



Legislation Text

File #: 22-1360, Version: 1

Recommendation to receive and file presentation on the Race and Suburbanization Historic Context Statement. (Citywide)

The *Race and Suburbanization Historic Context Statement* (the Context Statement) is the result of an internal review of existing City Historic Preservation documents by City of Long Beach (City) staff in 2015. The review included past initiatives, including review of the 2009 Citywide Context Statement. As a result of this review, City staff identified the need to update recent history into City Historic Preservation documents including cultural history, civil rights, housing rights, and discriminatory practices that affected the City's growth patterns, as related to different communities in Long Beach. In January 2019, the Development Services Department's (Department) Planning Bureau initiated this project and engaged the firm of Historic Resources Group. The effort and subsequent Context Statement were aided by a Certified Local Government grant, awarded by the California State Office of Historic Preservation.

This effort is part of a larger citywide racial equity and reconciliation initiative (the Initiative) in recognition of the history of racism within the nation and Long Beach and its impact on residents. All City departments are actively engaged in the Initiative. The Department's response to the initiative includes but is not limited to, analyzing and recognizing the City's full history and preserving it so that this history can influence future land use policies and zoning regulations.

The Context Statement was presented to Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) on July 26, 2022, the Equity and Human Relations Commission on August 3, 2022, and for adoption by the CHC on August 30, 2022. The final Context Statement was also presented as an informational item to the Planning Commission on October 6, 2022.

Historic Context Statement Report

The Context Statement is a study of how discriminatory practices and the fight for fair housing in Long Beach intersects with development patterns in the post-World War II era. It incorporates largely overlooked residents, and histories of Long Beach communities of color and the development patterns, including exclusionary practices, that played a significant role in settlement in Long Beach. The Context Statement is intended to foster a greater understanding of the influence of race and discriminatory practices on the built environment, provide background information on subsequent waves of immigration in Long Beach, and document an important layer of the City's history (Attachment A).

Housing discrimination, growth and discriminatory practices are examined in the Context Statement. These practices were facts of life for people of color in Long Beach, as it was in cities throughout Southern California and across the nation. The Context Statement 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 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 Context Statement 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. The 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 Citywide Historic Context Statement. Future studies of the City will include immigration patterns and changing demographics of the late 20th century, including a study of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, with a “+” to recognize other sexual orientations and gender identities not covered in the acronym) community in Long Beach.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Erin Weesner-McKinley on October 26, 2022 and by Budget Analysis Officer, Greg Sorensen on October 24, 2022.

Environmental Review

In accordance with Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, this action is not subject to environmental review as there is no potential for causing a significant impact to the physical environment.

City Council action on this item is not time critical.

This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with City Council priorities. There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
ACTING DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER