



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Update on the Status of Designated and Pending Historic Districts

1. Motion to note and file report.
2. Motion providing direction to staff.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Report Only

Approved for January 26, 2021 **calendar**

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Submitted by:

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Reviewed by:

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Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., Interim City Manager

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council review the information in this report and note and file and provide direction regarding implementation policy relating to historic districts.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Summary

At the direction of City Council, Planning staff has prepared this update on the status of the City's designated and pending historic district overlay zones. The following report provides information about the seven designated districts, the two potential districts currently being surveyed, and a third district nomination that was reviewed and moved forward in the designation process by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in November, 2020. The report also updates City Council with details about the City's program to offer Mills Act property tax reduction contracts to contributing properties in designated historic districts, a brochure detailing the benefits and obligations of property ownership in a historic district that will be distributed to property owners and local groups, and an overview of the potential districts identified in the South Glendale Historic Resources Survey.

Designated Historic Districts

Since the historic district overlay zone ordinance was approved by City Council in 2007, seven historic districts have been designated:

- Royal Boulevard
- Ard Eevin Highlands
- Cottage Grove
- Rossmoyne
- North Cumberland Heights
- Brockmont Park
- Niodrara Drive

Each current district features a collection of single-family homes that help tell the story of the city's residential growth through the first six decades of the 20th century.

Glendale's historic districts are the result of grassroots efforts that start in our neighborhoods. Residents of a potential district submit a nomination and then, over time, build support among their neighbors. The 2007 ordinance established a robust designation process, including multiple reviews by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), two petitions circulated among homeowners, and a historic survey prepared by a consultant (see Exhibit 1 for a flowchart of the process). The petitions are a key element to let decision-makers know whether or not support for a district is widespread. The first petition requests the City to conduct a survey to identify whether the area meets the criteria for designation – the owners of 25% of the area's properties

must sign for the nomination to move forward. This petition gives the City some assurance that investing in the district survey is warranted. After the survey is completed and reviewed by HPC and all interested property owners, the second petition requests that City Council designate the district and requires the signatures of owners of over 50% of the properties.

Information about the designated districts is included in the following chart:

Designated Historic Districts	# Properties	# Contributors	% of Contributors	Criteria	Period of Significance	% Properties Requesting Designation	1 st HPC Hearing	Designation Date
Royal Boulevard	30	22	73%	EG	1926-1948	80%	March 2007	October 2008
Ard Eevin Highlands	87	68	78%	AGB	1903-1955	75%	September 2007	March 2009
Cottage Grove	14	13	93%	GH	1901-1928	86%	August 2007	March 2009
Rossmoyne	504	413	82%	ABCFGH	1923-1950	71%	April 2010	August 2012
North Cumberland Heights	179	140	78%	ABCGH	1921-1953	74%	October 2010	October 2012
Brockmont Park	59	52	88%	ACGH	1910-1954	59%	December 2010	May 2014
Niodrara Drive	32	25	78%	AEGH	1909-1962	75%	January 2013	March 2016
Totals/ Averages	873	708	82% (avg.)			74% (avg.)		

All proposed exterior work at the 873 district properties that is visible from the street is reviewed to ensure the character of each home and the overall district is retained and, in many cases, enhanced. The survey prepared for each district identifies properties as either contributors or non-contributors. Contributors were built within the districts' period of significance and have not been dramatically altered over the years. Non-contributors

were built outside the period of significance or, if not, their historic character has been significantly diminished over the years. Both types are subject to design review based on the Historic District Design Guidelines, with contributing properties receiving a higher level of review to make sure that character defining features are protected. Depending on the scope and type of work proposed, either staff or HPC conducts the review.

Pending Historic Districts

Interest in historic districts among Glendale residents continues, with three neighborhoods currently in the designation process. Two of these, South Cumberland Heights and Casa Verdugo, have been surveyed and await community and HPC meetings to review the survey documents and, if accepted by HPC, receive authorization for proponents to circulate petitions requesting the City to designate the district. The nomination for the third, Bellehurst, was recently reviewed by HPC, which authorized proponents to circulate the petition that requests the City to conduct a historic resource survey.

- South Cumberland Heights includes the last portion of the larger Cumberland Heights area, once itself proposed for designation, that remains undesignated. If approved, it will join Ard Eevin Highlands and North Cumberland Heights as three adjoining districts that together reflect Glendale's residential building boom of the 1920s as displayed in its many examples of the Period Revival styles popular at the time.
- Casa Verdugo is located just east of the northern end of Brand Boulevard. The neighborhood's name dates to the early 1900s, when the Casa Verdugo restaurant, in both of its locations (one of which still stands within the proposed district), was one of Glendale's first tourist attractions. The restaurant, along with the Pacific Electric Red Car line on Brand Boulevard, made Casa Verdugo a desirable location for one of the city's most notable early subdivisions. The area differs from other historic districts in Glendale in having a collection of excellent Craftsman style homes, along with the mix of Period Revival, Minimal Traditional, and postwar styles found in other districts.
- Bellehurst is immediately to the west of the Rossmoyne Historic District. While similar in terms of its fine housing stock and mix of flat and hillside lots, the area has a different development history. It is the first Southern California subdivision of the Walter H. Leimert Company, which became a major developer of neighborhoods in Los Angeles including Leimert Park, Baldwin Hills, and Beverlywood.

Information about the pending district is included in the following chart:

Pending Historic Districts	# Properties	# Contributors	% Contributors	Criteria	Period of Significance	1 st HPC Hearing
South Cumberland Heights (information from draft survey)	217	161 (55 NC / 1 not evaluated)	74%	ABCGH	1922-1960	August 2017
Casa Verdugo (information from draft survey)	112	75 (35 NC / 2 not evaluated)	67%	ABGH	1906-1957	August 2017
Bellehurst	306 (proposed)	undetermined				November 2020
Totals/Averages	635	236	71% (avg.)			

