

August 30, 2022

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Administrative Draft of the Race and Suburbanization Historic Context Statement as final. (Citywide)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach
Development Services – Planning Bureau
411 W. Ocean Blvd
Long Beach, CA 90802

THE REQUEST

The Development Services Planning Bureau is requesting that the Cultural Heritage Commission make a motion to approve the Final Administrative Draft of the Race and Suburbanization Context Statement as a final document.

BACKGROUND

The project is the result of an internal review of existing City Historic Preservation Documents by City staff in 2015. The review included past initiatives, review of the 2009 Citywide Context Statement, and it found the need to incorporate more recent history into City documents including, cultural history, civil rights and the City's growth patterns as it relates to different communities in the City. In January 2019, the Development Services Department – Planning Bureau initiated this project and engaged the firm of Historic Resources Group (HRG). The effort and subsequent report was aided by a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant awarded by the California State Office of Historic Preservation.

This effort is part of a larger citywide racial equity and reconciliation initiative in recognition of the history of racism in the City and its impact on City residents. All City departments are actively engaged in the initiative. Within Development Services this effort focused on recognizing our full history and preserving it are part of this process.



The Race and Suburbanization Context Statement incorporates a study of largely overlooked communities, and includes histories of Long Beach communities of color and the development patterns associated with those communities, including exclusionary practices that played a significant role in settlement patterns in the city (Attachment A - Historic Context Statement: Suburbanization and Race – Final Administrative Report August 17, 2022).

Housing discrimination, growth and discriminatory practices are also examined in this report. It was a fact of life for people of color in Long Beach, as it was in cities throughout Southern California. The report also discusses post-World War II era growth. The city aggressively annexed adjacent farmland and orange groves in response to the immense population growth in the region after the war. Many residential tracts had Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) that limited the purchase and rental of homes to White residents. Lenders and insurers of the period often followed “redlining maps” which identified neighborhoods containing “subversive racial groups,” or those defined as “deteriorating” due to the presence of non-White residents. This coincided with the migration of White residents from areas that were becoming more racially or culturally diverse, to more homogeneous suburban areas known as “White flight.”

The report highlights significant and groundbreaking efforts by the community to overcome those discriminatory practices. In the early 1950s, Long Beach became a central player in the fight for fair housing in Southern California. During the mid to late 20th century, Long Beach was transformed by immigration. This context statement uses the multiple property documentation approach to identify and provide guidance for the evaluation of the built environment, as it relates to the intersection of race and suburbanization in the post-World War II era. It is intended to supplement the broader residential development themes and the ethnographic study provided in the City of Long Beach Citywide Historic Context Statement. The approximate period of study is 1945-1979, to correspond to development patterns that began in the immediate post-World War II period. It is recommended that future studies of the city include immigration patterns and changing demographics of the late 20th century, including a study of the LGBTQ community in Long Beach.

DISCUSSION

As part of the project, the Planning Bureau also engaged Stratiscope to assist with community engagement and outreach. The City established an advisory committee of respected and knowledgeable community members, and a group of readers were identified to review the document and provide feedback. The Bureau also received comments from the public in response to the posted draft report on the City’s website from May 20 to August 5th, 2022.

The report was also presented to two commissions, noted below

Cultural Heritage Commission : July 26, 2022

Equity and Human Relations Commission: August 3, 2022

Comments from each of the two commissions, along with comments from the public were included in the Administrative Draft report. All guidance and direction received from the advisory committee and readers were also instrumental to administrative draft report. While many public comments were addressed, some did not fit within the study period or specific subject of this study, but are intended to be addressed at a future update.

The Race and Suburbanization Historic Context Statement is considered a living document and could be modified as necessary, to address typos, inaccuracies or relevant information that is pertinent to the content. The report will also be substantially updated as more time passes to extend the period of study which starts in 1945 and ends in 1979.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the CHC make a motion to approve this report and accept this document as final.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alejandro Plascencia'.

ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Urbas'.

ANDREA URBAS, AICP CEP CUD
ACTING ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER