



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT



DEPARTMENT: Community Development

MEETING DATE: April 17, 2018

PREPARED BY: Nancy Lee, Associate Planner

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-3

TITLE: Citywide Monrovia Historic Context Statement, Resolution No. 2018-20

OBJECTIVE: To adopt the Citywide Monrovia Historic Context Statement as a resource tool for historic preservation

BACKGROUND: In August 2015, the City Council adopted a formal Neighborhood Study Policy Direction Statement. The two main themes that were identified were neighborhood compatibility and historic preservation. As a result, the City Council adopted Neighborhood Compatibility development standards (Ordinance No. 2016-08) to address new residential construction. A new discretionary demolition review process (Ordinance No. 2016-10) was also established to review proposed demolition requests and substantial alterations of potential significant residential structures that contribute to the defining character of the City.

In June 2016, City staff conducted a Joint Study Session with the City Council and the Historic Preservation Commission to consider additional policy implementation measures to further the City's historic preservation efforts. The consensus was the recommendation that the City engage the services of a historic preservation consultant to prepare a Citywide Historic Context Statement (HCS). Following the historic preservation consultant selection process, the City Council awarded the contract to ASM Affiliates, Inc. (ASM) for the completion of the Citywide HCS.

Historic Context Statement

A HCS identifies the broad patterns of historical development and links the history of an area with the built environment. A robust historic context is the foundation for identifying, evaluating, and handling historic properties and it helps communities and cities make land use decisions. In addition, a historic context differs from other types of narrative histories because it identifies important themes in a community's history and then illustrates how those themes relate to existing properties within the city. While a HCS contributes to an understanding of the story of a particular community, its focus is on existing properties within the community and how those properties helped shape the community's history. Understanding the historic development patterns provides a foundation for making decisions about identifying, evaluating, and treating historic properties.

As opposed to a comprehensive survey, the adoption of the proposed Monrovia HCS would not impose additional property constraints for homeowners. Instead, the HCS will be a tool for homeowners seeking landmark designation or whose home improvement projects require discretionary demolition review by the Historic Preservation Commission. The HCS will augment the historic preservation program by providing the clear criteria for identifying what properties are important and why they are important. It will also streamline the discretionary demolition review process by providing greater certainty to property owners and the Historic Preservation Commission when reviewing properties that are not historic resources. Given that the HCS contains clear evaluation criteria, property owners and staff will be able to identify properties that are not historic resources early in the development process

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which in turn will save the homeowner time and money. The absence of a HCS has required homeowners to hire professional historic consultants to prepare professional assessments for the demolition review process, which has added cost to the process.

ANALYSIS: Between May 2017 and January 2018, ASM completed the HCS drafting process in the following three phases:

- Phase 1 (Research) – ASM conducted thorough archival research of local archives, received public input at a Community Outreach meeting held in August 2017, and met with the City’s Historian, Mr. Steve Baker.
- Phase 2 (Reconnaissance Survey) – ASM carried out a reconnaissance survey by driving around the City to identify development patterns, architectural styles, general characteristics, and potential historic districts.
- Phase 3 (Context Development) – ASM developed the HCS based on their research and findings in Phase 1 and 2. On January 18, 2018, the Draft HCS was released to the public and presented to the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission had approximately one month to provide comments on the draft document. The Draft HCS identifies significant themes in the development of Monrovia from 1887 to the 1960’s.

Potential Historic Districts

Based on the scope of work approved in the contract, ASM’s task included the identification of potential historic districts. The January 2018 Draft HCS recommended the twelve (12) potential historic districts and the expansion of two (2) existing districts in the City as shown on the map attached as Attachment “A”.

The Monrovia Municipal Code defines historic districts as *“any area containing a concentration of improvements which have a special character, historical interest, or aesthetic value, which possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles typical to the history of the city.”* The recommended historic districts were primarily residential with the exception of the Downtown Commercial Historic District.

