

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT



City Planning Commission

Date: December 8, 2016
(Continued from October 13, 2016)
Time: After 9:30 a.m.
Place: City Hall, Room 350
200 N. Spring Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Public Hearing: August 20, 2016
Appeal Status: None


Case No.: CPC-2016-961-HPOZ
CEQA No.: ENV-2016-962-CE
Council District.: 4 – Ryu, 10 - Wesson
Plan Areas: Wilshire
Certified NC: Mid City West, P.I.C.O.
GPLU: Low II, Low Medium I, Low
Medium II, Medium
Residential
Zone: R1-1-O, RD1.5-1-O, R3-1-O,
R-4-1, [Q]C2-1-CDO
Applicant: City of Los Angeles


PROJECT LOCATION: Properties generally bounded by Wilshire Boulevard to the north, San Vicente Boulevard to the south, La Brea Avenue to the east, and Fairfax Avenue to the west.

PROPOSED PROJECT: Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.20.3.F, establishment of the Miracle Mile Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), and adoption of the Miracle Mile HPOZ Preservation Plan.

- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**
- 1) **Recommend** that the City Council approve the establishment of the proposed Miracle Mile Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ);
 - 2) **Find** that the proposed Miracle Mile HPOZ ordinance boundaries are appropriate;
 - 3) **Adopt** the Miracle Mile HPOZ Preservation Plan;
 - 4) **Adopt** the attached Findings; and
 - 5) **Find** that the project is categorically exempt under the State CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8, and Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 for the Miracle Mile HPOZ and Preservation Plan.

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ADVICE TO PUBLIC: *The exact time this report will be considered during the meeting is uncertain since there may be several other items on the agenda. Written communication may be mailed to the Commission Secretariat, 200 North Spring Street, Room 532, Los Angeles, CA 90012 (Phone No. 213/978-1300). While all written communications are given to the Commission for consideration, the initial packets are sent a week prior to the Commission's meeting date. If you challenge these agenda items in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing agendized herein, or in written correspondence on these matters delivered to this agency at or prior to the public hearing. As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to these programs, services, and activities. Sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, or other auxiliary aids and/or other services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability of services, please make your request no later than three working days (72 hours) prior to the meeting by calling the Commission Secretariat at 213/978-1300.

SUMMARY

At its regular meeting on October 13, 2016, the City Planning Commission considered the Department's Staff Recommendation Report on a proposed Miracle Mile Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) and Preservation Plan. At that meeting, staff presented an overview of the proposed boundaries and design guidelines and the Commission heard public testimony. The Commission discussed the ramifications of the proposed boundaries and provisions within the Preservation Plan, directed a number of questions to staff, and then continued their consideration of the proposed district to December 8, 2016.

The Department of City Planning has subsequently held two meetings with those who expressed concerns with the proposed HPOZ and a third meeting with both the proponents and opponents of the proposed district. All meetings were held in conjunction with Council District 4 at their field office. Based on the feedback received, the Department of City Planning has made numerous changes to the Preservation Plan, including to the chapters on Exemptions and Delegations, Setting, Windows, Additions, and Infill Development. Other details of the Preservation Plans were refined so as to enhance the document's utility and clarity. The changes are elaborated on below.

TESTIMONY AND CPC DISCUSSION

At the October 13 CPC meeting, 51 members of the public testified regarding the proposed HPOZ. Of the 51 speakers, 25 people spoke in support of the ordinance and raised the following points:

- The HPOZ not only preserves the architecture and character of the neighborhood, but is a way to impart knowledge of the historic community within the City as a whole.
- Without preservation, the unique character of the community could be lost. The HPOZ can serve as motivation to keep history and the corresponding built environment alive.
- Representatives of the Miracle Mile Residential Association (MMRA), including its President, strongly support the HPOZ. The MMRA representatives emphasized the importance of the establishment of a historic district to avoid out of scale and out of character development, and to protect the integrity and character of the neighborhood.
- Members of the working group for the Draft Preservation Plan noted that the Preservation Plan Guidelines were designed to be flexible and unique to the Miracle Mile neighborhood.
- The HPOZ resulted from widespread grass-roots involvement from community members over the past few years.
- Other longtime residents spoke in support of the HPOZ and gave personal accounts of growing up in the neighborhood and the need to preserve the special sense of community that exists in Miracle Mile.

