



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: MARCH 3, 2026

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF THE ARBOLEDA DRIVE LANDMARK DISTRICT

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines Section 15308: Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment) and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances;
2. Find that the proposed Arboleda Drive Landmark District as shown in Attachment A meets the criteria for designation as a landmark district, (Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.62.040.G P.M.C.), specifically:
 - a. Within its boundaries, a minimum of 60 percent of the properties qualify as contributing; and
 - b. 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 one or more of a defined historic, cultural, development and/or architectural context(s); and, therefore
3. Recommend that the City Council approve the designation of the Arboleda Drive Landmark District Overlay as shown in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND:

On June 30, 2025, Shauna Clark, on behalf of supporting property owners in the proposed landmark district, submitted an application for Eligibility Review of the designation of the Arboleda Drive Landmark District. The staff evaluated the district according to the landmark district designation criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and on September 8, 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 a virtual informational meeting which was noticed to all property owners within the district boundary, on September 4, 2025. The meeting was recorded and is available by request to anyone wishing to view it.

On December 2, 2025, Shauna Clark, submitted an application for Formal Review of the designation of the Arboleda Drive Landmark District. Staff has reviewed the material submitted and confirmed that the district meets the applicable criteria for approval, as described below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LANDMARK DISTRICT:

Boundaries: The proposed boundaries of the district are along Arboleda Drive, south of East California Boulevard, roughly midblock between South Oak Knoll Avenue to the east and El Molino Avenue to the west (see Attachment A). Within these boundaries there are 12 properties, the addresses include 696, 698, 700, 702, 704, 706, 708, 710, 712, 714, 716, and 718 East California Boulevard.

Construction Dates: All of the 12 buildings in the proposed district boundary were built in 1929.

Architects and Builders: All of the houses in the district were designed by architect Myer Radon (1884–1962). Myer Radon was born in Berlin, Germany, and later immigrated to the United States, where he became a significant and active architect during the early 20th century. Working during a period of rapid residential development, he contributed notably to the architectural character of Southern California through his use of revival styles popular in the 1920s and 1930s. All the houses in the proposed district were built by contractor Ray J. Ustick of the Pasadena Building & Construction Company.

Zoning: A majority of the properties within the proposed landmark district are zoned single-family residential (RS-6) with the exception of the two northernmost properties along East California Boulevard which are zoned multi-family residential (RM-16).

General Plan: The General Plan Designation of all the properties within the proposed landmark district is Low Density Residential.

ANALYSIS:

Pursuant to PMC Section 17.62.070.C, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)'s role in reviewing Landmark District Designations is to determine whether the Landmark District meets the criteria for designation as specified in PMC Section 17.62.040.G, which states that the criteria for designation of a Landmark District are as follows:

- a. Within its boundaries, a minimum of 60 percent 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.)...

The PMC also states that, the HPC shall apply the criteria above according to applicable National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Bulletins for evaluating historic properties, including the seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association (NRHP Bulletin #15: "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation"). In addition, the PMC states that when determining the boundaries of a landmark district, the HPC shall use the NRHP Bulletin #21: "Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties." Relevant excerpts from these NRHP Bulletins are included in Attachment G.

The analysis below is provided to substantiate the required criteria and NRHP Bulletins applicable to the designation of Landmark Districts as listed above.

Representation of Citywide Significance: The district is locally significant because all the 12 properties along Arboleda Drive, a private street off East California Boulevard, consist of two-story single-family residences in the Spanish Colonial Revival style designed by the architect Myer Radon in 1929. Neither a bungalow court nor an apartment complex, the development offered a unique alternative lifestyle to the single-family residence on a traditional rectangular lot, and through its variation in design and details the development avoids the repetition and monotony of many planned developments. The proposed district was previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register as a historic district under Criterion C during the 2004 Period Revival survey, because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant example of Period Revival architecture as an excellent collection of Spanish Colonial Revival single-family residences.

Unifying Characteristics of the District: The district is locally significant in the context of Period Revival architecture as an excellent collection of Spanish Colonial Revival single-family residences. All houses were designed by the architect Myer Radon. All the residences have stucco exteriors and tiled roofs and feature a wealth of detail which include arched doorways, wrought iron window grills and balustrades, French doors, second story balconies, stained wood posts, and multi-paned casement windows. The two front houses that face onto East California Boulevard have small front yards with lawns and large specimen trees. Other trees are planted along the curved asphalt motorway. At the end of the drive is a brick wall and a concrete bench decorated with Spanish tiles. Each house has a small private backyard or side yard, and several have small front yards. Garages are single car attached, and four detached double garages are shared parking with a common wall. All the buildings in the development avoid the repetition and monotony of many planned developments while retaining their architectural integrity and contribute to the significance of the district.

