



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

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Item #: A-2.

CC - (1) Discussion Pertaining to Updating Culver City's Historic Preservation Program, as Set Forth in Chapter 15.05 of the Culver City Municipal Code, Including Authorization to Release Request for Proposals for Related Consultant Services, and Authorization to Incorporate a Community Advisory Panel into the Process; and, (2) Direction to City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: February 25, 2019

Contact Person/Dept: Christine Byers/Cultural Affairs

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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐

Action Item: ☒

Attachments: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas - City Council (02/19/19); Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (02/19/19); Cultural Affairs Commission (02/08/19); Culver City Historical Society (02/11/19); Julie Lugo Cerra, City Historian (02/11/19); Culver City Chamber of Commerce (02/11/10); Los Angeles Conservancy (02/11/19).

Department Approval: Serena Wright-Black, Assistant City Manager (02/17/19); Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (02/19/19)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) discuss the priorities and process relating to updating the City's Historic Preservation Program as set forth in Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Chapter 15.05, including authorizing the release of a Request for Proposals for related consultant services, and authorizing the incorporation of a Community Advisory Panel into the process; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The City Council established a Historic Preservation Program (Program) by adopting an Ordinance in 1991 which is codified in CCMC 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

Best Practices

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 other preservation programs reflecting best practices. For example, the City’s Program is not aligned with federal and state guidelines and regulations (e.g. 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 over 30 years old and very limited in scope. As a result, under the current Program, City and private property owners are required 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.

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 the components of a local preservation program such as surveys, nominations for designation, and financial incentives.

CCMC Update

Updating the CCMC is the first step of a multi-phased process. Some of the provisions of 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;
- Threshold criteria for designation;
- Threshold criteria for establishing economic hardship;
- Clearly defining the role of appointed bodies and staff with regard to tasks associated with implementing the program;
- Clarifying the relationship between CEQA procedures and the City’s Historic Preservation Program, including 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).

Certified Local Government Status

In addition to the updates discussed above, there is the option of amending the CCMC in order for Culver City to be eligible to apply 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 CLG 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 it appears that the application process was not completed and submitted to OHP.

Next Steps

Pursuant to review and discussion of issues in 2018 between the Assistant City Manager, Community Development Director, City Attorney and Cultural Affairs Coordinator, 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 Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) Ad Hoc Historic Preservation Subcommittee, the Community Advisory Committee, Cultural Affairs Commission, Planning Commission and the 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.

Cultural Affairs Commission Recommendation

On August 13, 2018, the information included herein was reviewed by the CAC Ad Hoc Historic Preservation Subcommittee (Vice Chair Pali and Commissioner Williams) who supported these recommendations. The Cultural Affairs Commission considered the information together with the CAC's Historic Preservation Subcommittee's recommendation and unanimously passed the following motions at its meeting of October 16, 2018:

1. RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL AUTHORIZE STAFF TO ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 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.

During discussion of the item at the CAC meeting, there was a question from the Commission about including representatives on the Community Advisory Committee from other large neighborhoods that did not have an association. Staff responded that the intent of looking to the established neighborhood associations is with the objective of having a communication vehicle (i.e., association email listserv) that allows for outreach during the process. Staff said that workshops and community meetings would be alternatives for residents of neighborhoods not represented on the Community Advisory Committee to participate in the update process.

Preliminary Outreach

Staff has met with various stakeholders, including President and CEO of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce, City Historian, President of the Culver City Historical Society and Sony Pictures Entertainment, over the past few months to review with them what is included herein. Staff has no additional comments from these meetings for the City Council to consider at this time.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Based upon the direction provided by the City Council, the proposed update will have a fiscal impact with regard to consultant's fees and staff time. Consultant costs are estimated to be 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.

MOTIONS

That the City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager to issue a Request for Proposal for consultant services in conjunction with updating the CCMC as pertains to the Historic Preservation Program;and
2. Authorize the Consultant's scope of work to include development of a Mills Act Program and address criteria for Culver City qualifying as a Certified Local Government;and
3. Authorize the City Manager to incorporate a Community Advisory Committee into the process which shall comprise the following: Culver City Historical Society (2 representatives), Chamber of Commerce (2 representatives), Downtown Business Association (1-2 representatives), and one representative from each of the five neighborhood associations (Blair Hills Association, Culver Crest Neighborhood Association, Fox Hills Neighborhood Association, Rancho Higuera Neighborhood Association, and Sunkist Park Neighborhood Association);and
4. Provide other direction to the City Manager as the City Council deems appropriate.