CITY OF RIVERSIDE

Cultural Heritage Board Memorandum

Community & Economic Development Department **Planning Division**
3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 | Phone: (951) 826-5371 | RiversideCA.gov

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: MAY 21, 2025
AGENDA ITEM NO.: 5

PROPOSED PROJECT

Case Numbers	**DP-2025-00302** (Historic Designation)
Request	To consider a Historic Designation Modification request to remove the eucalyptus tree as contributing feature from the Hawthorne House City Landmark designation.
Applicant	Brenda Flores, Director of Facilities Auxiliary Service of California Baptist University
Project Location	3697-3747 Monroe Street, at the southeast corner of Monroe Street and Magnolia Avenue
APN	231-020-026; 231-020-032
Ward	5
Neighborhood	Ramona
Historic District	Not Applicable
Historic Designation	City Landmark #123
Staff Planner	Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer 951-826-5507 swatson@riversideca.gov

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Cultural Heritage Board recommend that the City Council:

1. **DETERMINE** that Planning Case DP-2025-00302 (Historic Designation) for the designation of the Boyd Residence as a City Landmark is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Rule) and 21084.1 (Historical Resource), as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment; and

2. **APPROVE** Planning Case DP-2025-00302 (Historic Designation), based on the facts of findings, and removing the eucalyptus tree from the Hawthorne House City Landmark Designation.

BACKGROUND

The Hawthorne House Designation

On January 17, 2012, the City Council approved a request by California Baptist University (CBU), based on the recommendation of the Cultural Heritage Board, to designate the Hawthorne House as City Landmark #123. According to the November 16, 2011, staff report from the Cultural Heritage Board:

> The applicant is requesting to designate the A.C.E. Hawthorne House with a related Eucalyptus tree as a City Landmark. The tree appears eligible for designation as a related natural feature of the Landmark - eligible Hawthorne House. The applicant seeks to designate the residence and tree due to its reflection of the city's cultural and economic past, unique Swiss Chalet architectural style, significance as an A.C. Willard designed residence, and for their contribution to the understanding of settlement and growth in Riverside at the turn of the 19 Century.

The landmark designation nomination and subsequent staff report found that the Hawthorne House and Eucalyptus tree were eligible for designation under City Landmark criterion A - *Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history*; C - *Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship*; and D - *Represents the work of a notable builder, designer or architect*; and I - *Reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning*.

The Eucalyptus tree was mentioned as a contributing feature of the Hawthorne House under criterion A (now criterion 1), as follows:

> The proposed designation complies with this finding because the Hawthorne House and Eucalyptus tree are part of a former 20 - acre orange grove of the late 1880s representing a vestige of what was once the norm in residential development along the Magnolia Avenue corridor and, indeed, throughout the outlying areas beyond the town centers of Riverside and Arlington during the heyday of the Citys' citrus-dominated past. Agricultural, especially citrus, windbreaks were commonly used for disease management... and reduction of windscar. One of the favored windbreak trees, Eucalyptus... was used as a foundation tree able to provide upper story canopy and baffled wind protection. Aerial photos show that the extant tree was likely one of many planted in multiple rows along the southern boundary of the larger Hawthorne grove property. The size, maturity and location of the tree… indicate the tree is likely the last extant specimen of a windbreak system associated with the earliest development of the site as a grove.

Such elegant homes, each surrounded by extensive acres of citrus groves, were a large part of the popular image of Riverside, along with other southern California communities such as Redlands and Pasadena.

CBU Specific Plan

In 2019, the City Council adopted the CBU Specific Plan. Both the plan and its associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) identified the Hawthorne House as a designated City Landmark with the Eucalyptus tree as an associated feature. This designation remained, and an updated Cultural Resources evaluation of the house and the tree was not necessary because both resources were still intact. The Cultural Resources report primarily studied buildings on campus not previously designated and those not previously evaluated for designation. The plan, however, did note that future removal of the tree would require an EIR, as listed in *Table 6-1: Disposition of Properties Surveyed for Historic Significance*. The specific plan and EIR also indicated that if the tree was to die of natural causes, it's removal would not require an EIR and could be removed with staff review.

Current Tree Condition

In February 2022, a 100-foot pine tree on the CBU campus failed near its base, damaging a nearby student residential building. This incident prompted a broader inspection of campus trees, including the Hawthorne Eucalyptus tree.

In 2024, Monarch Environmental completed a Risk Assessment Report which found that the tree was in fact not in good health. The report assessed the health of the tree using sonic tomography at the base of the Eucalyptus tree. The results showed:

- 31% solid wood
- 55% damaged wood
- Presence of a fungal conk at the root collar, indicating active wood decay

Based on the assessment of the tree, the report concluded, "it is possible – not necessarily probable – that the tree could fail within a one-year timeframe, which renders it a Moderate risk. If we were to extend the assessment timeframe out to three- to five years, the tree would potentially be bumped up into the probable failure likelihood level, which is highly concerning and puts the tree in the High-Risk category." Therefore, it was recommended that the tree be removed within the next year to prevent a risk to property and life-safety.