Boundary Justification: The district encompasses all the houses and garages situated along the private street, Arboleda Drive, which extends south from East California Boulevard. The 12 properties included in the district are contiguous and the district is united by development history and architectural style which includes 12 two-story single-family residences, and four garages constructed in 1929 as a planned development.

Period of Significance: All houses within the proposed landmark district were built in 1929. As such, staff finds the appropriate period of significance for the district to be 1929.

Contributing Properties to the Landmark District: All 12 of the buildings in the district were built in 1929, the period of significance, and remain largely intact on their street-facing elevations (100% contributing).

Generally, buildings that retain most of their original exterior features or historically significant alterations are contributing to a landmark district. Minor exterior alterations, which may be reversed, typically do not render a building noncontributing. Buildings with two or more substantial alterations including openings with altered dimensions, 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. In this case, all houses were built during the period of significance and represent the context of "Cultural Resources of the Recent Past." Given the strong architectural cohesion of the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture style represented by all of the properties in the district, staff recommends that none of the houses be excluded from the period of significance or be considered non-contributing to the district.

Support from Property Owners: In the preliminary petition (Attachment C), 100% of the property owners have signified their support for district designation in writing (12 of the 12 properties in the district boundary), which exceeds the minimum 51% requirement. Signatures in support of the district designation by a majority of the property owners are not required until the public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council. At this stage, the petition is preliminary. No formal opposition to the landmark district designation has been received as of the date of this report writing.

District Name: While the architect, Myer Radon, who designed all the houses and the Spanish Colonial Revival style of all the properties are unifying features of the district, the district is entirely along Arboleda Drive; therefore, staff recommends that the name "Arboleda Drive Landmark District" be established to represent the unifying feature of the district.

RESULTS OF DESIGNATION:

Landmark District designation protects the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood by requiring submittal and review by the Historic Preservation Commission or Design & Historic Preservation staff of an application for Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes that are visible from the street. Demolitions, relocations and new construction are also reviewed in landmark districts. Reviews of alterations and demolitions of non-contributing structures are required, as well as of contributing structures; however, according to

the guidelines, more changes are permitted on non-contributing structures because they have few, if any, features that need to be preserved.

Interim Procedures while Designation is Pending: The Zoning Code requires submittal of an application for Certificate of Appropriateness for any major projects, as defined in the Code, after the Historic Preservation Commission makes a positive recommendation on a proposed landmark district designation. Applications submitted and deemed complete prior to the Commission's action are not subject to these interim procedures. Applications submitted during this period would follow category one review procedures and could therefore be approved, approved with conditions or disapproved. Minor projects would not require this review unless and until the designation is approved by the City Council and a Zoning Map Amendment Ordinance becomes effective.

Guidelines: The *Design Guidelines for Historic Districts* apply to reviews of all projects in residential landmark and historic districts. These guidelines, developed with the participation of local residents, are an elaboration of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* and have examples and illustrations targeting local conditions.

Incentives: If a property is designated as a contributing structure to a landmark district, it will become eligible for additional incentives for preserving historic resources, including the use of the State Historical Building Code, reduction of building permit fees and construction tax for certain projects, and eligibility for the Historic Property Contract Program (Mills Act) which provides a reduction of property taxes for performing specified maintenance and rehabilitation work.

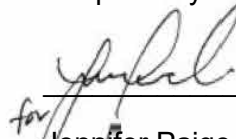
NEXT STEPS

If the HPC recommends approval of the designation, the application will be scheduled for review by the Planning Commission (PC), which will be asked to make the required findings to amend the zoning map with a historic overlay district consistent with PMC Section 17.74.070.B and to certify the final petition for the proposed landmark district in accordance with PMC Section 17.62.070.D.3. Following the PC's review the recommendations from both commissions will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration at a public hearing.

CONCLUSION

Based on this analysis, the proposed Arboleda Drive Landmark District Designation meets all of the necessary criteria for approval. Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend that the City Council approve the proposed Landmark District Designation.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

- A. Map of Proposed District
- B. Inventory of Properties
- C. Preliminary Petition
- D. Sanborn Maps
- E. Photographs
- F. Historic Documents
- G. Excerpts from National Register Bulletins 15 & 21