Community Outreach

After the Draft HCS was released, the Planning Division began the community outreach for property owners located within identified potential historic districts. A meeting was held on February 15, 2018 for homeowners in the Bliss potential district, and on March 1, 2018, a meeting was held for homeowners in the Highland Place, Parker Avenue Esplanade, and Downtown East Residential potential historic districts. The goal of these outreach meetings was to provide education, answer questions, and address concerns. Homeowners were informed that being in a potential district does not add restrictions. Instead, the reviewing body for home improvements subject to the Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance would differ (Historic Preservation Commission instead of the Development Review Committee) if their homes were found to be contributors in potential historic districts.

The feedback from these meetings was generally positive. Many of the property owners expressed some interest, but most wanted to have more information and time to gain a greater understanding of the issue. The overall response was reflective to early Wildrose district exploration meetings, where there was interest, several homeowners did not want additional property restrictions. Admittedly, only a small percentage of the property owners attended the meetings. Homeowners were informed during outreach meetings that the adoption of the final HCS with the recommended potential historic districts would not designate their neighborhoods as official historic districts, because the historic district designation process is homeowner initiated.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting – February 28, 2018

Staff received written comments on the Draft HCS from the Historic Preservation Commission in mid-February. Most of the Commissioner's comments related to the recommendation of the potential historic districts. During the February 28, 2018 Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission had an opportunity to discuss their comments, questions and concerns. A major concern voiced by the Commission was that the adoption of the potential historic districts would discourage homeowners from improving their homes.

Further, the Commission felt that moving forward with the adoption of the HCS with potential historic districts identified could have an effect of creating mandatory preservation, which is not the intent of Monrovia's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The consensus position of the Commission was that before consideration could be given to adopting the recommended historic districts, it would be beneficial for the City to continue outreach meetings to educate property owners about what it means to be in a potential historic district. The majority of the Commissioners felt that the potential district designation should begin at the homeowners' request. Additionally, though the identification and adoption of potential districts does not have an immediate effect on the Mills Act Contract, the Commission expressed a desire to continue the dialog on future ramifications of the Mills Act Contract on the City's finances.

Final Historic Context Statement

As a result of the comments received from the Commission, staff determined that the most practical way to move the final HCS forward while addressing the concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission and the community would be to separate the potential historic district component from the HCS. The HCS is a living document because it can be modified and expanded upon at any time. Identification of future potential districts can also stand alone as a separate document. Should homeowners wish to initiate historic district designation in the future, the identified potential districts in the Draft HCS can still be used as a guide to complement the Historic Preservation Ordinance in evaluating the proposed historic districts.

A copy of the Final Historic Context Statement is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk and in the Planning Division at City Hall. The document can also be downloaded on the City's website:

<http://www.cityofmonrovia.org/your-government/community-development/historic-preservation/historic-context-statement>

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting - March 28, 2018

The Historic Preservation Commission held a public meeting to review the Final Historic Context Statement at their meeting on March 28, 2018. Overall, the Commission stressed the importance of potential historic district homeowner outreach. They also agreed that separating the HCS and the potential historic districts recommendation was appropriate as it would give the Staff and the Commission more time to conduct additional homeowner outreach and have the Mills Act program updates in place to address future ramifications. At the meeting, the Commission recommended the City Council adopt the Final HCS without the potential district component by a unanimous vote.

Conclusion

In brief, as recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission, the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement does not contain recommended potential historic districts. As proposed, the final HCS will be a useful tool for the community, Historic Preservation Commission, and staff. Specifically, the HCS provides a history on what shaped Monrovia's built environment and provides a detailed framework for evaluating potential historic resources, which will be used for determining what the best representations of historic resources and historic districts are in the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: Adoption of Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement is exempt from CEQA under Section 15061(b)(3).

