



# CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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

March 1, 2016

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
City of Long Beach  
California

## RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Attorney to prepare an Ordinance designating the Alamitos Neighborhood Library located at 1836 East Third Street as a Long Beach Historical Landmark. (District 2)

## DISCUSSION

On January 4, 2016, an amended Cultural Heritage Ordinance (15-0038) took effect and streamlined the process for designation of new landmarks within the City. Among other changes, the amended Ordinance allows nominations to proceed directly from a Cultural Heritage Commission recommendation to a full City Council consideration. On January 11, 2016, the Cultural Heritage Commission recommended that the City Council designate the Alamitos Neighborhood Library at 1836 East Third Street as a Long Beach Historical Landmark (Exhibit A).

Since its construction in 1928, the Alamitos Neighborhood Library has continuously been utilized as a public library building. Today it is operated by the Library Services Department and is the oldest remaining branch within the City network of libraries. The building was designed by a team of City "Department Engineers" and the design leader was not discovered in the historic record. The library's history; however, dates to 1895 when leading residents of Alamitos Beach organized the Alamitos Library Association. The Alamitos Neighborhood Library is the oldest building remaining in the City's library system and is associated with the development of Alamitos Beach and greater Long Beach during the 1920s.

The subject property is located on the south side of Third Street between Hermosa Avenue and Cherry Avenue (Exhibit B). The site is located within the R-2-N zone (Two Family Residential District with Normal Lots). The two-story library building consists of the main reading room, second floor offices, second floor community room and exterior courtyard behind the building.

The Alamitos Neighborhood Library is eligible for Long Beach Historical Landmark designation under Criteria A and Criteria C of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. The historic building is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criteria A), and the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or it represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic value (Criteria C).

The historic building is located in the Alamitos Beach Town site laid out by John Bixby; it also embodies the history of library development and the importance of civic life during the early development of the City of Long Beach. It is an excellent example of Spanish Colonial Revival style applied to an institutional building. The building is also significant because it retains its historic purpose as a library building and for its unique neighborhood scale. The Spanish Colonial Revival style is directly tied to architecture's attempt to embrace and promote the California environment and lifestyle during the 1920s.

The building's hand-painted ceiling beams, wrought iron railings, window grates, courtyard with tile fountain and terra cotta tile are all remarkable examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. While many residential structures of this style remain in Long Beach, civic buildings are more rare. This scarcity and the pristine condition of the library is particularly compelling in terms of its significance.

The exterior of the library structure is a critical piece of Long Beach's shared cultural and architectural history. Its preservation meets the criteria for designation and will assure that the library continues to connect Long Beach residents and visitors to the civic history and long traditions of the public library system. This designation will allow the library to continue its operations and make necessary changes to the interior, all while protecting the exterior and preserving it for generations to come.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Linda T. Vu on February 11, 2016 and by Budget Management Officer Victoria Bell on February 5, 2016.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

Establishing the Alamitos Neighborhood Library as a Long Beach Historical Landmark will assure its continued use and existence, reducing construction waste as compared to new construction.

#### TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action on this matter is not time critical.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Amy J. Bodek in cursive, followed by the word "for" in a smaller font.

AMY J. BODEK, AICP  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

AJB:LT:ck  
P:\Planning\City Council Items (Pending)\Council Letters\2016\3-1-16\Alamitos Library

APPROVED:

Handwritten signature of Patrick H. West in cursive, written over a horizontal line.

PATRICK H. WEST  
CITY MANAGER

Attachments: Exhibit A – January 11, 2016 Cultural Heritage Commission Staff Report  
Exhibit B – Location Map



# CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

333 West Ocean Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor • Long Beach, CA 90801 • (562) 570-6194 • Fax (562) 570-6068

January 11, 2016

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS  
City of Long Beach  
California

## RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend the City Council designate the Alamitos Neighborhood Library located at 1836 East Third Street as a Historical Landmark. (District 2).

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach  
333 W. Ocean Boulevard  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
(Application No. HP14-202)

## THE REQUEST

The City requests that the Cultural Heritage Commission review the background materials and recommend that the City Council designate the Alamitos Neighborhood Library as a Historical Landmark.

