



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

333 West Ocean Blvd., 3rd Floor, Long Beach, CA 90802 (562) 570-5237

December 10, 2018

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSISONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council designate a new historic district for nineteen properties located on the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue, bounded by 61st Street to the north and 60th Street to the south, specifically addressed as 6001, 6002, 6012, 6017, 6018, 6023, 6024, 6029, 6030, 6037, 6038, 6043, 6044, 6049, 6050, 6055, 6056, 6067 and 6068 Walnut Avenue as a Historical Landmark District. (District 9).

APPLICANT:

City of Long Beach
333 West Ocean Blvd
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. HP18-508)

REQUEST

The City requests that the Cultural Heritage Commission review the background materials and recommend that the City Council designate the nineteen properties located on the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue, bounded by 61st Street to the north and 60th Street to the south, specifically addressed as 6001, 6002, 6012, 6017, 6018, 6023, 6024, 6029, 6030, 6037, 6038, 6043, 6044, 6049, 6050, 6055, 6056, 6067 and 6068 Walnut Avenue as a Historical Landmark District as shown the proposed district would consist of a single residential block and would be recognized as Grant Neighborhood Historic District (Exhibit A - Location Map).

Background

The Grant Neighborhood Association expressed interest in nominating the properties located on the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue as a historic landmark district. An application was received on June 18, 2018, which nominated the entire 6000 block of Walnut Avenue. In conjunction with the application, 18 letters of support were received from the owners of the properties along the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue.

In evaluating historic significance, a Historic Context Statement (HCS) was prepared to establish a historic timeline and framework for evaluating Grant Neighborhood's history (Exhibit B – Grant Neighborhood Historic Context Statement). The HSC identified significant events or themes that shaped the development pattern of Grant

Neighborhood in terms of historic setting and context of the area. This study utilized and expanded upon the 2009 Long Beach Citywide Historic Context Statement.

In addition to the HCS, a Historic Resources Survey Report was prepared to evaluate the specific properties located along the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue for potential significance as a historic landmark district (Exhibit C - Grant Neighborhood Survey Report). The survey report determined that the properties along the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue meet the qualification for significance, as the block represents a distinguishable part of Long Beach history and is significant as an intact, cohesive automobile suburb whose core was constructed between years of 1928 and 1930. This cohesive collection of residential properties reflects Long Beach's booming economic growth in the 1920's and corresponding rapid residential expansion in the city periphery, as the rise of the personal automobile made settlement feasible in areas far from the City Center.

Each property along the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue was evaluated to determine individual significance to the collection of residential properties on the block (Exhibit D – Historic Resources Overview). A total of 19 properties were analyzed and a total of 17 were found to directly contribute significance to the block. The 19 properties specifically evaluated have the following addresses: 6001, 6002, 6012, 6017, 6018, 6023, 6024, 6029, 6030, 6037, 6038, 6043, 6044, 6049, 6050, 6055, 6056, 6067 and 6068 Walnut Avenue. These properties are located in the R-1-N zone (Single Family Residential District with Normal Lots).

The supporting documents establish themes of significance for Grant Neighborhood, detail eligibility standards, and identify integrity thresholds to ensure that evaluations are both contextual and comparative.

On September 23, 2018, a community workshop was held to discuss the proposed landmark district. The workshop provided guidance to community on the process for landmark district designation, how we evaluate properties and the specific impact the designation would have on property owners affected by the designation.

ANALYSIS

The HSC established several periods of significance for residential development in Grant Neighborhood and specifically the properties on Walnut Avenue. The primary themes of significance that apply to evaluations of these properties are listed below:

Residential Development and Suburbanization, 1887 to 1970

- Theme #1: Automobile Suburbanization, 1920 to 1960
- Theme #2: Oil Boom Town
- Theme #3: New Deal and the FHA "Minimum House," 1934-1945
- Theme #4: Military Boom Town: Defense-Related Housing
- Theme #5: Ethnic Enclaves, 1968 to 1980

Historical Background

Grant Neighborhood, including the entire City of Long Beach, originates from vast land holdings granted to Manuel Nieto in 1784 by the Spanish government. The 300,000-acre rancho, was overtime divided into a number of smaller land grants, which included Rancho Los Alamitos and Rancho Cerritos. After acquiring the land of Rancho Los Alamitos and Rancho Cerritos from Abel Stearns and John Temple in the 1870's, Jothem Bixby continued parceling off and selling the land. The area at that time was occupied by sheep and dairy farms, as well as agricultural farms which harvested barley, oats, alfalfa, pumpkin, and sugar beets amongst other crops.

