

# Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 1998

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: APPEAL OF 180-DAY STAY ON ISSUANCE OF A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS TO DEMOLISH STRUCTURES AT 180 SO. SAN GABRIEL BOULEVARD.

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## CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

### Finding:

1. Affirm the finding of the Cultural Heritage Commission that the property at **180 S. San Gabriel Boulevard** (the house, garage, and water tower) qualifies for designation as a **landmark** under criteria A, D, & E (P.M.C. §2.75.130) and that the structural integrity of the structures and the conditions of the site allow for **relocation** of the buildings.

### Actions:

1. Affirm the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission to stay a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition for an initial **180-day period** to allow time to explore preservation of some or all of the structures; and
2. Direct staff to continue working with the developer on **strategies to preserve the structures** (including discussions about a redesign of the proposed new development).

### Executive Summary.

On July 7, 1998, the Cultural Heritage Commission determined that the property at 180 South San Gabriel Boulevard possess sufficient historic and architectural significance to qualify for designation as a landmark under three criteria in the cultural heritage ordinance. Subsequently, on August 17, 1998, the Commission voted to stay demolition of the structures for an initial 180 days. This action also had the effect of classifying the proposed demolition as an adverse effect on a "cultural resource" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition to the property being determined eligible for landmark designation, CEQA regulations specifically state that demolition of a cultural resource that is eligible for the California Register of Historical Places or the National Register of Historic Places is an adverse impact that cannot be mitigated. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Report is required. Eligibility for the state and national registers is determined under a slightly different set of criteria than the criteria for local landmark designation. Staff believes that the property is eligible for both the state and national registers.

The City's Current Planning Section has received an application for subdivision of this and two adjoining (smaller) properties. The staff of that section is in the process of preparing an initial study for determination of possible environmental impacts of the proposed subdivision project. Although the City's normal procedure is to review applications for demolition after a subdivision action, in the case of 180 South San Gabriel Boulevard, the applicant submitted an application for review of demolition before the review of the

subdivision application was complete. This change in sequence did not have an effect on the staff's investigation and justification of landmark eligibility.

The applicant, Paul Friedman of the Paul Howard Group (of Arcadia), subsequently appealed the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission to the City Council. The purpose of the appeal is to lift the stay of demolition approved by the Commission on August 17, 1998. Friedman is in escrow to acquire the property.

The municipal code allows the Cultural Heritage Commission to stay a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition for a maximum of two, 180-day stays. To stay an application, the Commission must find that the property qualifies for designation as a landmark and that the condition of the buildings and the site permit relocation. The code authorizes the Commission to lift a stay at any time if preservation is infeasible or efforts to preserve the buildings are unsuccessful.

### **Background.**

On July 6, 1998 the Cultural Heritage Commission reviewed an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish three buildings on the property at 180 S. San Gabriel Boulevard. The buildings, a house, garage, and water tower, are a grouping of surviving structures from a citrus ranch that operated on the site from approximately 1900 to about 1928. At that time, the Commission adopted by a unanimous vote a finding that the ensemble of buildings on the former ranch, along with several of the stately, mature trees on the property, qualifies for designation as a landmark. The Commission also found that the structures could be relocated. On the basis of these findings, it delayed the application for a 45-day review period. The purpose of the review period was to inspect the property and meet with the developer, who intends to subdivide the property for construction of nine, single-family houses. The site visit—with five members of the Commission—took place on July 20, 1998.

Following the site visit, the staff researched more information on the property. Although a visit to the County records in Norwalk was inconclusive, newspaper records confirmed the 1900 date attributed to the buildings in the assessor's records. Local newspapers first advertised the subdivision of the Sunny Slope ranch in 1895. The property at 180 S. San Gabriel Boulevard was part of the "number one [tract] map" of this subdivision (lot #7 of the northern part). Notices in the *Los Angeles Journal* refer to sales in 1900 of tracts with "orange trees and artisan wells" from the Sunny Slope estate and proposals for construction of "country dwellings" on the sites. One reference (Apr. 27, 1900) is to lot seven, which corresponds to the assessor's records for 180 South San Gabriel Boulevard.

This information supports the hand-written date of 1900 on the assessor's tax forms. The architectural design of the fifteen-room ranch house, transitional Colonial Revival/Craftsman style, also supports an attribution of a 1900 date to the property. The original, 1,300-acre winery and citrus ranch on the site, the Sunny Slope estate, operated until 1887. Subsequently, under the ownership of an English real estate syndicate, L.R. Rose Co., Ltd., the land continued as a ranch. The water tower may date from this period.

The evidence presented to the Cultural Heritage Commission documents that the property was actively used as a ranch from the 1850s through the 1920s. Since the subdivision in 1900, it has been under only two owners, the Graff family (Richmond and Lucille Graff maintained the site as a ranch until 1928) and the Chaffee family (Elene Chaffee Loebbecke currently owns 75% of the assessed value of the property).

