



Information Item

Date: June 8, 2011

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Eileen P. Fogarty, Planning and Community Development Director
Subject: Historic Resources Inventory Update

Introduction

Planning and Community Development staff has completed the latest update to the City's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) and the final [report](#) is attached for the Council's use and reference. The inventory identifies districts, buildings and objects that tell an important story about Santa Monica while also providing details about architectural features, significant persons, and neighborhood history. The report details the evolution of the City from a resort community, through the Golden Age of the 1920s, and up to the Modern, post-war era of the 1950s and 1960s. In summary, 478 properties have been newly identified as historic resources from the time the last update was completed in 2004, increasing the Citywide total to 1,520. In addition, 11 new potential historic districts have been identified, bringing the City's total to 53.

Background

Since 1982, in order to better understand Santa Monica's unique history, development patterns, and architectural heritage, the City has maintained an inventory of the community's historic resources. Since this inventory is not a static list, it requires continued updating to capture additional resources that may have achieved their own significance as time progresses.

Discussion

On February 14, 2011, the Landmarks Commission officially received and filed the latest update to the City's Historic Resources Inventory, culminating a multi-year study of all buildings Citywide constructed in 1968 or earlier. This action formally updates the prior version of the HRI with revised information and officially notifies the public of its availability for consideration and consultation.

The Historic Resources Inventory is an important planning tool. This document provides an historic reference which is useful to property owners and City staff in understanding important characteristics and features that make a specific resource (i.e. object, building or neighborhood) historically unique. This information often influences design and development decisions when alterations are sought, and guides decision-makers, such as the Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board and Landmarks Commission, when resources are potentially impacted. Since a neighborhood's character is often defined by shared historic traits and/or common architectural styles, the inventory will also be a key component for identifying and defining neighborhoods in support of the Neighborhood Conservation and Historic Preservation policies established in the General Plan (LUCF).

Being listed on the HRI does have a legal relevance and import. Most importantly, listed properties are considered "historic resources". This is a significant distinction particularly when development projects involving these resources require discretionary review and environmental impacts must be assessed through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. For example, if a project that requires City Council, Planning Commission, Landmarks Commission, Architectural Review Board or Zoning Administrator discretionary review involves a listed historic resource, evaluation of the project for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards is required. Also, as an identified City historic resource, the use of the Historic Building Code, which can provide flexibility from code requirements that may result in incompatible

alterations, can be applied. This increases the opportunity for the retention of older buildings and heightens potential for adaptive reuse, as encouraged in the General Plan.

The Historic Resources Inventory, however, is not the equivalent of being designated as a City Landmark. Landmarks are designated through a public hearing process with mandatory findings of significance. Once designated, Landmarks are afforded stronger protections from demolition as well as benefits, including participating in the Mills Act program. The HRI is an indicator of historic significance and informs the public that a resource offers unique or interesting characteristics that may be an important reflection of Santa Monica's history. While being listed on the HRI often results in the filing of Landmark designation applications, it is not uncommon for identified resources on the inventory to be further studied during the designation process and found to not be historically significant.

Ensuring community understanding of the HRI is the primary motivation to develop an outreach program to engage the public about historic preservation, the City's Landmarks program, and the many resources that the City has to share that are summarized in the Inventory update. In partnership with the Landmarks Commission, staff anticipates conducting four community meetings throughout the City. The goal is to present the HRI findings, clarify the difference between HRI listing and Landmark designation, and promote awareness of the City's on-going efforts to identify, protect and preserve its valuable historic resources.

Prepared By: Scott Albright, Senior Planner

Attachment: [**Santa Monica Citywide Historic Resources Inventory Update Final Report**](#)