ANALYSIS

In addition to the Tree Risk Assessment report, a Cultural Resources Analysis was completed by Bill Wilkman of Wilkman Historical Services, because of the determination that the tree's health was in a fairly rapid decline. The report found that although the tree was historically related to the Hawthorne House, the distance and development between the two renders its relationship to the residence very weak and fails the to qualify as a contributor to a historic resource. The report recommended that the tree may be removed as a contributing feature from the Hawthorne House Landmark Designation.

TITLE 20 EVALUATION

Under Title 20 (Cultural Resources), a *Non-contributing feature of a Historic District, Neighborhood Conservation Area, or individually significant property* means a site, improvement, or natural feature within a Historic District or Neighborhood Conservation Area that does not provide appropriate historic context, historic architecture, historic association or historic value, or is not capable of yielding important information about the period, because that element:

A. Was not present during the district's or area's period of historic significance; or

   FACTS: Based previous and current evaluations, it appears that the tree was present during the period of significance of the Hawthorne House; therefore, this criterion does not apply.

B. No longer possesses integrity due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes; and

   FACTS: Based on the re-evaluation by Wilkman and the rapid declining health of the tree, the tree no longer possesses the level of integrity required to be considered a contributing feature. Per Section 20.50.010, Integrity means the ability of a cultural resource to convey its significance. To retain integrity a cultural resource must retain most of the aspects that closely relate to the resource's significance including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. As the tree is not a built structure, the design, materials, and workmanship aspects of integrity are not applicable. Of the remaining aspects, the tree only retains an integrity of location as it is still in its present location. The integrity aspects of setting, feeling, and association have been significantly impacted by surrounding site improvements that began in the early 1980s. Although these site changes predate both evaluations, the updated evaluation places greater emphasis on the integrity impacts created by these improvements. As expressed by in the report, they created a visual separation of the tree from the Hawthorne House, which is approximately 870-feet from the tree. As noted in the Landmark designation, the eucalyptus tree was part of the original windrow that surrounded the citrus grove. The citrus grove and all other windrow trees were removed by the mid-twentieth century. The tree and the house are separated by parking lots, roadways, various landscaping, and two-story student house buildings. Additionally, the tree is situated in the middle of a roadway and surrounded by a raised planter. With the surrounding development and planter enclosure the setting and feeling of the tree as a windrow for a citrus grove is now longer present. Additionally, the association with the Hawthorne House has been compromised. The report states, "Given the tree's 870-foot distance from the Hawthorne Residence and the presence of landscaping and buildings that obscure the view of the tree from the residence, the tree can no longer seen as an entity that is associated with the residence."

C. Does not independently meet the designation criteria as defined in this title.

   FACTS: The tree was designated in association with the Hawthorne House under criterion A. However, it does not independently meet this criterion. Eucalyptus

trees were commonly used as windbreaks in citrus groves across Southern California, as well as for other purposes. This tree does not represent a unique or defining example of that practice; therefore, the tree does not independently (without its association with the Hawthorne House) serve as special elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history.

Due to its loss of integrity and inability to meet designation criteria independently, the Eucalyptus tree should now be considered a non-contributing feature and removed from the Hawthorne House Landmark Designation.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This item contributes to the Envision Riverside 2025 City Council Strategic Priority 2 – Community Well Being (Goal 2.3 – Strengthen neighborhood identities and improve community health and the physical environment through amenities and programs that foster an increased sense of community and enhanced feelings of pride and belonging citywide).

This item aligns with the following Cross-Cutting Threads:

1. *Community Trust:* This Landmark Designation modification request is being reviewed during a Public Hearing before the Cultural Heritage Board and the public is able to provide comments.
2. *Equity:* The updated historic property information associated with this designation will be added to the City's Historic Resources Inventory, which will be available to the public. This will allow information about the historic property to be available to all residents.
3. *Fiscal Responsibility:* No City General Funds are being allocated as part of this Landmark Designation modification.
4. *Innovation:* This Landmark Designation modification request made use of current research practices and looks at historic integrity based on best practices approaches.
5. *Sustainability and Resiliency:* This Landmark Designation modification will help to preserve the City's collective history for future generations without causing impacts to historic resources.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

A public hearing notice was mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the site. As of the writing of this report, no responses have been received by Staff regarding this proposal.

APPEAL INFORMATION

Actions by the Cultural Heritage Board, including any environmental findings, may be appealed to the City Council within ten calendar days after the decision. Appeal filing and processing information may be obtained from the Planning Division by calling 951-826-5800.

EXHIBITS LIST

1. Aerial/Location Map
2. Current Photos
3. City Council Staff Report, January 1, 2012
4. Resolution #22332
5. CBU Specific Plan – Chapter 6: CR Management
6. Cultural Resources Analysis by Wilkman, April 25, 2025

Prepared by: Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer
Approved by: Maribeth Tinio, City Planner