



## REPORT TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

February 26, 2018

FROM: DANIEL ZACK, AICP, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Development and Resource Management Dept.  
Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission

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SUBJECT: REVIEW AND APPROVE FINDINGS FOR RE-SURVEY OF POTENTIAL L  
STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1606

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission review and approve findings in the *Re-survey of Potential L Street Historic District Report*, completed following the initiation of a new survey of the previously identified potential L Street Historic District pursuant to FMC 12-1606.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following the Historic Preservation Commission's approval on Monday, January 22, 2018 for City staff to re-survey the potential L Street Historic District in Downtown Fresno, survey materials were prepared, fieldwork was carried out, and findings were assessed. Assessment was based on previous surveys for an L Street District conducted in 1977, 1994, and 2007; photo-documentation and data collected during recent fieldwork in January 2018; mapping analysis; *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines* as well as the *Fresno Municipal Code*, and additional research.

The three previous surveys conducted each consisted of its own findings, yet no survey within the past 40 years resulted in the designation of an L Street Historic District. Alterations, and at times demolitions, have taken place in between the years these surveys were conducted that affect those findings. In addition, alterations and demolitions have taken place since 2007, when the last survey was conducted which lead to the need for an updated survey of a potential L Street Historic District and for a determination as to whether or not a potential L Street Historic District still exists.

Based upon the re-survey of a potential L Street Historic District in 2018 – a reconnaissance survey resulting in a report consisting of an Introduction, Methodology, Background, Findings & Analysis, Conclusions, a Bibliography, and Appendices – the once potential district is found to be ineligible for National Register, California Register, or Local designation through survey evaluation due to lack of a geographically definable area as well as significant concentration, linkage, and continuity.

## BACKGROUND

The motion for City staff to re-survey the potential L Street Historic District was approved 5-0 by the City of Fresno's Historic Preservation Commission at its meeting on Monday, January 22, 2018. There have been three surveys conducted since 1977, each consisting of its own findings. Yet, no survey within the past 40 years has resulted in the designation of an L Street Historic District. Alterations, and at times demolitions, have taken place in between the years these surveys were conducted that affect those findings. In addition, alterations and demolitions have taken place since 2007, when the last survey was conducted, which lead to the current need for an updated survey of a potential L Street Historic District and for a determination as to whether or not a potential L Street Historic District still exists.

The purpose of this survey was to generally characterize existing resources and to determine if more detailed survey efforts were needed; therefore, the re-survey of the potential L Street Historic District is defined as a reconnaissance survey, as opposed to an intensive survey. An intensive survey would require information on the appearance, significance, integrity, and boundaries of each property sufficient to permit an evaluation of its significance – and the use of the DPR 523 series of forms for recording and evaluating resources in California. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Identification* specify the information that should be documented as a result of a reconnaissance field survey:

1. The kinds of properties looked for;
2. The boundaries of the area surveyed;
3. The method of survey, including the extent of survey coverage;
4. The kinds of historic properties present in the survey area;
5. Specific properties that were identified, and the categories of information collected;  
and
6. Places examined that did not contain historic properties.

Following the Historic Preservation Commission's approval to re-survey the potential L Street Historic District, survey materials were prepared, fieldwork was carried out, and findings were assessed. Assessment was based on previous surveys for an L Street District conducted in 1977, 1994, and 2007; photo-documentation and data collected during recent fieldwork in January 2018; mapping analysis; National, State, and Local regulations; and any additional research.

The boundaries for this survey area were based on the original L Street District survey boundaries in 1977, which include all properties that were assessed in the 1994 and 2007 surveys, as well as additional properties. The potential district identified in 1977 had irregular boundaries but generally abutted Divisadero Street to the north, Stanislaus Street to the south, the rear property line of N Street to the east, and Van Ness Avenue to the west. Currently, these boundaries consist of approximately 74 properties.

