



Community & Economic Development Department

Planning Division

3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 | Phone: (951) 826-5371 | RiversideCA.gov

TO: CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD

MEETING DATE: April 19, 2017

FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

ITEM NO: 3

WARD: CITYWIDE

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATION FOR ADOPTION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY AND FINDINGS - CHINESE AMERICANS IN RIVERSIDE: HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1868-1975

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) recommend that the City Council approve the attached findings, thereby adopting the cultural resources survey - Chinese Americans in Riverside: Historic Context Statement, 1868-1975.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Riverside received a \$40,000 Certified Local Government (CLG) grant in 2015 to prepare a citywide Chinese American historic context statement for identifying and evaluating resources associated with Chinese Americans in Riverside and educational materials. The CHB staff partnered with the Riverside Metropolitan Museum (RMM), California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB), and the University of California Riverside (UCR) Public History Department and hired Historic Resources Group (HRG), who assigned M. Rosalind Sagara, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Professional Qualifications and experienced in Chinese American history, to complete the intensive-level study.

This project met four important objectives of the City General Plan's Historic Preservation Element, which are further described in the findings in Exhibit 1:

- Objective HP-2.0: to continue an active program to identify, interpret and designate the City's cultural resources
- Objective HP-3.0: to promote the City's cultural resources as a means to enhance the City's identity as an important center of Southern California history
- Objective HP-4.0: To fully integrate the consideration of cultural resources as a major aspect of the City's planning, permitting and development activities
- Objective HP-6.0: to actively pursue funding for historic preservation programs

ANALYSIS:

The City's partnership included additional coordination with the Riverside Public Library, CSUSB and UCR student research assistants/interns, community volunteers, as well as local and cultural experts, including such organizations as Asian-Pacific Cultural Association and the Gom-Benn Village Society of Los Angeles.

The survey was completed in accordance with National Register Bulletin No. 24, *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*; the *Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation*; and the California Office of Historic Preservation's (OHP) *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources*.

The project included three research elements: 1) primary and secondary source research, including community meetings, to develop a Historic Context Statement; 2) six oral histories conducted with members of Riverside's Chinese American community; and 3) identification of thirty (30) properties associated with the City of Riverside's Chinese American history identified through research conducted by the project team. The survey, oral histories, and context statement were completed in tandem in order to integrate and expand the findings of each element.

The context statement includes a historical overview of the Chinese American experience as it relates to Riverside's growth and development. The period of significance includes the experience of Riverside's Chinese American community from 1868 to 1975, spanning the arrival of the first known Chinese Americans in Riverside, through the death of Wong Ho Leun (George Wong), the last resident of Chinatown, in 1974, and the creation of Dr. Sam Huang's first mural in 1975. It focuses on historical themes associated with residential settlement patterns, labor, culture and institutions, and commercial growth in Riverside. It also identifies important individuals that played significant roles in Riverside's Chinese American history and includes suggestions for future study. The survey was inspired by Riverside's National Register-listed Chinatown site, located at Tequesquite and Brockton Avenues, which was the largest and longest-continuously populated of three known Chinese American settlements in Riverside. The context explores the role of Chinese Americans in the citrus and agricultural industry and as domestic and service laborers, their experience in the anti-alien climate of the late-19th through early-20th century and the physical and cultural contribution of Chinese Americans to the historic fabric of Riverside. The powerful story of the Chinese American experience in Riverside's history is represented by such properties as the Voy and Fay Wong House, the Chen Ling Palace Restaurant, the "Ecology" mural at the Riverside City College Life Sciences Building, and the tombstones of the Olivewood and Evergreen cemeteries and introduces previously little known figures such as Wong Fong, the first Chinese resident of Riverside, landowner, businessman, and cook for the Riverside Land and Irrigating Company, who fought and won a federal lawsuit after being falsely imprisoned under the Anti-immigrant Geary Act.