## BACKGROUND

During 2014 the Cultural Heritage Commission received a presentation from Long Beach Heritage and Development Services staff regarding potential city properties that could be prioritized for preservation and local landmark designation. Over the course of 2015 staff began a review of these priority properties and determined the Alamitos Neighborhood Library to be a top-choice among culturally valuable buildings owned by the City. This determination was based on the integrity of the building's architecture, the compatibility of its current use with a potential designation, availability of historic records of the property and the fact the property was not encumbered by any ongoing lease, purchase or disposal negotiations. On January 4, 2016, an updated Cultural Heritage Ordinance (15-0038) took effect and streamlined the process for designation of new landmarks within the City. Among other changes, the updated ordinance uses the four California Register criteria for landmark dedications and allows nominations to proceed directly from a Cultural Heritage Commission recommendation to a full City Council consideration.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

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The first landmark to be considered by the Commission under the updated Cultural Heritage ordinance is the Alamitos Neighborhood Library. The Library Department operates the City's system of main and branch libraries. Development Services staff consulted with the Library Department in reviewing the structure, its integrity, use, and any impacts of the landmark designation.

Since its construction in 1928, the building has continuously been utilized as a public library building. It is the oldest remaining branch within the City of Long Beach network of libraries. The building was designed by a team of City of Long Beach "Department Engineers" and the design leader was not discovered in the historic record. The library's history however dates to 1895 when leading residents of Alamitos Beach organized the Alamitos Library Association. The Alamitos Branch Library is the oldest building remaining in the City's library system and is associated with the development of Alamitos Beach and greater Long Beach during the 1920s.

The subject property is located on the south side of Third Street between Hermosa Avenue and Cherry Avenue (Exhibit A – Location Map). The site is located within the R-2-N zone (Two Family Residential District with Normal Lots). The two-story library building consists of the main reading room, second floor offices, second floor community room and exterior courtyard behind the building.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### *DESIGN*

The building is designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style which is influenced by Spanish, Baroque, Moorish and other European styles. The popularity of this style grew during the 1920's and 30's and its use was widely spread throughout Southern California. During this period as an architectural style its design was applied to residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

Character-defining features typical of this architectural style include: asymmetrical primary elevations, smooth stucco walls, clay tile roofs, flat or low-pitched gabled roof forms, exposed rafter tails and/or brackets beneath the eaves, round or square towers and cupolas, wood paneled doors accented with spiral columns, pilasters, carved decorations, or decorative tiles, wood or metal double-hung or casement windows, wrought iron or pierced stucco window grates, balconies with wood or wrought iron railings; tiled accents on walls, stairs, or fountains; wrought iron lanterns and hardware.

#### *FLOOR PLAN*

The first floor of the building consists of the main reading room and library collections in the western half of the building, and in the eastern half of the building, there is an entry foyer, staircase and a smaller reading room. The second floor is primarily made up of a larger community room, offices and storage. From the reading room a pair of wood French doors open to a rear courtyard with a tiled fountain on the rear perimeter wall. There is a small surface parking area accessible from a rear alley.

### *FORM & MATERIALS*

This two-story building has some traditionally larger building forms, key features to the Spanish Colonial style, including: the cross gable roof, low pitched roofs and stucco finished walls. The structure also has many of the character defining ornamental features of the Spanish Colonial Style, including a balconette centered over the front door, decorative wrought iron railing over the windows, pierced stucco window grates along the second floor and paneled wood doors at the front entry. Other features include: the tiled fountain, metal casement windows, clay vents and metal gutters with decorative fastenings.

### *WINDOWS AND DECORATIVE FEATURES*

The building features a combination of multi-light fixed and casement metal windows with larger windows located along the west wall to provide natural light into the reading room. A tall fixed rectangular window is located along the front façade and adorned with a decorative wrought iron railing. Some of the second floor windows feature low relief carving including the balconette window with low wrought iron railing. There are also iron window grilles and decorative arch elements throughout the building.

### *ROOF*

The building is unique for its asymmetrical front façade and varying roof lines. There is a protruding front gable (reading room) on the first floor that extends within five feet of the sidewalk. The second roof line consists primarily of a cross-gable roof line. The second floor side gable is the predominant roof, with two smaller north and south facing gables. At the rear of the building there is a lower level flat roof over the reading room with a parapet wall. The roofing material is composition shingle with little or no roof eaves (Exhibit B –Photographs).