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

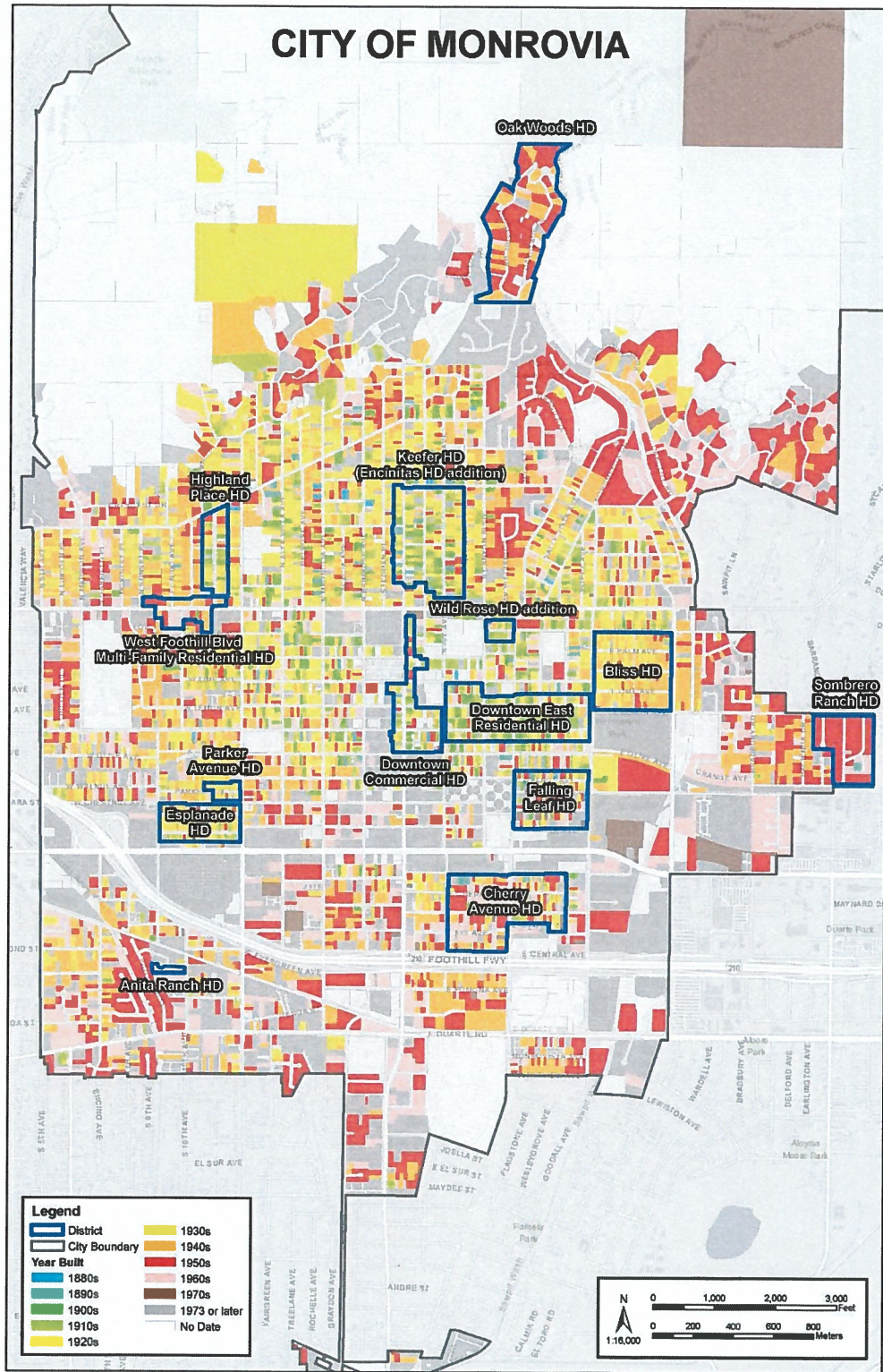
OPTIONS: The following options are presented for the consideration of the City Council:

1. Adopt Resolution No. 2018-20 to adopt the Historic Context Statement as presented in the staff report.
2. Deny Resolution No. 2018-20 and provide staff with further direction.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends adoption of Resolution No. 2018-20 to adopt the Final Historic Context Statement as a resource tool for historic preservation.

