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INFORMATION

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Item No: 8
Deputy: Report from Planning

August 20, 2013

TO: Jose Huizar, Chair
Planning and Land Use Management Committee

FROM: Ken Bernstein, AICP
Manager, Office of Historic Resources

SUBJECT: Appeal of ENV-2012-3129-CE

EXPANDED CEQA FINDING – CLASS 31

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15300, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines for projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation, or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

The Project consists of the maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, restoration, and preservation of the primary and accessory structure at 1342 W. Adams deemed historic as part of the North University Park Historic Resources Survey (1983).

Maintenance work includes: replacing the composition shingle roofing on the main structure, painting the exterior of both structures, making improvements to the parking area, and updating the landscaping. A six foot high fence at the perimeter will be removed and replaced with a new 42 inch high wrought iron fence as approved by the South Los Angeles Area Planning Commission in the Revised Conditions of Approval.

Repair work includes: repairing 77 original wood windows on the primary structure and 22 original wood windows on the accessory structure (see Exhibit I for comprehensive window schedule), and the replacement of four windows on the primary structure with similar windows that match original ones on the house.

One new east-facing dormer will be added to the rear roof of the primary structure to replace an existing skylight. It is not known when the skylight was added to the structure and it was not identified as a character-defining feature in the Historic Resources Survey. The new dormer, made up of two windows, differentiates itself from the historic dormers in that it is not a copy of the others in size and shape. An existing south-facing dormer window on the rear roof is proposed to be expanded horizontally with three new windows. This extension is differentiated from the original dormer, with an area of stucco and a separate grouping of windows. Both dormers will not be visible from the street.

What was an open air porch at the northwest corner of the primary structure was enclosed at some point in the property's history to create more habitable space. Large windows and doors were added to fill the porch openings to create a sunroom. The project proposes to retain the enclosed space, but will replace the large windows and doors to adapt the room for use as a kitchen. The replacement windows and doors will be in the same locations, but the opening on the west façade will be reduced. The window on the west elevation will be replaced with a new double hung window to match others on the west façade. Though the porch enclosure is not original to the 1898 structure, the applicant is retaining it as part of the project. On balance, the replacement of the doors and windows in the room will not impact the original character-defining features of the house.

These changes are minor and, as described in detail in the Director of Planning's Findings (DIR-2012-3128-COA-SPP), are proposed in a way that includes slight differentiation to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The exterior repairs, therefore, do not adversely impact the significance of the resource.

Rehabilitation and restoration work includes: rehabilitation of features that were added in 1934, including the front pilasters, stucco cladding, and the structure physically connecting the church to the mansion ("the cloister"). Furthermore, a pair of leaded glass French doors and windows on the first floor east (side) elevation will be retained as well as the three leaded glass windows located in the same room on the north elevation. These elements will be restored in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Project also includes rehabilitation of the accessory structure and a small second story addition of 184 square feet. The second story addition is proposed in a way that is discreet, and in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as discussed in the Director of Planning's Findings (DIR-2012-3128-COA-SPP).

The proposed project allows for preservation of the primary and accessory structures at 1342 W. Adams Boulevard through adaptive reuse and rehabilitation in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the North University Park Specific Plan. The Project is a thorough rehabilitation of the exterior of the structures. Any alterations proposed are minor, not visible from the Adams Blvd. facade, and will have no adverse impacts on the significance of the property as a historic resource.

The 1983 survey of 1342 W. Adams only includes documentation of the exterior of the structures at 1342 W Adams. No interior features were noted or surveyed, and the

property was listed as a Contributor based on the integrity of its exterior features.

CEQA Section 15064.5(b) states that "substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired."

It goes on to say that "the significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project: (B) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 500.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant."

In closing, the Project does not materially alter in an adverse manner the physical characteristics (the exterior character-defining features) that account for the inclusion of 1342 W. Adams as a Contributor in the North University Park Specific Plan. As such, the Project qualifies for the categorical exemption under CEQA. Furthermore, the findings below address how the proposed project does not require an exception from a categorical exemption.

15300.2. EXCEPTIONS TO CATEGORICAL EXEMPTIONS

As explained below, the Project does not satisfy the criteria for exceptions to the application of Section 15300, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines:

(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

The Project is not exempt under Classes 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11. Furthermore, the Project is not located in a sensitive environment as defined above.

(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

The Project will have no cumulative impacts. The Project involves the rehabilitation of two historic buildings on one site. The North University Park Specific Plan, in which the Project is located, establishes strict standards which prevent the loss or degradation of historic resources within the district by requiring projects to conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

The Project involves the rehabilitation of two existing historic structures. There are no known unusual circumstances relative to the Project that could result in significant effects on the environment.

(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

Adams Boulevard is a City-designated scenic highway; it is not a state scenic highway. Furthermore, the Project does not result in damage or adverse impact to historic buildings. Therefore, the exception does not apply.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

The Project is not located on a site listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, therefore the exception does not apply.

(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

The Project involves rehabilitation of two structures locally designated as Contributors to the North University Park Specific Plan. The structures also appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places based upon the "3S" status code assigned to the property at the time of the historic resources survey.

Substantial adverse change means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration in the resource, such that the resource is "materially impaired." The significance of a historical resource is considered materially impaired when a project demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner the physical characteristics that justify the determination of its significance (CEQA Guidelines 1604.5(b)(2)(B)). In this case, only the exterior of the structure was surveyed and found to be historically significant. The basis for the designation was based solely on the survey of the exterior. The changes proposed to the exterior will not demolish, destroy, relocate or alter the exterior of the historic resource in a way that would compromise its status as a locally designated Contributor to the Specific Plan which serves as a historic district.

Note: Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; References: Sections 21084 and 21084.1, Public Resources Code; Wildlife Alive v. Chickering (1977) 18 Cal.3d 190; League for Protection of Oakland's Architectural and Historic Resources v. City of Oakland (1997) 52 Cal.App.4th 896; Citizens for Responsible Development in West Hollywood v. City of West Hollywood (1995) 39 Cal.App.4th 925; City of Pasadena v. State of California (1993) 14 Cal.App.4th 810; Association for the Protection etc. Values v. City of Ukiah (1991) 2 Cal.App.4th 720; and Baird v. County of Contra Costa (1995) 32 Cal.App.4th 1464