### *ALTERATIONS*

The building is well preserved with minimal building alterations. In 1937 some repairs were completed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) after damage to the building from the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. In 2008-2009, the front tile steps were modified and a ramp compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was added. The alteration was approved with a condition to salvage the tile staircase bulkhead to be reused for a bench at the front of the property. A detached garage located behind the building and accessible from the rear alley was demolished in 2014.

Textured stucco was added to the west wall at an unknown date. The majority of the building is finished with a smooth stucco. Unlike other structures of this era and style, the library has a composition shingle roof. Typically, most Spanish Colonial style buildings use red clay tile roofing material instead of the composition shingle roofing. It is not confirmed whether this building originally had clay tile roofing. If the building did have clay tile roofing, it's possible that it may have been removed after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. These alterations are noted for purposes of establishing what historic material exists within the structure and applying the correct standard of review to future requests to modify already altered areas versus areas where historic building materials remain.

### *HISTORY*

The Alamitos Library Association was founded in 1895. The members of the Library Association acquired land donated by Jonathan Bixby Sr. of the Alamitos Land Company and in 1897 constructed a small wood-framed building to be called "Library Hall." When Alamitos Beach Townsite (Alamitos Beach, Belmont Heights, Belmont Shore and Naples) was annexed to the City of Long Beach in 1905, the Alamitos Library Association offered the library and its contents to the City of Long Beach public library system. The City quickly outgrew the wood structure and began plans for the Alamitos Branch Library that stands today. The current building, a replica of a castle in Spain, with wrought iron railings, decorated beams, and a patio with an art tile fountain, opened in 1929.

### **DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

The updated Cultural Heritage ordinance contains four criteria for 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).

The Alamitos Library is eligible for Long Beach historic Landmark designation under Criteria A. The historic building is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and Criteria C as the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or it represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic value.

The historic building is located in the Alamitos Beach Townsite laid out by John Bixby; it also embodies the history of library development and the importance of civic life during the early development of the City of Long Beach.

The library is also eligible under Criteria C. The Alamitos Library is an excellent example of Spanish Colonial Revival style applied to an institutional building. The building is also significant because it retains its historic purpose as a library building and for its unique neighborhood scale. The Spanish Colonial Revival style is directly tied to architecture's attempt to embrace and promote the California environment and lifestyle during the 1920s.

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The exterior of the library structure is a critical piece of Long Beach's shared cultural and architectural history. Its preservation meets the criteria for designation and will assure that the library continues to connect Long Beach residents and visitors to the civic history and long traditions of the public library system. This designation will allow the library to continue its operations, make necessary changes to the interior and operations of the library, all while protecting the exterior and preserving it for generations to come.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff has analyzed the landmark 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 Landmark if it retains integrity and meets one or more of the four findings. Staff supports the nomination, and finds that the nomination meets criteria A and C.

The proposed nomination is complimentary to the surrounding neighborhood. The library is surrounded by single and multi-family residential structures on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street as well as parks, commercial and residential uses in the larger vicinity. The library has continuously served as a social and civic gather plan, providing knowledge and facilitating learning throughout the Alamitos Beach community over many decades. This civic asset is also a historic and cultural assets, its preservation through landmark status will be complimentary to the residences, parks and businesses in the surrounding community. The nomination of the library for Landmark status is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Element Goals of Neighborhood Emphasis, Quality Education, Facilities Maintenance and Arts and Culture Support. Nomination of the library also specifically forwards Policy 2.7 of the Historic Preservation Element through the landmarking of a public building.

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Commission make a recommendation to the City Council to approve the nomination.

### **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

Public notices were distributed on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015. As of this date no letters have been received.