Apart from the excavation of the Chinatown site in the mid-1980s and the designation of this archaeological site in 1990, the Chinese American experience in Riverside's history has not played a large part in general public awareness or visibility in the city's built environment. The survey expands the understanding of this history by documenting historic themes and properties associated with the context. Although this history has national significance as it relates to the impacts of Asian immigration to the west coast of the United States, properties identified by the survey were found eligible at the local level. Establishing this type of broader context for the Chinese American experience in Riverside creates not only more relevance for the Chinatown site, but also provides a broader understanding of the Chinese American story in Riverside. The survey identified properties associated with this history, and although relatively few were identified, they include several residences, businesses, schools, churches, cemeteries, and public works of art.

Thirty (30) properties were identified as associated under the Chinese American context:

- Nineteen (19) properties were newly or previously found eligible for designation.
 - Two (2) properties were newly identified as eligible for local designation as Landmarks and assigned status code 5S3; and
 - Seventeen (17) properties had already been found eligible for designation and assigned status codes under previous surveys.
- Eleven (11) properties were added to a future study list.

The survey was prepared in accordance with all appropriate standards, instructions and guidelines named above and further guided by continual communication with the OHP staff. The OHP has formally accepted the survey deliverables in fulfillment of the CLG grant requirements. Historic resources surveys, like this Chinese American context statement, are a vital planning tool not only to identify properties eligible for designation under the City's Cultural Resources Ordinance, but also to help expedite the environmental review process and associated development projects.

Properties found to be significantly associated with the Chinese American historic context during the course of the survey, and therefore eligible for designation, would be considered historic resources for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Title 20. These properties would be required to follow the Title 20 Certificate of Appropriateness process (no fee application) for property permits and modifications. For example, a property eligible as historic would require Administrative review (up to 60-day review process) and approval of in-kind changes, small rear additions, and other minor changes in keeping with the historic property. Cultural Heritage Board review and approval (3-6 month review process) would be required for exterior changes visible from the public right of way, modification of windows to alternate materials, large additions to original structures, potential site work to the property, and removal of character defining features or demolition of identified historic features. Any projects proposing radical modifications to character defining features or demolition of the identified historic structures would be discouraged as Title 20 and the General Plan encourages retention of historic buildings and their character defining features. If an owner of a designated property or an eligible survey property wished to radically alter or demolish a historic property, review of this would trigger an Environmental Impact Report, which would take a minimum of a year and the cost of preparing an EIR would exceed \$50,000. Conversely, studied properties found ineligible for designation, and that are not otherwise designated or found eligible under other historic contexts, would not be considered historic resources under CEQA or Title 20 and not subject to the above-described processes.

The survey and materials will further enrich the RMM's and other educational and interpretive programs related to the Chinatown site and the Chinese American history of Riverside. All of the grant project outcomes and products will be used to increase the accessibility of the story from the historic context and oral history transcripts, which will be on file with the Local History Resource Center in the Main Library and in the Community and Economic Development Department for locals and visitors, to the audio/visual podcast on the City's website for those further afield. The format of the historic context statement is also an important piece because it allows for additional related sites discovered in the future to be evaluated within the framework established by the context.

The study produced a historic context, included in Exhibit 2. A full listing of properties surveyed with their respective status codes and map key number, are presented in a table in Exhibit 3, and a corresponding map of the identified properties is included in Exhibit 4. The individual DPR forms, in the order listed in the table, are provided in Exhibit 5. The approximately 6-minute podcast entitled, "Exploring Riverside's Chinese American History, 1868-1975, will be screened during the CHB meeting after a PowerPoint presentation by the survey consultant, which will provide additional information and training about Riverside's Chinese American heritage. Other materials and background information are on file in the Community Development Department.

Prepared by: Jen Mermilliod, Contract Historic Preservation Senior Planner

Exhibits:

1. Survey Findings
2. Historic Context
3. Table of Identified Properties
4. Chinese American Properties Maps
5. DPR Forms