It remains in 1998 as the only remaining site in Pasadena with a grouping of structures, open space, and trees associated with the citrus ranch era of the City's early history. On this basis, the Cultural Heritage Commission found that the property is significant under the following landmark criteria: A ("*character, interest or value as part of the heritage of the city*"); D ("*exemplification of a...way of life important to the city*"); and E ("*exemplification of the best remaining architectural type in a neighborhood*").

The house on the property is a transitional Colonial Revival/ Craftsman style building (4,329 square feet). It has characteristic features of early Craftsman (or "Western brown shingle") design: boxy, rectangular volumes, vertical massing, wide overhanging roofs supported on timbered brackets; transomed multi-light window sash (many in a six-over-one configuration); alternating wall surfaces of wood shingles and clapboards, wide flat trim.

The original (1900) portion of the house appears to have been the one-story wing on the east (rear) side. The two-story portion facing South San Gabriel Boulevard is similar in design to the earlier part of the house and may have been constructed within a few years. The three-car garage is similar in design and construction to the ranch house. On its south end, it has a small room that may have had agricultural uses. The clapboarded water tower is a simply detailed, freestanding structure with an attached shed. It has battered walls, a jetty, and a low pyramidal roof. A notable feature of the site is the impressive collection of monumental trees (mostly oak and eucalyptus).

***Application for Subdivision/ Environmental Study.***

The proposed new use of the property, a subdivision of nine parcels with single-family houses, involves the demolition of the structures on the site (including the adjacent house, built in 1949, at 200 S. San Gabriel). Because the subdivision is a discretionary action, it requires an environmental clearance. The initial environmental study for the project will be circulated for public review and comment on or before September 20, 1998. The hearing on the subdivision is scheduled for October 14.

***Justification for a Stay of Demolition.***

The cultural heritage ordinance allows the Commission to stay a demolition if "additional time is needed to accomplish preservation of the structure[s]" (§2.75.210 D). In this instance, a stay of demolition would allow the Commission an opportunity to search for alternatives to the proposed demolition and to determine whether preservation of some or all of the structures is "reasonably likely" (§2.75.210 E). The stay would also allow the Commission to await the outcome of an environmental study before arriving at any final decisions about the feasibility of preserving the buildings at 180 South San Gabriel Blvd.

Before the end of the 180-day stay of demolition, the Commission is required to act again on the application; it may either find that more time is necessary to achieve preservation of the structures or issue a Certificate of Appropriateness after finding that preservation is infeasible. A 180-day stay of demolition would expire on February 24, 1999. The ordinance limits the Commission to withholding a Certificate of Appropriateness for a maximum of two, 180-day stays.

Among the issues that might be considered during a stay of demolition are:

- Changing the site design of the proposed subdivision to preserve some or all of the existing structures.
- Relocating some or all of the structures on the property.
- Promoting preservation of one or more structures with financial incentives, such as façade easements.
- Advertising the availability of the buildings for relocation.

***Alternative Actions.***

Following the public hearing, the City Council could:

- a) Approve the staff recommendation to stay the demolition and direct the staff to continue working with the developer on feasible alternatives to demolition before the hearing on the subdivision.
- b) Uphold the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission to stay the demolition for 180-days and acknowledge that the applicant may file an appeal to the Council at a later date (in February 1999) if the Cultural Heritage Commission extends the stay of demolition for a second, 180-day period.
- c) Uphold the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission that the buildings are a historically significant grouping and that the structures can be relocated, but find that preservation is infeasible and issue a

- Certificate of Appropriateness, conditioned upon photographic documentation of the property (required by P.M.C. §2.75.210).
- d) Reverse the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission, find that the structures do not qualify for designation as a landmark and that structural and site conditions do not preclude relocation and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.
  - e) Stay the demolition for one or two of the structures and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the other(s).
  - f) Stay the demolition for fewer days than the maximum of 180 allowed by the ordinance.
  - g) Continue the review of the appeal to a date following the subdivision hearing to allow time for completion of an environmental assessment which is required by the CEQA.

If the City Council supports the decision of the Commission that the buildings qualify for designation as a landmark, the environmental study would identify demolition as an adverse effect on cultural resources in the environmental study. In that event, an EIR would be required to analyze the effects of the subdivision on cultural resources and to explore alternatives.

**Reconsideration by the Cultural Heritage Commission.**

After receiving additional information, the Cultural Heritage Commission on September 8 reconsidered its previous two decisions about the significance of the property. This information came from two sources: a) a list of permits and notices from the City, between 1924 to 1952; and b) correspondence from the attorney representing the owners of the property. This correspondence cited the recollections of family members who had lived on the property since 1938.

