

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 06/22/2009		Item Number: <u>A-1</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion and Direction Relating to a Proposed Process and Timeline for Updating Culver City's Historic Preservation Program, Including Implementation of an Updated Historic Structures Survey, Updates to Section 15.05, et seq. of the Culver City Municipal Code Relating to the Historic Preservation Program, and Updates to Other Related City Planning Guidelines and Tools.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Todd Tipton/ Redevelopment Administrator Sol Blumenfeld/Community Development Director		Phone Number: (310) 253-5770	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Master E-Mail Notification List (06/17/09); Meetings and Agendas – Redevelopment Agency (06/17/09); Meetings and Agendas – Planning (06/17/09); Meetings and Agendas -Cultural Affairs (06/17/09); City Historian Julie Lugo Cerra (06/04/09); Culver City Chamber of Commerce (06/04/09); Culver City Historical Society (06/04/09); Downtown Business Association (06/04/09); Culver City News Published Notice (06/11/09 and 06/18/09)			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld: (06/15/09)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab: (by H. Baker) (06/18/09)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by M. Noller) (06/17/09)		City Manager Approval: Mark Scott: (06/18/09)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council discuss and provide comments and direction regarding the proposed process and timeline for updating the City's Historic Preservation Program, including implementation of an updated historic structures survey, and updates to Sections 15.05, et seq. of the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) related to the Historic Preservation Program. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> In 1987, Thirtieth Street Architects, Inc. completed a field survey that was used as the basis for the 1990 Culver City Historic Preservation Advisory Committee Report, which recommended designation of Culver City properties as historical resources. The field survey, the 1990 report, and an ordinance adopted in 1991, provided the foundation for Culver City's Historic Preservation Program which is intended to protect the City's unique historical, architectural and cultural heritage. The			

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

preservation of historical resources is not only mandated at the local level, but also at the state and Federal levels.

State law, pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”), requires public agencies to evaluate and address the impacts of certain projects on the environment. CEQA specifically provides regulations for determining if there is a significant impact to a historical resource, which includes determining whether the resource is “historically significant” and whether a project would cause a “substantial adverse change” in the significance of the resource. In order for the City to make informed decisions on future projects in accordance with the requirements of CEQA, it is important that the Historic Preservation Program remain consistent with CEQA guidelines, which requires updating historic structure surveys at regular intervals.

In May 2008, staff resolved outstanding issues related to the requirements, proposed process, and an initial estimated timeline for updating the City’s Historic Preservation Program.

Subsequently, staff has worked with the California Office of Historic Preservation (“OHP”) which has provided technical assistance relating to general historic structures survey issues, examples of good context statements, and provided additional resources and contacts.

Staff has also begun the process of reviewing and updating the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (CCMC Sections 15.05, et seq.). The ordinance update is expected to be completed prior to initiating the survey. An initial draft of an updated ordinance was reviewed by the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) at its meeting on August 12, 2008. Staff will bring a revised ordinance back to the CAC for comment, prior to submission to the Council for consideration.

As part of the research effort to develop a preservation work plan, staff sought and received comments from several community stakeholders, including the Culver City Historical Society, City Historian Julie Lugo Cerra, and the Chamber of Commerce on the proposed update to the ordinance and the upcoming survey. The CAC also had comments regarding the preliminary draft ordinance and asked staff to provide further information.

DISCUSSION:

Historic Preservation Tasks & Timeline

The draft Historic Preservation Tasks & Timeline (Attachment 1) is designed to identify the basic components involved in updating Culver City’s Historic

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Preservation Program. It is anticipated that the scope of work may be further refined as necessary at certain junctures and target dates prior to completion. Many of the tasks included in the timeline relate to one another and are therefore arranged in a specific order. Below is a brief narrative summary of the sequence of tasks necessary to complete the project:

1. Advisory Committee: Historic structures surveys demand considerable community outreach and involvement. Typically an advisory committee, comprised primarily of community representatives, is formed to help with outreach, to serve as liaisons, and to provide recommendations at significant junctures during the process. Significant junctures include comment in the following areas: the selection of a consultant team, review of the context statement, review of the survey results, and designation nominations. Final actions on these subjects are made by the City Council.

In 1989, the City formed a Historic Preservation Advisory Committee ("HPAC"), comprised of 17 members, to review the results of the 1987 survey, establish designation criteria, and make recommendations to the City Council for designations at the local level. The HPAC was also charged with recommending designation criteria for historically significant buildings and provisions for rehabilitation of designated structures in a Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The HPAC was comprised of representatives from the Planning Commission, Human Services Commission, Redevelopment Project 3 Committee, Culver City Arts Committee, Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce, Realty Board, Homeowners' Association and the Unified School District. In addition, after a public solicitation process, eight volunteers from the public were appointed (October 16, 1989) as "at-large" representatives.

Staff developed the following list of recommended members for the advisory committee based upon the project background research:

- The City's two main movie studio lots (1 each – total 2)
- The three members from currently designated historic residential districts (Braddock, Lafayette & McConnell) (1 each – total 3)
- Culver City Historian (1 representative)
- Culver City Historical Society (2 representatives)
- Culver City Chamber of Commerce (1 representative)
- Downtown Business Association (1 representative)
- Culver City Unified School District (1 representative)
- Two Culver City civic organizations/clubs (2 total)
- At-Large Members (2 total)

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

- A representative from the City's Planning and Cultural Affairs Commissions (1 each – total 2)

The recommendation to include a representative from the Culver City Unified School District (primarily for outreach purposes) was made by the CAC at its August 12, 2008 meeting. In addition, the CAC also recommended at that time that members represent as many of Culver City's neighborhoods as possible and that nominations include persons who have a design, urban planning or preservation background.

At the January 13, 2009 CAC Town Hall meeting, the above-recommended list was again presented to the CAC for comment. The CAC recommended that the representatives of the three residential districts be removed, that the number of representatives of civic organizations/clubs be increased to three, and the at-large members increased to five. Per the CAC's recommendation, the advisory committee would be comprised of 18 members as follows:

- The City's two main movie studio lots (1 each – total 2)
- Culver City Historian (1 representative)
- Culver City Historical Society (2 representatives)
- Culver City Chamber of Commerce (1 representative)
- Downtown Business Association (1 representative)
- Culver City Unified School District (1 representative)
- Two Culver City civic organizations/clubs (3 total)
- At-Large Members (5 total)
- A representative from the City's Planning and Cultural Affairs Commissions (1 each – total 2)

2. Advisory Committee Application Process: Staff recommends that a simple application form be utilized that addresses the criteria outlined above and be accompanied by a resume. Consistent attendance at meetings (which are anticipated to be more frequent through the spring and summer) is imperative, and an individual's application should also reflect their commitment to participate. Prior to initiating the application process, staff intends to identify when meetings will occur so those applying are aware and able to make the necessary commitment.

As reflected on the attached timeline, the advisory committee would be involved in the review and update of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the selection process for a consultant to perform the survey, and the survey process itself. Staff anticipates returning to the City Council in September 2009 for consideration of the list of advisory committee nominees and appointment of committee members.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

3. Certified Local Government Status: The Certified Local Government Program is a preservation partnership between local, state and national governments focused on promoting historic preservation at the grass roots level. The program is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the OHP,

CLG status is beneficial because it provides access to Federal and State grant funds to help offset survey costs (typically between \$20,000 - \$25,000), provides access to a variety of historic preservation resources (the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Preserve America, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Main Street Center) and shows Culver City's commitment to keeping historic elements available to future generations.

Pursuant to OHP staff, Culver City's ability to obtain CLG status will be improved once a plan is in place to implement an updated City-wide historic structures survey.

4. Historic Preservation Ordinance Update: The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance was initially adopted in 1991 and most recently updated in 2001 to reflect the creation of the CAC and its purview over the historic preservation program. There was also an amendment to the Ordinance in 2004 to make several clerical corrections. As a tool for both property owners and staff, a good preservation ordinance reflects a local community's priorities for preservation, but should be updated to remain consistent with CEQA and state and federal guidelines for designation. Specific areas requiring review include:

- Updating the list of definitions
- Clarifying language in certain areas to ensure consistent interpretation
- Updating designation categories
- Updating designation threshold criteria
- Updating threshold criteria for establishing economic hardship
- Creating financial incentives for historic preservation (e.g., implementing a Mills Act program)¹.

5. Historic Structures Survey: Historic structures surveys are typically comprised of a context statement, completion of a reconnaissance survey (a cursory review of properties meeting the minimum age requirement to verify whether

¹ The Mills Act program (if adopted by the local jurisdiction) offers historic property owners property tax rebates in an effort to offset the cost of maintaining a historic property.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

or not they meet the criteria for documentation) followed by an intensive survey. The number of properties included in the intensive survey is a percentage of those included in the reconnaissance survey phase and involves documentation of information and images about specific properties onto standardized survey forms (attached).²

The 1987 Culver City survey includes approximately 180 individual structures built between ca. 1915 and 1940, which is approximately 10% of the properties currently recorded as having been constructed between 1900 and 1939.

