

HUNG SA DAHN
3421-3423 South Catalina Street
CHC-2021-5125-HCM
ENV-2021-5126-CE

FINDINGS

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with the Korean American patriotic organization, Hung Sa Dahn, for which the property served as its first permanent headquarters, and for its role as an important social and cultural hub for the Los Angeles Korean American community.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The subject property meets one of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance criteria: it “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with the Korean American patriotic organization, Hung Sa Dahn, for which the property served as its first permanent headquarters, and for its role as an important social and cultural hub for the Los Angeles Korean American community.

Hung Sa Dahn was an important civic organization that played a critical role in the liberation of Koreans from Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). With the Japanese occupation of Korea, much of the work towards independence was conducted abroad, and the United States became one of the key bases for the Korean independence movement. Further support for the movement occurred when the United States entered World War II in 1941, which strongly influenced Korean political organizations who saw a long-awaited opportunity for a Korea free from Japanese occupation. The subject property served as the first standalone and permanent headquarters of Hung Sa Dahn and its purchase in 1936 marked the end of a nomadic experience for the organization, further underscoring the growth and importance of its mission and providing a haven for its members. It became a part of an early concentration of Korean American residences, businesses, and civic and religious institutions that had emerged in South Los Angeles in the early 1920s to serve the growing Korean American immigrant community of Los Angeles. Beyond its civic functions, Hung Sa Dahn became an important social and cultural hub for the Korean American community, in part by providing critically needed housing for its members who faced discrimination in housing and employment. Three years following Korea’s independence from Japan in 1945, the global headquarters for Hung Sa Dahn relocated to Seoul, South Korea. However, the organization in Los Angeles continued to serve as a political voice by promoting democratic governance through education and the study of Ahn’s teachings. Today, the subject property is the only extant property associated with Hung Sa Dahn in Los Angeles and is a rare example of an early institutional property associated with Korean American immigration, settlement, and development in Los Angeles.

While the applicant argues that the subject property “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” for its association with Dosan Ahn Chang Ho, staff are unable to make this finding. Ahn was imprisoned in Korea at the time Hung Sa Dahn acquired the property and he died two years later, before he could return home to Los Angeles. Although Ahn rises to the level of an historic personage as an important figure in the development of the Korean American community in Los Angeles, as well as the Korean independence movement, the subject property is not directly associated with the productive period of his life and therefore does not meet this criterion.

The SurveyLA Korean Americans in Los Angeles, 1905-1980 Historic Context Statement outlines integrity standards that need to be met for institutions and community centers such as the subject property, which consist of integrity of location, design, feeling, and association. Despite interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, association, and materials to convey its significance as the first permanent location of Hung Sa Dahn and its role as a social and cultural hub for Korean Americans in Los Angeles. The subject property is in the same location and the immediate neighborhood setting remains residential. The building footprint, massing, scale, and fenestration patterns do not appear to have changed since 1978, when Hung Sa Dahn left, reflecting its integrity of design. In looking at historic photographs from the period during which Hung Sa Dahn occupied the building, there have only been minor exterior alterations including removal of the chimney, the expansion of the covered front porch, and the enclosure of the rear porch, thus it retains integrity of feeling and association. Furthermore, the subject property retains most of its characteristic features, including a rectangular plan, horizontal wood and shingle siding, gabled porch roof, oriel windows, jerkinhead gable ends, knee brackets, and primary entrance with sidelites, demonstrating integrity of materials.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.*”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of 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 designation of Hung Sa Dahn as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2021-5126-CE was prepared on September 13, 2021.