23 people spoke against the HPOZ and identified the following concerns:

- Those in opposition, expressed concerns over the number of guidelines and the extent of restrictions within them. An HPOZ represents an over-reaching approach to combat mansionization.
- An HPOZ is contrary to private property rights and will create an additional layer of City review.
- The properties on the 700 block of Orange Grove Avenue and multi-family properties north of 8th Street should be excluded from the boundaries of the proposed HPOZ.
- The HPOZ will result in additional costs when replacing windows.
- The Preservation Plan contains too many guidelines and is both too restrictive and too vague.
- Local property owners had little or no involvement in the HPOZ adoption process.

The Commission then opened a discussion, which included questions directed at staff, addressing the following points:

- Whether the new zone boundaries were appropriate as proposed, including specific concerns over:
 - The properties north of 8th Street having a higher density and close proximity to new transit infrastructure,
 - The properties along Olympic Blvd. as it is a major thoroughfare. Concerns regarding the number of Contributing Structures along the Boulevard were also mentioned.
- How opponents' concerns could be addressed within the Preservation Plan and with additional outreach.

The Commission requested staff to meet with constituents to address concerns over the proposed boundaries and the language within the Preservation Plan, and return to the Commission at its December 8th meeting.

STAFF RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDED CHANGES

As a result of the additional discussions at the meetings convened at the offices of Council District, staff is proposing a revised version of the Preservation Plan. The Preservation Plan has been revised to simplify guidelines and prioritize visible facades over non-visible areas. No change is recommended to the HPOZ Boundaries.

Boundaries

At the October 13, 2016 City Planning Commission hearing, concerns were expressed from both the public and from Commissioners over the proposed HPOZ Boundaries. The stated concerns largely centered on two areas, the properties north of 8th Street and the properties along Olympic Boulevard. For both of these areas, concerns focused on the

number of Contributing Properties, proximity to transit corridors, and density of the structures.

Although the properties north of 8th Street are zoned R3-1-O, R4-1, and [Q]C2-1-CDO, these properties were included within the boundaries of the proposed HPOZ because they were part of the original subdivisions and contain 83% Contributing Properties. Legitimate concerns were expressed that an HPOZ could run counter to other planning goals of increasing density, housing opportunity and activity levels near the approaching Purple Line Extension stations. However, in the Miracle Mile, a majority of the parcels north of 8th Street are already developed to their zoning potential and the Department of City Planning's recently-launched Transit Neighborhood Plan (TNP) for the Miracle Mile is focusing on the major corridors, rather than proposing changes to the residential neighborhood. Similarly, in other transit-adjacent areas of the city with cohesive single-family neighborhoods (such as Rancho Park) or multi-family neighborhoods with a high concentration of rent stabilized housing (such as Palms), the Department of City Planning's Transit Neighborhood Plans have been careful not to undermine the stability and affordability of the existing housing stock through dramatic zoning changes.

While Olympic Boulevard does have a relatively low overall percentage of Contributing Structures with 56% of the street identified as either as a Contributing Feature or Altered Contributing Feature, its development as a major thoroughfare is intrinsic to the development pattern of this historic neighborhood. Olympic Boulevard is the primary historic gateway to the neighborhood and continues to act as an artery and connection between the areas north and south of it. Furthermore, Olympic Boulevard is included within the boundaries of the three adjacent HPOZs – Carthay Circle, South Carthay, and Carthay Square (proposed).

Finally, while the neighborhoods east of Redondo Blvd. are not included within the boundaries of the area served by the Miracle Mile Residential Association (MMRA), the Department of City Planning makes recommendations on HPOZ boundaries based upon historic tract development and cohesive neighborhood character, not based upon the boundaries of private neighborhood associations. These neighborhoods similarly retain a cohesive historic character worthy of HPOZ designation, and the entire boundary area was considered and approved by the Cultural Heritage Commission, which certified a historic resources survey for the proposed Miracle Mile at its September 15, 2016 meeting. In addition, all areas of the proposed HPOZ, including the neighborhood east of Redondo, received public notice of the proposed HPOZ and had an opportunity to participate in the public workshop and public hearing.

Preservation Plan Revisions

Department of City Planning staff has made numerous changes to the proposed Preservation Plan to address concerns raised by neighborhood stakeholders. Among some of the key changes are the following:

Additions.

- Revisions were made to establish more permissive guidelines for non-visible and second-story additions to both Contributors and Non-Contributors.
- Modifications were made to the organization of Section 8.2 for clarity. Guidelines are now organized by major categories, clarifying how to achieve a successful addition that is appropriately compatible yet differentiated.
- The changes in formatting reduced the number of guidelines in Section 8.2 from 16 to 7, and resulted in simplified language with clearer requirements.
- Language was also added to the introduction to clarify that the intent of Section 8.2 is to allow for flexibility and change to a structure, while minimizing the visual impact of an addition through design.
- Furthermore, guidelines were modified to allow for liberalized review and approval of second-story additions to all structures, provided the addition is located in the rear of the structure, stepped back from the primary architectural façade, stepped in from the sides, subordinate in scale and volume to the existing house, and does not obscure the original rooflines of the house.

Windows.

- Revisions were made throughout the document to prioritize preservation of windows on street visible facades and create more permissive requirements for non-visible facades. Within the Windows Chapter, language was added to the introduction to clarify the intent, "It is the intention of this Preservation Plan to provide maximum flexibility for alteration to windows on non-street-visible rear facades".
- Window guidelines have been significantly simplified and reorganized, including a new format based on location and type of alteration.
- Language regarding windows on non-visible facades was modified to allow for windows to be of varied size, material, fenestration pattern, and method of construction.

Infill.

- To address concerns that the HPOZ might prohibit Modern or Contemporary architectural styles for infill projects, language was added to the introduction of the infill chapter stating, "While styles found in Section 3.3 for Architectural Styles are generally the most appropriate infill forms, it is also possible to design new structures in Contemporary or Modern Styles that are referential to the architectural pattern of the block".
- New language also clarifies that new architecture in any of the historic architectural styles within the neighborhood may be found appropriate as HPOZ infill development.

Landscaping.

- The Exemptions and Delegations Chapter has been changed to allow for the removal of trees without an arborist report.
- To provide more flexibility and reduce the number of guidelines affecting Setting, the guidelines regarding taller plantings and alleyways have been removed.

Paint Color

- Paint color is exempt from review under the Miracle Mile HPOZ Preservation Plan.

Solar Panels

- The State Solar Rights Act prohibits local governments from subjecting solar installations to a discretionary review process; therefore, the installation of solar equipment is exempt from review. A guideline was added to section 7.9 to further clarify this.

Conclusion

The intent of the Miracle Mile HPOZ is to preserve neighborhood character and guide new development to be compatible in scale and massing with the historic properties. Without regulation of construction activities in Miracle Mile, the historic integrity of the neighborhood could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of irreplaceable historic structures.

Based on the feedback received, the Department of City Planning has made changes to the proposed Miracle Mile Preservation Plan to ease landscaping restrictions by clarifying review processes and reducing the number of design guidelines, reformat and simplify design guidelines for transparency, create more flexible regulations for windows, additions, and new construction, and prioritize visible facades over non-visible areas. The changes were developed in conjunction with both the opponents and proponents of the proposed HPOZ and staff is confident that, as revised, the proposed Preservation Plan will protect the historic character of the community while also creating a clearer, more streamlined review process and safeguarding private property rights.