COUNCIL ACTION REQUIRED: If the City Council concurs, then the appropriate action would be a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2018-20.

ATTACHMENT "A"



Map of Recommended Historic Districts in the City of Monrovia.

RESOLUTION NO. 2018-20

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING THE MONROVIA CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT AS A RESOURCE TOOL FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the City Council adopted a formal Neighborhood Study Policy Direction Statement in August 2015 that resulted in the adoption of the Neighborhood Compatibility (Ordinance No. 2016-08) and Discretionary Demolition Review (Ordinance No. 2016-10) ordinances; and

WHEREAS, the City Council and the Historic Preservation, at a Joint Study Session in June 2016, determined that the City should engage the services of a historic preservation consultant to prepare a Citywide Historic Context Statement; and

WHEREAS, Historic Context Statements provide the foundation for historic preservation and are critical for understanding, identifying, and evaluating potential historic resources in a community; and

WHEREAS, a Request for Proposals for the Monrovia City-wide Historic Context Statement was released in December 21, 2016 and the historic preservation consulting firm ASM Affiliates, Inc. (ASM) was selected. The City Council approved a Professional Service Agreement on April 4, 2017, authorizing ASM to prepare the Monrovia City-wide Historic Context Statement; and

WHEREAS, ASM prepared the Draft Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement, which was circulated for public and Historic Preservation Commission input on January 18, 2018; and

WHEREAS, ASM completed the Final Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement, which included input received from two separate public outreach meetings and the Historic Preservation Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement provides a background on the historic themes and sub-themes related to the development of Monrovia, identifies associated property types and their character-defining features, and provides a framework for evaluating potential historic resources, and fostering the integration of historic preservation into future land use planning and permitting; and

WHEREAS, the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement will augment the historic preservation program by providing the clear criteria for identifying what properties are important and why they are important. It will also streamline the

discretionary demolition review process by providing greater certainty to property owners and the Historic Preservation Commission when reviewing properties that are not historic resources; and

WHEREAS, the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement will assist in promoting the goals and policies of the General Plan and supplement the Historic Preservation and Demolition Review of Main Residential Buildings (Monrovia Municipal Code §17.40 and §17.10 respectively); and

WHEREAS, it is recognized that the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement is a living document and may require revisions and updates from time to time in order to remain current with the latest available information; and

WHEREAS, at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on March 28, 2018, the Commission recommended the City Council adopt the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement by unanimous vote; and

WHEREAS this action is exempt from CEQA, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State Guidelines. This section states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. The Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement is for informational purposes; accordingly, there is no possibility that adopting the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement will have a significant effect on the environment;

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Monrovia hereby finds, determines and resolves as follows:

1. The City Council finds that all of the facts set forth in the Recitals of this Resolution are true and correct.

2. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City's local CEQA Guidelines, the City Council independently finds that the adoption of the Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement will not have a significant effect on the environment.

3. The Monrovia Citywide Historic Context Statement as attached as Exhibit "A", and incorporated herein by this reference.

4. The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of April 2018.

Tom Adams, Mayor
City of Monrovia

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Alice D. Atkins, CMC, City Clerk
City of Monrovia

Craig A. Steele, City Attorney
City of Monrovia



EXHIBIT "A"

Resolution 2018-20

**Monrovia Citywide Historic
Context Statement**

A copy of the Final Historic Context Statement is available in the Planning Division at City Hall. The document can also be downloaded on the City's website at:

<http://www.cityofmonrovia.org/your-government/community-development/historic-preservation/historic-context-statement>