Typically, existing surveys are updated when new surveys are initiated (i.e., the information in an existing survey is incorporated and then amended as appropriate). Staff and OHP recommend that this process be followed for the 1987 Culver City survey for the following reasons:

- The built environment is constantly changing. Therefore, historic contexts change with time, and structures not included in the initial survey may meet the context criteria today.
- The 1987 survey does not comprehensively address historical resources as currently defined by CEQA guidelines.
- Structures included in earlier surveys may be altered over time or be demolished. If those structures were not designated or designated “recognized,” (an honorary designation that bears no preservation protections), then the significance of those properties may have changed over time.
- Structures included in earlier surveys may become more significant over time. There are several examples of this in Culver City’s 1987 survey, the most recent being the Gateway Station Post Office at 9942 Culver Boulevard. In the 1987 survey, the post office was given a “B”

² Survey guidelines (see, e.g., *National Register Bulletin 24 – Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*) include the development of a context statement as the foundation for any survey which is based on documentation gleaned from a wide variety of sources, including City records, local historical society records, and oral interviews. (Footnote continued on next page.) Once completed, the context statement becomes the basis against which all properties meeting the minimum age criterion are assessed. This first survey phase is referred to as a “reconnaissance” survey. A smaller percentage of those properties are then actually recorded using standardized survey forms available through OHP that includes images, narrative descriptions and a California Historical Resource Status Code. (For purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act “CEQA”, resources included in a local register or deemed significant through a survey meeting OHP requirements and given a status code between 3 – 5, are presumed historically or culturally significant.)

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

ranking which meant that it was neither architecturally or historically significant enough for National Register consideration but that it maintained local importance. The post office was subsequently recommended for and designated “recognized,” a category bearing no preservation protections. In October 2008, the US Postal Service sent a report to OHP stating that the Gateway Station Post Office is eligible for listing on the National Register based on a Section 106 review prepared in conjunction with the proposed sale of the property. (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effects that their federally funded activities and programs have on significant historic properties.)

- Comprehensive city-wide surveys, which include updating existing surveys, are preferable to partial surveys in that information is gathered and assessed within the larger context of the entire community.

6. Designation Nominations: Context statements, survey results and ordinance criteria are used to make historic designation recommendations at the local level. An updated survey completed according to OHP standards, would also identify properties for potential listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. The necessity for making additional designations would be determined by the City Council once the survey is completed.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The cost for the historic structures survey will be known after responses to the RFP are received. The final amount will include costs for development of a context statement, completion of the survey, compilation of reports, development of a database, public noticing and community outreach program. Staff anticipates the final amount being funded from the Art Fund, a restricted Capital Improvement Fund and the Redevelopment Agency (in an amount proportional to the percentage of properties to be included in the survey that fall within Agency component areas).

Finally, at the time the RFP is issued, consultants bidding on the project will be able to provide cost estimates for completing a comprehensive survey versus several partial survey options. A draft RFP will be brought to Council for consideration prior to its release which is currently scheduled for October 2009.

A successful CLG status and grant application – as noted above --could assist in offsetting the fiscal impact of this project.

Additional costs associated with other tasks included in the timeline (Historic

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Preservation Ordinance update, adoption and implementation of a Mills Act, etc.) require further research and will be included when each of those respective items are presented to City Council for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Historic Preservation Tasks & Timeline
2. May 12, 2008 Memorandum to City Council Re Updated City-Wide Historic Structures Survey
3. Letter from Culver City Chamber of Commerce, dated September 25, 2008
4. Letter from Sol Blumenfeld to Culver City Chamber of Commerce, dated January 8, 2009
5. Letter from The Culver Hotel, dated September 20, 2008
6. Memorandum from Julie Lugo Cerra, dated September 18, 2008
7. Summary of Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel Data for Culver City, 1900 – 1964
8. Sample Survey Forms (DPR 523A & B)
9. The Top Ten Myths About Historic Preservation 10.
10. 2008 Los Angeles Conservancy Preservation Report Card

MOTION:

That the City Council:

1. Provide input and direction regarding the process and timeline for updating the City's Historic Preservation Program, including implementation of an updated historic structures survey, updates to CCMC Sections 15.05, et seq. related to the Historic Preservation Program, and updates to other City planning guidelines and tools; and,
2. Direct staff to implement projects associated with updating the City's Historic Preservation Program as included in the Historic Preservation Tasks & Timeline (identifying a community advisory committee, applying for Certified Local Government status, updating the historic preservation ordinance, updating the historic survey, implementing a Mills Act program, collecting data, considering additional designations, etc.); and,
3. Direct staff to proceed with the advertisement of an opportunity to serve on the advisory committee (as constituted per staff's recommendation) and return to City Council for consideration of appointments to that committee (which is currently scheduled to occur in September, 2009).