



Community & Economic Development Department

Planning Division

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

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: APRIL 17, 2019
AGENDA ITEM NO.: 2

LANDMARK DESIGNATION

I. CASE NUMBER(S): P19-0073

II. PROJECT SUMMARY:

- 1) **Proposal:** Proposed historic designation of the Farm House Motel as a City Landmark
- 2) **Location:** 1393 University Avenue
- 3) **Ward:** 2
- 4) **Applicant:** Alyssa Digangi of Bailey California Properties, LLC
- 5) **Case Planner:** Scott Watson, Associate Planner

III. RECOMMENDATION:

That the Cultural Heritage Board recommend that the City Council:

1. **DETERMINE** that Planning Case P19-0073, City Landmark Designation, is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15308 of the CEQA Guidelines as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment, that said action is intended to preserve the historic character of the building and site and provide notice of the historic status; and,
2. **APPROVE** Planning Case P19-0073, based on the attached facts for findings (Exhibit 1) and thereby designate the Farm House Motel as a City Landmark.

IV. BACKGROUND:

The University Avenue Specific Plan (Specific Plan) was prepared in 1992 and identified several buildings, including the Farm House Motel, as potentially eligible for designation. The Specific Plan recommended formal historic evaluations of the properties. In 1998, City of Riverside Development Department hired consultants, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Janet L. Tearnen, to complete a Historic Resources Survey (Exhibit 2) for the Hacienda and Farm House Motels. The survey to address the recommendation in the University Avenue Specific Plan and included an assessment of the historic and architectural significance of the properties. The Farm House Motel was identified as eligible for designation as a local landmark and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The eligible determination was reinforced in the 2013 Modernism Survey.

The former City of Riverside Redevelopment Agency acquired the Farm House Motel in 2008 with the goal of removing blight from the neighborhood and protecting the historic building. On March 27, 2018, the City's Successor Agency (formerly Redevelopment Agency) staff received an unsolicited proposal from Bailey California Properties, LLC for an adaptive reuse project at the site. The City Council Development Committee reviewed and selected the proposal on June 21, 2018 to move forward.

Prior to the proposal by Bailey California Properties being selected, staff worked with the applicant and advised them of the Certificate of Appropriateness requirements, the California Historic Building Code, and the Mills Act. On January 29, 2019, Bailey California Properties submitted an application (Exhibit 3) for Landmark Designation. The City will remain in City ownership until the close of escrow following entitlements. The Community and Economic Development Department Director has consented to the applicant's Landmark Designation application (Exhibit 4).

V. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The Farm House Motel, located at 1393 University Avenue, fronts the north side of University Avenue between Iowa and Cranford Avenues. Constructed in 1953, it originally consisted of three one-story buildings with 23 units on a 0.97-acre site. The buildings include two parallel lines of buildings with a paved drive aisle running down the center of the property. The prominent vehicular access and the integrated carports are key features of the motor-court building type.

The motel features a variant of the California Ranch style of architecture. This includes character-defining features such as gambrel roofs, board-and-batten siding, diamond-paned or multi-lite windows, and wood multi-lite half glass and four panel cross doors. The neon pole sign, in the shape of a gambrel roof, was added to the property in 1958.

A fire in March 2017 destroyed the rear building which included four units.

VI. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

As stated in the 1998 survey report (Exhibit 2):

The Farm House Motel is an excellent example of a motor court in the City of Riverside. It is exceptional for its architectural quality and integrity and evidences the once important role University Avenue (historically Eighth Street) played as a segment of State Highway 60. The motel is eligible for designation as a local landmark and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Staff has reviewed the survey report, visited the site and determined that the property retains the high degree of integrity required for Landmark designation. The California Department of Parks and Recreation Forms (Exhibit 5) include additional details on the buildings.

VII. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS:

Public notices were published in one newspaper of general circulation within the City, and mailed to property owners and occupants within 300 feet of the site, at least ten (10) days prior to the scheduled hearing. No responses were received to date.

VIII. EXHIBITS:

1. Staff Recommended Findings
2. Historic Resources Survey
3. Designation Application
4. Memo Community and Economic Development Department Director
5. California Department of Parks and Recreation Form
6. Aerial/Location Map
7. Site & Historic Photos



EXHIBIT 1 – STAFF RECOMMENDED FINDINGS

CASE NUMBER: P19-0073

MEETING DATE: April 17, 2019

FACTS FOR FINDINGS: (From Section 20.20.040 of the Riverside Municipal Code)

At a public hearing, the Board shall make written a recommendation based upon the applicable criteria from Chapter 20.50. The Board shall forward its recommendation to the City Council.

FINDING: Criterion 1: Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history.

FACTS: As the automobile became the primary form of travel in the mid-twentieth century, auto tourism and auto related developments became an integral part of the economy of cities along the state highway system. By the late 1950s, the section of Eighth Street (now University Avenue) immediately west of Iowa Avenue had been widened and functioned as a terminus of State Highway 60 until it was extended to Blaine Street. This increased highway traffic along Eighth Street and, for marketing purposes, the north side of the street became the preferred side to locate auto-dependent businesses. These development trends were officially recognized on the City's Zoning Map of 1956 in which the area along Eighth Street immediately west of Chicago Avenue (then the eastern city boundary) was zoned C-3 "General Commercial Zone," and C-4 "Automobile Service Station Zone." The Farm House Motel exemplifies this auto-related economic development along University Avenue in the Eastside Neighborhood of the City.

FINDING: Criterion 3: 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.

FACTS: The Farm House Motel is an excellent example of the motor court type of construction in the City of Riverside. Motor courts were often designed-themed architecture to attract motorist as they drove along the highway, such as the Wigwam Motels along Route 66. The Farm House was constructed in the ranch style to express a farm or ranch theme. The Farm House Motel features several character-defining elements of the motor court type of construction including: frontage on the highway, units laid out in parallel rows, undeveloped rear portion of the site to allow for future expansion, carports located adjacent to the unit, a bathroom in each unit, and manager's office and residence placed near the front of the property.

FINDING: Criterion 6: 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, or cultural landscape.

FACTS:

The Farm House Motel is located in the Eastside neighborhood of Riverside. The Eastside began to develop in 1882 after the Gage Canal was built. The predominant land use along Eighth Street was residential until the early 1950s when it became a segment of State Highway 60 running from Mission Boulevard on the west and along Eighth Street to Iowa Avenue on the east. State Highway 60 became an important transportation link between Los Angeles and the desert communities.

By the late 1950s, the built environment along Eighth Street served motorists traveling along State Route 60 as auto tourism increased. The majority of the single-family residences were replaced with restaurants, motels, car washes, and service stations. As a motor court, the Farm House Motel exemplifies the auto related development that occurred along University Avenue in the mid-twentieth century.