



**REPORT TO THE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

AGENDA ITEM NO. VIA
HPC MEETING: 05/23/16

May 23, 2016

FROM: DANIEL ZACK, AICP, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
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APPROVED BY

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

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Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission

SUBJECT: CONSIDER REQUEST TO STAFF TO PREPARE AN INITIAL APPLICATION
FOR AN ARMENIAN TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT PURSUANT TO FMC 12-
1610(a).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission formally request that the staff prepare an Initial Application for an Armenian Town Historic District for submittal at the June 27, 2016 meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By the First World War 10,000 Armenians had settled in Fresno, refugees from the genocide that occurred in Turkey and Armenia. A 60-block "Armenian Town" developed here between the two World Wars, due in part to the restrictive covenants that precluded settlement in other parts of the city. Although State Route 41 cut a swath through the heart of this community, numerous buildings, including the five houses restored by the RDA for the Armenian Town Project, the Valley Lahvosh Bakery, the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church (1914) and several other early cottages and business buildings are extant.

Staff, the Commission and members of the community have long discussed the value of an Armenian Town Historic District which would include many of these resources, some of which are already designated, others as yet not designated and thus not protected. Unlike individual resources considered for the Local Register of Historic Resources, a request for a District can only be initiated by the City Council, the property owners (as with Huntington Boulevard and the Wilson Island) or the Commission itself. Therefore the Commission must formally request that staff prepare the Initial Application which, pursuant to FMC 12-1610(b), will include a proposed District boundary and a statement of how the proposed District meets the Designation Criteria as outlined in 12-1607(b).

BACKGROUND

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (FMC 12-1600 et seq) provides for the designation of both individual properties as well as Local Historic Districts. Local Historic

Districts may be contiguous, as with Fresno's Wilson Island Historic District, or thematic and non-contiguous (FMC 12-1603(s) as for example in the proposed bungalow court or hitching post Districts. Designated neighborhood historic districts provide for protection of the character-defining features of the District, compatible infill through design review, use of the more flexible California Historical Building Code as well as some perks through the City's Zoning Ordinance. Most importantly, historic districts add to a sense of place and community pride and usually lead to enhanced property values. Designated non-residential buildings may also qualify for federal tax credits.