Mills Act Program for Contributing Properties in Designated Historic Districts

In 2016, City Council established a new policy to offer Mills Act property tax reduction contracts to owners of qualified contributing properties in designated historic districts. Previously, contracts were only available to owners of Glendale Register-designated properties. Council reviewed a series of options prepared by Planning staff to implement the new program. Because there are so many contributors and they are not historically significant in the way Register properties are, Council approved staff's conceptual proposal to create a competitive application process to ensure the tax benefit would go to properties most in need of restorative and significant structural work. The following key points were approved by Council:

- Allow Mills Act contracts for properties that are historic district contributors and that are not otherwise eligible for the Glendale Register (GR);
- Establish property valuation caps for district contributor Mills Act contracts of \$1.5 million for single-family properties and \$3.0 million for other property types;

- Process no more than a total of six Mills Act contracts per year unless staff time is available for additional processing (this includes GR-eligible properties and district contributors that are not otherwise eligible for the GR);
- Prioritize contracts for up to four GR properties per year, whether inside or outside of historic districts;
- Prepare up to two contracts for district contributors per year (additional GR and contributor contracts will be processed each year as staff time allows);
- Establish an annual application submittal and processing schedule for GR, district contributor Mills Act applications, and Mills contract processing to distribute work evenly throughout the year.
- Develop a merit-based application review system to allow staff to provide ranked recommendations of Mills Act applications for consideration by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and City Council; and
- HPC and Community Development Director design review authority encompass all exterior portions of contributing Mills Act property in line with the treatment of GR properties.

Despite concern that owners of contributors would submit large numbers of applications, no public interest was shown until 2019, when a property owner from the Niodrara Drive district and another from Brockmont Park inquired about the program. Because of the earlier lack of interest and workload priorities, staff only began fleshing out the details of the program around this time. In August, 2020, the Historic Preservation Commission considered staff's implementation plan for 2021 based on the direction approved by Council (see Exhibit 2 for HPC staff report). HPC reviewed a more specific annual timeline than Council reviewed and a list of submittals expected from applicants. Submittals will include a detailed work plan with cost estimates for each project proposed and termite and building inspection reports to help identify needed work that is not readily visible (subsequently, these will be performed again on a ten-year cycle). Finally, the commission considered staff's conceptual proposal to create a point system, similar to those used in other local cities, to allow for a more objective analysis of each application and provide a basis for staff to rank applications for HPC and Council consideration. The Commission unanimously supported the proposal with the exception of one commissioner dissenting on the use of a point-based ranking system. At this time, staff is finalizing the application and supporting materials, which should be available to the public within one or two months. In addition, staff will work with the Public Information Officer to develop ways to publicize the program and hopes the Glendale Historical Society and various homeowners' groups will join in the effort so that as many property owners become aware of the program as possible.

Potential Districts Identified in South Glendale Survey Area

The South Glendale Historic Resources Survey identified seven potential historic districts in South Glendale. Of these, one was identified in the Craftsman Survey (Riverdale Drive Potential Historic District), and one is a recommended expansion of an

existing designated historic district (Cottage Grove Potential Historic District Extension). All seven potential historic districts identified in the survey represent intact collections of residential development in South Glendale, both single- and multi-family. These residential neighborhoods are significant for conveying patterns of development within South Glendale, and primarily date from the 1920s.

The seven potential historic districts are:

- Carr Drive/Broadway Potential Multi-family Residential Historic District
(11 total properties; 11 contributors (one severely damaged by fire in 2019); 100% contributing)
- Cottage Grove Potential Historic District Extension
(11 total properties; 8 contributors, 3 non-contributors; 73% contributing)
- East Doran Street Potential Multi-family Residential Historic District
(29 total properties; 24 contributors, 5 non-contributors; 83% contributing)
- Garfield/Windsor Potential Residential Historic District
(44 total properties; 31 contributors, 13 non-contributors; 70% contributing)
- Isabel/Howard/Geneva Streets Potential Residential Historic District
(95 total properties; 75 contributors, 20 non-contributors; 79% contributing)
- Riverdale Drive Potential Historic District (previously identified in 2007)
(7 total properties; 6 contributors, 1 non-contributor; 86% contributing)
- Roads End Potential Residential Historic District
(26 total properties; 15 contributors, 9 non-contributors, 2 not visible; 65% contributing)

Historic District Brochure

A brochure intended for distribution to historic district homeowners and residents has been discussed for several years. Preparation of the brochure has resumed in recent months and a draft version is expected to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission in February. It is intended to raise awareness within designated districts about how the City conducts design review and approves alterations and new construction, providing basic information about how districts work and what owners need to know when proposing changes to their property. At this time, it is expected the City will mail copies of the brochure to all homes in designated districts, as well as to non-resident owners. It will also be available on the City website. In addition, an electronic version could be distributed to local homeowner, preservation, and real estate groups to further spread the information throughout the community.

Environmental Review

The project is exempt from CEQA review as a Class 8, "Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment," exemption pursuant to Section 15208 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it provides for the enhancement and protection of historic resources.

FISCAL IMPACT

Valuation reductions for Mills Act properties made by the County Assessor will slightly reduce City revenues from the general County tax levy. The average revenue loss per property in recent years has been under \$1200 per year.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Note and file the report and provide no direction to staff at this time.

Alternative 2: Note and file the report and provide direction regarding implementation policy relating to historic districts.

Alternative 3: The City Council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

Not applicable.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Historic District Designation Process Flowchart

Exhibit 2: HPC report regarding Mills Act for Contributors (August 20, 2020)