The additional information, mostly unavailable to the Commission at its two meetings on July 6 and August 17, modified some of the assumptions on which the Commission based its decisions. The following table compares the information presented to the Commission on July 6 and September 8 and lists the most recent response by the Commission.

<b>Representations to Commission on July 6/ Aug. 17</b>	<b>Additional or Modified Information</b>	<b>Recommended Updated Findings</b>
Accessory structure behind the house is a stable dating to c. 1900.	The structure, built after the house, is a three-car garage, not a stable. According to the applicant, it has "no historical significance of any kind." A separate, freestanding barn was demolished in 1952. The 1922 assessor's site plan for the property indicates a garage; a 1924 building permit cites "purpose of building: garage."	The garage relates stylistically to the house and is part of the historical development of the property (Criterion D).
Mature trees on the site may date to c. 1900.	Family members recall large oaks trees, now gone, that may have dated to 1900. The largest of the existing trees are probably 60 to 80 years old.	Some of the largest trees may have associations with the ranching operations on the site (Criterion A & D).

Representations to Commission on July 6/ Aug. 17	Additional or Modified Information	Recommended Updated Findings
Water tower is best remaining example in the neighborhood; water tower may date from 1880s or 1890s.	Two other water towers from the citrus ranch era survive in the City: one (from 1879) on the campus of Las Encinas Hospital, the other (from 1891) at 691 Grace Terrace. According to the applicant, the water tower is "structurally unsound and cannot be safely moved." At a site inspection on 9-1-98, the City's Building Official determined that the tower is structurally sound.	The water tower at Las Encinas is close in location to 180 S. San Gabriel and a better example of this property type. It, however, is not in an intact setting with a house, accessory structure, open space, and trees. The rarity of this building type within its original setting contributes to the significance of the water tower at 180 S. San Gabriel (Criterion E).
	Public safety exception (§2.75.330) should apply to the buildings: demolition is "necessary to for the preservation of the health, safety or welfare of the public."	City's building official has not adopted this finding.
	Insufficient notice to property owners.	Applicant is the developer who is in escrow to develop the property, not the property owner. His application for a Certificate of Appropriateness failed to list the current owners; owners nevertheless received notice about the 8-17 hearing (but not the 7-6 meeting).
	Stay has caused a severe hardship.	Stays of the application are limited by code to specific times. At the end of a stay, the application is approved. Thusfar, the stay has not interfered with the scheduling or outcome of the application for the subdivision. Under §2.75.220, the buildings on the property cannot be demolished unless or until the developer has a valid building permit for a replacement project. Even if the stay were lifted, the City would not issue a demolition permit.

**Conclusion.**

Given the scarcity of agricultural buildings from the settlement period and citrus ranch era of the City's history, the Cultural Heritage Commission found that the buildings at 180 South San Gabriel Boulevard meet three of the criteria for designation as a landmark. No other site in the City appears to have a grouping of ranch-era structures in a setting largely unchanged from its early history. While there is a scattering of individual structures from citrus ranches (e.g., "Red Barn" which recently burned), none exists in an open space.

Acting on this finding, the Commission stayed a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition to "explore means for the protection, retention, and use of any ...potential landmark..." (P.M.C. §2.75.110 B 5). The code limits this the duration of this activity and requires the Commission to lift the stay "at any time if [it] determines that preservation is not feasible" (§2.75.220 D).

**HOUSING IMPACT.**

The new development on the site proposes nine, single-family houses. A stay of demolition is only a temporary measure and does not, by itself, affect the proposed subdivision. A finding that the property qualifies for designation as a landmark may require an environmental impact report for the proposed subdivision and possibly a redesign of the project (or mitigation measures) to lessen adverse effects on historic resources.

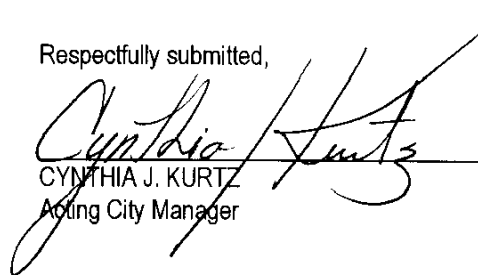
**IMPACT ON THE CITY'S REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS.**

The appeal will not affect the City's review and approval process.

**FISCAL IMPACT.**

A stay of demolition is a temporary measure. The Subdivision Committee will be responsible for acting on the application to subdivide the property and construct nine, single-family houses. The Committee's decision will determine the extent of revenues to the City from property taxes, construction tax, and development impact fees.


Respectfully submitted,



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Written by:

Approved by:

  
Jeff Cronin  
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### **ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: Advertisement for Subdivision of Sunny Slope Estate, 1895.

ATTACHMENT B Correspondence from Harry R. Stang, Esq. (Aug. 26, 1998).

ATTACHMENT C: Photographs of Buildings at 180 S. San Gabriel Blvd. (Aug., Sep. 1998).