### **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.



CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

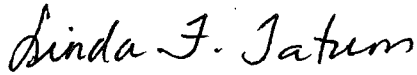
January 11, 2016

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Respectfully submitted,



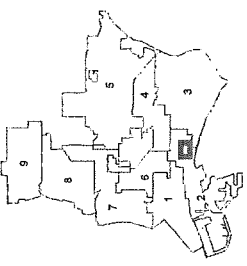
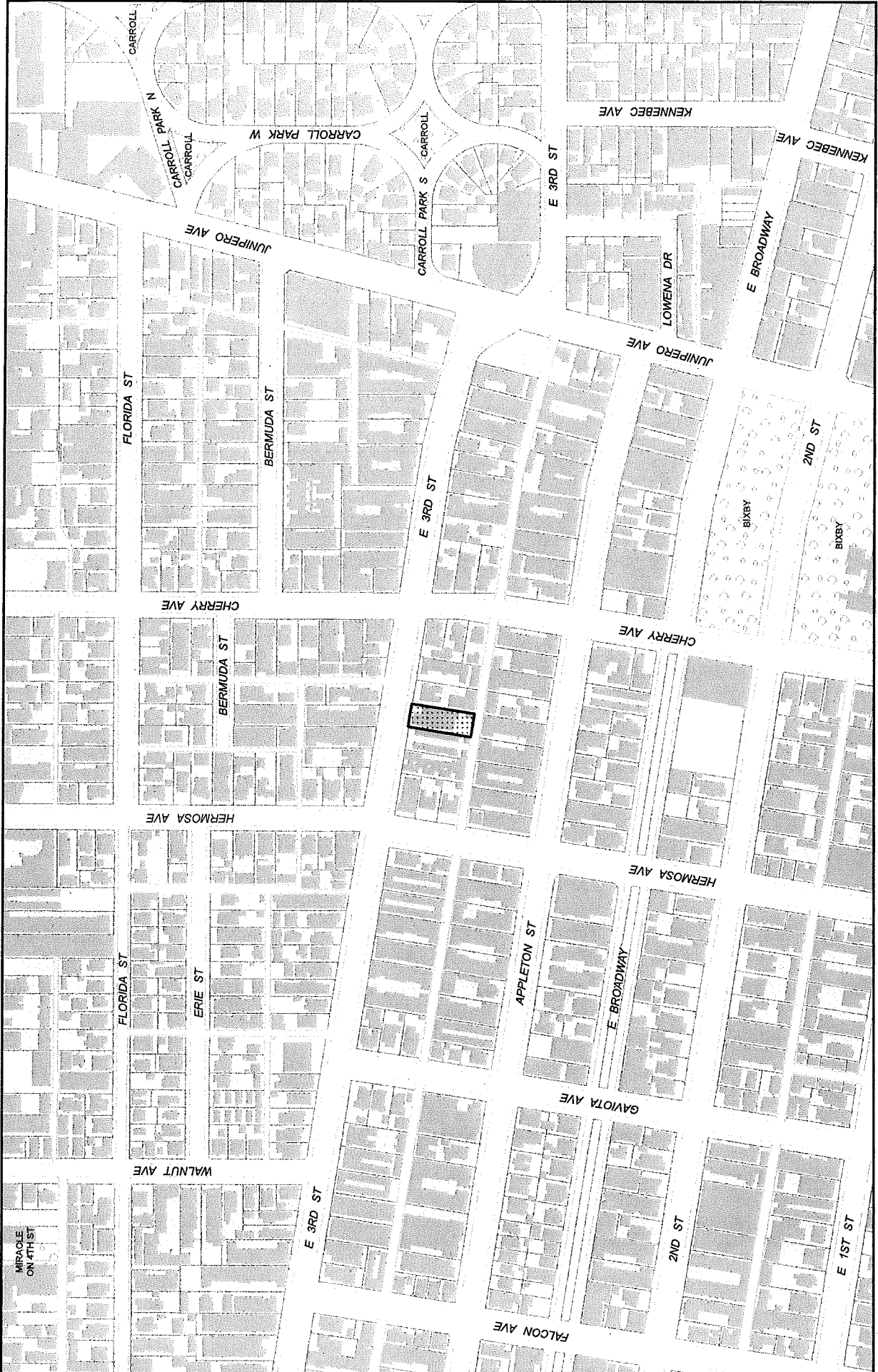
CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP  
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER



LINDA F. TATUM, AICP  
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

LFT:CK:ap

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map  
Exhibit B – Photographs  
Exhibit C – Findings  
Exhibit D – Primary Record



**Exhibit B**



**Subject Property:**  
 1836 3rd St  
 Application No. HP14-202  
 Council District 2  
 Zoning Code : R-2-N

