



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

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CAC - (1) Discussion Pertaining to Updating Culver City's Historic Preservation Program, Beginning with Updates to Chapter 15.05 of the Culver City Municipal Code Relating to the Historic Preservation Program; and, (2) Make a Recommendation to the City Council.

Meeting Date: October 16, 2018

Contact Person/Dept: B. Christine Byers / Administrative Services - Cultural Affairs

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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐

Action Item: ☒

Attachments: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (10/11/18); Culver City Historical Society (10/11/18); Julie Lugo Cerra, City Historian (10/11/18); Culver City Chamber of Commerce (10/11/18); Los Angeles Conservancy (10/11/18).

Department Approval: Serena Wright-Black, Assistant City Manager (10/09/18)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) consider the information provided and make a recommendation to the City Council with regard to process relating to updating the Culver City Municipal Code Chapter 15.05 (Historic Preservation Program).

BACKGROUND

The City Council established a Historic Preservation Program (Program) by adopting an Ordinance in 1991 which is codified in the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) under Chapter 15.05. At that time, the City Council also adopted Resolution 91-R015 which outlines a system for ranking and classifying structures and districts as Culver City Cultural Resources. There are a total of three Cultural Resource classification categories or levels: "Landmark", "Significant" and "Recognized". The "Landmark" and "Significant" categories have certain protections associated with them; the "Recognized" category is honorific only and comes with no protections.

Except for the former Culver City Ice Arena, all individual structures and districts designated Culver City Cultural Resources were made based on a field survey completed in 1987 by Thirtieth Street Architects, Inc., together with information included in the 1990 Culver City Historic Preservation

Advisory Committee (HPAC) Report. (The HPAC, comprising representatives of community organizations and at-large members, was tasked, among other duties, with making recommendations regarding criteria for ranking structures and districts of historic significance and making recommendations for designation based on these criteria. The majority of the structures ranked and recommended for designation by the HPAC were included in the 1987 survey.) Currently, Culver City's register of Cultural Resources includes over 120 individual structures and three historic districts.

The last substantive update to the City's Historic Preservation Program was completed in 2002 when language was added to the CCMC to incorporate the then newly created Cultural Affairs Commission and Cultural Affairs staff into implementation of the Program.

DISCUSSION

While forward-looking at the time of its establishment, Culver City's Historic Preservation Program is outdated and no longer functions as a streamlined and effective planning tool. The program is missing components included in preservation programs reflecting best practices. For example, it is not aligned with federal and state guidelines and regulations (most significantly, the California Environmental Quality Act or CEQA). The program does not provide financial incentives for owners of properties designated at the local level (e.g., Mills Act) and the only field survey completed in conjunction with the program is now over 30 years old and very limited in scope. At the very least, this currently means that the City and private property owners have to complete Historic Resource Evaluations for individual structures 45 years or older as part of CEQA review on a case-by-case basis. This approach is both inefficient, expensive and can significantly extend the entitlement process.

In addition, there is the option of updating the Program so that Culver City is eligible for applying for Certified Local Government (CLG) status. The Certified Local Government Program is a preservation partnership between local, state, and federal government agencies established in 1966 by the National Historic Preservation Act. In California, the program is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). California currently has more than 65 CLG partners, including both city and county agencies. CLG status provides local governments with certain benefits, including eligibility for grant funding (up to \$40,000 per year) toward future updates of surveys, public outreach and educational programs, preparation of or updates to General Plan Historic Preservation Elements, and information management and technology. In November 1997, the City Council adopted a resolution approving the application and certification agreement for CLG status, but there is no evidence that the application process was completed and submitted to OHP.

As a tool for both property owners and City staff, a preservation ordinance should reflect a community's current priorities and provide a foundation and framework for other aspects of a local preservation program such as surveys, nominations for designation, and financial incentives. Updating the CCMC via a revised ordinance is the first step of a multi-phased process.

Some of the provisions of the CCMC Chapter 15.05 staff recommends be reviewed include:

- Definitions - “Adverse Effect”, “Contributing Property”, “Demolition” “Demolition by Neglect”, and “Environmental Setting”, are some commonly used terms referenced in CEQA and preservation planning that are currently not included in the CCMC;
- Designation Categories - These need to be evaluated and streamlined; having a designation category with no protections poses a disconnect with CEQA;
- Threshold criteria for designation;
- Threshold criteria for establishing economic hardship;
- Clearly define role of appointed bodies and staff with regard to tasks associated with implementing the program;
- The relationship between CEQA procedures and the City’s Historic Preservation Program, clarifying whether or not the local preservation decision-making review process will be influenced by the state-mandated CEQA review process; and,
- Provision for economic incentives for property owners (this is optional and can be added at a later date).

Subsequent to a staff meeting earlier this year (Assistant City Manager, Community Development Department, City Attorney and Cultural Affairs staff), the following approach is recommended:

- That a Community Advisory Committee be created comprising representatives of the Culver City Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, and one or more neighborhood associations. The Community Advisory Committee should represent owners of different types of properties but be small enough to allow for streamlined coordination during the update process.
- That the City hire a qualified preservation consultant who will also coordinate input and review of various City Departments/Divisions, the CAC Historic Preservation Subcommittee, the Community Advisory Committee, the CAC, Planning Commission and City Council. The consultant would also conduct public workshops.
- That the consultant’s scope of work include development of a Mills Act Program, including a Mills Act Ordinance and application procedures and materials; and,
- That the consultant’s scope of work include recommendations on changes that would make Culver City eligible for Certified Local Government status.

On August 13, 2018, the information included herein was reviewed by the CAC Historic Preservation Subcommittee (Vice Chair Pali and Commissioner Williams) who supported these recommendations.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Based upon the direction provided by the City Council, proposed updates will have a fiscal impact with regard to consultant's fees and staff time. Consultant costs are estimated between \$30,000 - \$40,000. Currently there is \$50,000 appropriated for FY 2018-19 in account number 41322400.619800 PZ 954 (Historic Preservation).

ATTACHMENTS

None.

RECOMMENDED MOTIONS

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. Recommend that the City Council authorize staff to issue an Request for Proposal for consultant services in conjunction with updating the CCMC as pertains to the Historic Preservation Program;

AND

2. Recommend that the Consultant's scope of work include development of a Mills Act Program and address criteria for Culver City qualifying as a Certified Local Government;

AND

3. Recommend that the City Council direct staff on including a Community Advisory Committee into the process and direct staff on how the members are to be selected.