Recent fieldwork resulted in basic identification and assessment of historic integrity for each property within the survey area and 125 photographs taken. Categories of information collected for each property in preparation for and during fieldwork include:<sup>1</sup>

- 2018 Survey Reference Number
- Assessor Parcel Number (APN)
- Street Address
- Historic Name
- Construction Date
- Land Use
- Aspects of Integrity
  - Location
  - Design
  - Setting
  - Materials
  - Workmanship
  - Feeling
  - Association
- Is Integrity Retained? (Y/N)<sup>2</sup>
- 1977 Survey Reference Number
- 1994 Survey Reference
- 2007 Survey Reference Number
- National Register of Historic Places Listing Date<sup>3</sup>
- Local Register of Historic Resources Listing Date
- Historic Property Number
- Photograph Number
- Notes

Following fieldwork, mapping analysis and additional research took place to help assess the history, change over time, and current state of the subject survey area. Mapping analysis was done with the utilization of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, historic and current aerial maps, current parcel maps, and findings from fieldwork. Additional research was achieved through local literature as well as past and recent City plans.

An important part of the purpose of this survey is to identify and document the character of a historic neighborhood in order to recognize what remains of it. According to local resources, there once was a concentrated, predominantly wealthy, single family residential neighborhood within the survey area which has dwindled over time. An assessment of survey findings revealed what remains of it today.

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<sup>1</sup> The information collected for each property is dependent upon what was immediately available and applicable.

<sup>2</sup> In order for a property to retain historic integrity, it must retain most if not all aspects of integrity.

<sup>3</sup> Properties in California which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places are automatically listed in the California Register of Historical Resources.

Within the survey area of the potential L Street Historic District, three of the 74 properties are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (in addition to the Local Register of Historic Resources). There are 18 properties in total individually listed on the Local Register of Historic Resources within these boundaries. There are a variety of land uses including residential, commercial, institutional, and parking as well as vacant lots. At least seven residences have been re-purposed for commercial use, yet they do retain historic integrity.

Each of the 74 properties within the survey boundary was assessed for historic integrity based on the seven aspects of integrity as well as the period of significance identified in the most recent survey evaluation conducted in 2007 (c.1897-c.1937). The 2007 survey correctly defined the historic neighborhood identity of the subject survey area as a "reflection of 19th and 20th Century residential development patterns in the downtown edge of Fresno between c. 1897 and c. 1937."

At present, approximately 29 out of the 74 properties surveyed within the extent of the survey boundaries were constructed during the period of significance and retain historic integrity. This number is further reduced to 23 when only properties with a historic residential use are considered. Contributing properties within a potential Historic District must not only retain historic integrity, but they must also collectively compose a historically definable and significant area.

The possibility of a geographically definable area becomes clear upon assessment of the Survey Area Map which depicts the most pertinent information collected for each property in preparation for and during fieldwork.<sup>4</sup> The assessment is further informed by a change over time analysis of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, particularly with regard to land use, as well as aerial maps that provide a general sense of neighborhood identity within the survey area boundaries.

Currently, there is only one block consisting of uninterrupted properties that retain historic integrity and that could contribute to a potential L Street Historic District: the east side of the 1600 block of M Street - which consists of only two properties (both listed). Eight out of the approximately 19 blocks included within the survey area consist entirely of properties that do not retain integrity and could not contribute to a potential L Street Historic District. Seven out of the 19 blocks consist of a majority of properties that do not retain integrity and could not contribute to a potential district. Three of the 19 blocks consist of a majority of properties that do retain integrity and could contribute to a potential district. These include the west side of the 1700 block of L Street, the west side of the 1600 block of L Street, and the south side of the 1400 block of Divisadero Street.

The blocks within the survey area that do consist of at least a majority of properties that retain integrity and could contribute to a potential L Street Historic District are not located adjacent to each other and do not create a geographically definable area. Despite the fact that the subject survey area, or a portion thereof, was once a historically definable and

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<sup>4</sup> All categories of information can be found in the Survey Area Table.

significant residential neighborhood, the present area lacks significant concentration, linkage, and continuity. It is important to document the area's history, and to recognize the properties that still represent that significant development – which are already listed individually on the Local Register of Historic Resources. But, the remains of a cohesive district are not identifiable.

#### Attachments

Exhibit A: *Re-survey of Potential L Street Historic District Report*, February 2018.