The 1920s brought widespread construction and population boom for Long Beach. One of the most significant events in the City's early formation was the 1921 discovery of oil in Signal Hill. Between 1920 and 1925, the City's population more than doubled due to the influx of people looking for work in the oil industry. Oil-related processing, production, and shipping became Long Beach's principal employer. By 1925, Long Beach had become home to 135,000 residents, an increase of 80,000 in just five years. Throughout North Long Beach, the oil boom triggered a rapid rise in residential development, replacing the dairies and farms with single-family homes for oil workers and their families.

The one-square mile encompassed by Grant Neighborhood was roughly divided into four quadrants and by 1925, more than a dozen tracts had been subdivided and offered for sale, primarily in the northwest and southwest quadrants. Tract 7846, which was filed in January 1924, includes the current 6000 block of Walnut Avenue, between 60th and 61st Streets. This track totaled approximately 200 parcels with sizes ranging from 40-45 feet wide and approximately 117 feet deep.

Grant Neighborhood saw an increase of residential development, (specifically between 1938 and 1947), with primarily single-family homes, mainly due to the defense industry and the Navy's presence in Long Beach. By the end of World War II, Grant Neighborhood was already a well-established automobile suburb, with uniform setbacks, street trees, and neighborhood amenities. The deep configuration of the lots allowed for a home and an accompanying garage, set back and accessed via a side driveway. A majority of building permits from the 1920s and 1930s included a dwelling and a garage as part of the original construction. The presence of a garage for most homes throughout the neighborhood reflects the centrality of the automobile in making settlement in North Long Beach feasible for many new residents.

Exclusionary Housing Practices

During the early 20th Century, restrictive covenants had been widely used in property deeds, that dictated terms for present and future ownership. For example, deeds could specify what races could own property and more importantly what races could not. During the Great Depression, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), as a New Deal program, offered home mortgages that were long-term and low interest. However, not all races benefited from this program due to exclusionary housing practices. During the 1930s, exclusionary housing practices restricted home ownership to non-Caucasians.

Another New Deal program, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) program offered refinancing and low-interest loans for homeowners. The HOLC established an appraisal system for ranking neighborhoods and assigning a “security risk” level for each neighborhood. Owners living in neighborhoods identified with a moderate or high security risk generally could not qualify for loans or federal funding. Most properties located in North Long Beach, including the properties on Walnut Avenue, were identified as a 3rd level (yellow or moderate) security risk. The long time use of these practices resulted in the segregation in communities. The FHA supported the use of restrictive covenants until 1948. Today, the Grant Neighborhood is one of the most demographically varied and diverse in the region.

Architectural Style

In efforts to provide affordable housing for the military personal returning from war, the FHA developed a home design that was affordable to construct. The so-called Minimum House, also referred to as the “Minimal Traditional” style, presented a minimum threshold, in terms of square footage, plan, program, and amenities, that would be approved and funded through the FHA. The Minimal Traditional home served as the prototype used by the FHA in its efforts to codify and manufacture “a standard, low-cost, minimum house that the majority of American wage earners could afford. While architectural detailing varies, the basic house type represents a stripped-down version of the historic-eclectic styles popular in the 1920s, in particular the Tudor and English Revival styles. Long Beach retains a great number of FHA-funded Minimal Traditional homes of the late 1930s and early 1940s, with a large concentration in North Long Beach neighborhoods.

As of 2018, Grant Neighborhood retains the highest concentrations of 1920s properties in the northwest quadrant (north of East Harding Street, along East 65th Street, Poinsettia Street, and 63rd Street) and southwest quadrant (south of East Harding Street, along Walnut Avenue, Falcon Avenue, Gundry Avenue, and Gaviota Avenue). These areas were also home to some of the earliest tracts and subdivisions in the neighborhood. In total, 25 percent of the current built improvements in the neighborhood were constructed during the 1920s, with notable concentrations in the western half of the neighborhood. Furthermore, Fire Station No. 12, located on the northwest corner of Gundry and East 65th Street, was recently designated as a historic landmark.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance contains four criteria for *landmark* designation: associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A), associated with the lives of persons important to the City’s past (Criterion B), embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values (Criterion C), or has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important in prehistory or history (Criterion D). For landmark designation the district has to meet one finding.

