewed the material submitted and confirmed that the district meets the applicable criteria for approval. As detailed above, both the HPC and PC have reviewed the application and recommend that the City Council approve the designation.

ANALYSIS:

Description of the Proposed Landmark District

Boundaries: The proposed boundary encompasses a distinguishable grouping of intact Modern Ranch and mid-century modern style homes located along Mesita Road, which is a small private street and is identified by a brick monument sign with the name of the road at the entrance into the neighborhood from Sierra Madre Villa Avenue (Attachment B). Within these boundaries there are seven properties; the addresses include 1070, 1085, 1105, 1125, 1150, 1155, and 1175 Mesita Road.

Construction Dates: All properties within the proposed landmark district were constructed between 1949-1958. As such, staff determines the appropriate period of significance for the district to be 1949-1958. See Attachments C and D for construction information and photographs of each specific property.

Architects and Builders: The district represents a strong collection of architect-designed residences that, with one exception, were designed by architect Harold B. Zook. The houses were built by different contractors, including J. Shelton Gordon, Frederick J. Zimowski, E.A. Daniell Co., A.F. Bredthauer, R. Johnson, and Evald C. Moller. Frederick J. Zimowski constructed two of the seven houses in the proposed district.

Unifying Characteristics of the District: The district represents the theme of architect-designed single family residential development, consisting of single-family Mid-Century Modern and Modern Ranch style houses with high integrity, most of which were designed by Harold B. Zook. These homes are distinguished by their high-style and

site-specific designs that sit on large and relatively flat parcels with expansive front lawns. The mid-century modern style is characterized by geometric and simple forms, an absence of exterior decorations or ornamentation, flat or low slung pitched roofs and wide overhangs, large expanses of glass, and open floor plans that emphasize indoor-outdoor living. The district represents historically significant development trends and building types built between 1935-1965 that were identified in a 2009 study of mid-twentieth century architecture. Furthermore, the district was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in the 2007 Cultural Resources of the Recent Past survey.

Contributing Properties to the Landmark District: All seven buildings exhibit high integrity on their street-facing elevations, with the exception of 1105 Mesita Road, which has undergone significant alterations, including construction of an attached garage through conversion of existing livable space and alteration to original window openings, window surrounds, and configurations from a previous window replacement project. As such, six out of seven of the properties are considered contributing, or 86%.

Criteria for designation

Pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.62.040.G, the criteria for designation of a Landmark District are as follows:

- a. Within its boundaries, a minimum of 60% of the properties qualify as contributing;
- b. A simple majority (51%) of property owners support the designation at the time of designation by the City Council; and
- c. The grouping represents a significant and distinguishable entity of Citywide importance that is united historically by past events or aesthetically by plan or development...and represents one or more of a defined historic, cultural, development and/or architectural context(s) (e.g., 1991 Citywide historic context, as amended, historic context prepared in an intensive-level survey or historic context prepared specifically for the nominated landmark district).

Six out of seven (86%) of the buildings in the district qualify as contributing. Four out of seven (57%) of the property owners in the district boundaries have signified their support for district designation in writing. The other three owners are aware of the district designation application and have opted not to sign the petition supporting the designation, no formal opposition to the designation application has been received. The district is locally significant because it contains a cohesive and contiguous collection of single-family residential buildings that are designed in the Mid-Century Modern and Modern Ranch architectural styles and represent the work of significant architect Harold B. Zook. For additional analysis, please refer to Attachment E.

Zoning Map Amendment

Landmark District Overlays

A Zoning Map Amendment is required to establish a Landmark District (LD) Overlay zoning district for the proposed Arboleda Drive Landmark District. LD Overlay zoning districts are depicted on the Zoning Map by adding the suffix "LD" to the base zoning district designation, followed by the number of the LD district based on order of adoption. For example, this application would be the 30th landmark district and would be depicted as RS-4 HD-LD-30 (Single-Family Residential, 4 du/ac, Hillside Overlay District, Landmark District 30). The LD Overlay would not change the land uses allowed in the base zoning district or the applicable development standards. For additional analysis, please refer to Attachment F.

There are seven properties in the proposed LD Overlay. Table 1 below identifies the existing zoning district, land use designation, and current use of each property within the proposed overlay.

Table 1. List of Properties.

Address	Existing Zoning	Existing Land Use Designation	Current Use
1070 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1085 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1105 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1125 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1150 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1155 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family
1175 Mesita Road	RS-4 HD	Low Density Residential	Single-Family

Results of designation

The landmark district designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process. The Zoning Code requires an application for COA, 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 new fences. Major projects, such as demolitions, relocations, significant exterior alterations, major changes to original windows and doors or their openings and changes to exterior cladding, require review by the HPC.

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:

The proposed landmark designation and Zoning Map Amendment qualify for a categorical exemption pursuant to Section 15308, Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines, and there are no features that distinguish the project from others in the exempt classes, and therefore, there are no unusual circumstances, and no other exception to the exemption applies. Class 8 exempts actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the 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 proposed project is consistent with multiple goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan including the following Guiding Principle:

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."

Additionally, the project is consistent with Goal 8 (Historic Preservation), Policy 8.1 (Identify and Protect Historic Resources) and Policy 8.2 (Historic Designation Support).

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action. 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,



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Attachments: (6)

- Attachment A – Findings
- Attachment B – Map of Proposed Landmark District
- Attachment C – Inventory of Properties
- Attachment D – Photographs of Buildings in Proposed Landmark District
- Attachment E – HPC Staff Report dated March 3, 2026, without attachments
- Attachment F – PC Staff Report dated June 10, 2026, without attachments