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance contains two criteria for *landmark district* designation: the grouping represents a significant and distinguishable entity that is significant within a

historic context (Criterion A) and a minimum of sixty percent (60%) of the properties within the boundaries of the proposed landmark district qualify as a contributing property (Criterion B). For landmark district designation the district has to meet both findings.

The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue is eligible for Long Beach historic *landmark* designation under Criteria A and historic *landmark district* designation under Criterion A and B. The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue was found to be eligible for landmark designation under Criterion A, as it represents a distinguishable part of Long Beach history and was determined to be significant as an intact cohesive automobile suburb whose cores were constructed between 1928 and 1930. The period of significance is between 1928-1956. The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue was determined to be eligible as a historic *landmark district* as the 19 properties were found to be unified through compatible architectural styles and scale, shared planning features, street trees, landscaping, and uniform set-backs. This cohesive collection of residential properties reflects Long Beach's booming economic growth in the 1920s and corresponding rapid residential expansion in the city periphery, as the rise of the personal automobile made settlement feasible in areas far from the City center. A total of 89% of properties are contributing to the district which exceed the minimum requirement of 60% under Criterion B.

Among the residential parcels along the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue, a total of 14 are considered primary "contributors" (or eligible historic properties), three (addressed as 6012, 6017 and 6018 Walnut Avenue) are considered secondary contributors (due to their construction date), and two (addressed as 6001 and 6002 Walnut Avenue), are not eligible as contributors to the historic district (due to their orientation toward 60th Street and their construction date). The three secondary contributors (addressed as 6012, 6017 and 6018 Walnut Avenue) are considered transitional properties for the historic district, important for their shared planning features, orientation to the street and neighborhood, and for their uniform mass, character, set-backs and landscaping.

The 19 properties are designated as General Plan Land Use District (LUD 1) Single Family Districts. The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue are developed as single family residences. The General Plan Land Use Element includes relevant goals consistent with the proposed nomination, including:

Neighborhood Emphasis: Long Beach recognizes the strong neighborhood to be the essential building block of a Citywide quality living environment, and will assist and support the efforts of residents to maintain and strengthen their neighborhoods.

The proposed nomination will preserve the history of the neighborhood. The 19 properties embody the history of the neighborhood and City as a whole. Its designation as a historic landmark district helps to raise public awareness about the City's history, historic preservation program, encourages public participation in learning about the historic resources in the City. The nomination will also assure the neighborhood is maintained in a high-quality manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Preservation of the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue will also allow for a future expansion to protect additional properties within the Grant Neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the landmark district nomination and has determined that it meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code, Section 2.63.050 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code which state that a cultural resource qualifies for designation as a historic *landmark* if it retains integrity and meets one or more of the four findings and historic *landmark district* designation as it retains integrity as a whole and it meets two findings. Staff supports the nomination, and finds that the nomination meets Criteria A for landmark designation and Criteria A and B for Landmark District designation.

The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue was found to eligible for landmark designation under Criterion A, as it represents a distinguishable part of Long Beach history and was determined to be significant as an intact cohesive automobile suburb whose cores were constructed between 1928 and 1930. The period of significance is between 1928-1956. The 6000 block of Walnut Avenue was determined to be eligible as a historic *landmark district* under Criterion A and B. The 19 properties were found to be unified through compatible architectural styles and scale, shared planning features, street trees, landscaping, and uniform set-backs. This cohesive collection of residential properties reflects Long Beach's booming economic growth in the 1920s and corresponding rapid residential expansion in the city periphery, in particular through North Long Beach, as the rise of the personal automobile made settlement feasible in areas far from the City center. A total of 89% of properties are contributing to the district which exceed the minimum requirement of 60% under Criterion B. (Exhibit E – Landmark Designation Findings).

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on November 21, 2018, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21, of the Long Beach Municipal Code. As of this date, no objections have been filed as it relates to the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the 15331 Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), environmental review is not required for actions taken for the preservation or restoration of historic structures.

Respectfully submitted,



GINA CASILLAS
PLANNER



ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

CK:AP:gc

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
 Exhibit B – Grant Neighborhood Historic Context Statement
 Exhibit C – Grant Neighborhood Survey Report
 Exhibit D – Historic Resource Overview
 Exhibit E – Landmark Designation Findings

