

Appendix B

Historical Resources Tree Study and Historical Resource Impacts Assessment



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Project No. 17-03903

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Via email: Christopher.Koontz@longbeach.gov

Subject: Historical Resources Tree Study for the Houghton Park Community Center Improvements Project

Dear Mr. Koontz:

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) is currently preparing a historical resource impacts assessment for the Houghton Park Community Center Project (project). Located in Houghton Park at 6301 Myrtle Avenue in Long Beach, California, the project involves improvements to an existing community center complex, which would result in new construction and the removal of ten (10) adjacent trees. A historical resources report prepared in April 2015 identifies several trees in the park (including some proposed for removal under the project) that potentially date to the time that the Colonel Sherman Otis Houghton and his family owned the larger property (1896-1927), and which could be potentially significant for their age or for a direct association with Houghton and his family.¹ To determine whether the ten trees can be considered historical resources and their removal would result in an adverse impact under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Rincon was retained to prepare this Historical Resources Tree Study.

Methods

Rincon's International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist Stephanie Lopez (WE-10442A) conducted a visual assessment to determine tree species and age. Diameter was measured at 4.5 feet above natural grade using a Forestry Supply diameter measuring tape with only the above ground portions of the trees were observed. A health assessment was not conducted, but obvious signs of stress were noted. An increment borer was not used to take a core sample from the tree because it would result in injury to the trees. Tree age was estimated based on height, diameter and canopy spread. Calculating age by the average annual wood ring growth was not feasible because the trees are in a landscaped environment where they have received watering and nutrients. This type of environment causes wood rings to vary from what it typical.

¹ GPA Consulting, *Historical Resource Report – Houghton Park and the Houghton Park Community Center Complex*. Prepared for the City of Long Beach, October 2014, Revised April 2015.

Senior Architectural Historian Steven Treffers, M.H.P. conducted supplemental research in an effort to determine whether any additional information is available to confirm the subject trees' age and any potential associations with the Houghton family. A number of resources were consulted, including but not limited to:

- Archives of the Historical Society of Long Beach Research Center
- Long Beach Public Library Digital Archive
- Archives of the *Long Beach Press-Telegram*
- Archives of the *Independent*
- Archives of the *Los Angeles Times*
- Cal State Dominguez Hills Digital Collections
- Historic aerial photographs at NETR Online
- USC Digital Library
- Huntington Digital Library
- Historic Land Records on file with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works

Findings

Tree Species and Age

Three (3) of the ten (10) trees are Jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), three (3) are carrot wood (*Cupaniopsis anacardiodes*), two (2) are eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* sp.) and two (2) are Canary Island date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*). None of these species are unusual in urban landscapes of southern and central California.² All of the trees appear to be regularly maintained with watering and trimming.

Jacarandas

The three (3) Jacarandas are located nearest the existing community center building (along the east side of the building). They are mature trees measuring 26, 25.5 and 18.5 inches in diameter. The trees are 30-35 feet in height with canopy spreads of approximately 15-30 feet wide. Jacarandas are known to grow to 25-40 feet in height with a 15-30 foot canopy spread and can have longevity of 80-125 years (Hatch 2007). They appear to be in good condition and are somewhat protected by the building. The jacarandas' height and spread are consistent with the species' known extents and it is possible the trees were planted 80-125 years ago.

Carrot Wood

The three (3) carrot wood trees are planted in planters and/or in the median beside the parking lot. They are 17, 16, and 13.5 inches in diameter, with canopy spreads of approximately 15-20 feet wide. Carrot wood tree longevity can reach 40 feet in height with a 30-foot spread and have longevity up to 100 years (Hatch 2007). The trees have die back in the canopies and ants were observed on the trunks indicating that the trees are stressed. The carrot wood trees are not the size that would indicate that they were planted up to 100 years ago but the conditions in which they exist (surrounded by asphalt) may have been a limiting factor. It is not possible to determine the time range within which they might have been planted based on the size of the trees.

² See Steve Brigham, *Ornamental Trees for Mediterranean Climates, the Trees of San Diego* (Berkeley, 2005); Charles Hatch, *Trees of the California Landscape: A Photographic Manual of Native and Ornamental Trees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and SelecTree, "Phoenix canariensis Tree Record." 1995-2017, accessed via <https://selectree.calpoly.edu/tree-detail/phoenix-canariensis> on September 7, 2017.



Eucalyptus

The two (2) eucalyptus trees are likely blue gum species, but no flower, seed or capsules were observed to determine the species definitively. The eucalyptus measure 49.5 and 47 inches in diameter with heights between 30 and 50 feet in height with spreads of approximately 15-25 feet wide. The trees have sparse canopies with extensive die back, dead limbs, and ants on the trunks and appeared to be in poor health. Eucalyptus trees are fast growing and can reach up to 165 feet in height. Growing conditions (soils and constant trimming) may have been a limiting factor for the trees' growth. It is not possible to determine the time range within which they might have been planted based on the size of the trees.

Canary Island Date Palms

The two (2) Canary Island date palms are at the west end of a line of numerous palms that extend east into the park grounds. They measure 22.5 and 20 inches in diameter and are approximately 35-45 feet in height. Canary Island palms can grow to 60 feet in height. These palms can have longevity of 50 to 150 years. The palms are planted in close proximity to one another, which may have inhibited growth to some degree over time. However the palms height and spread are consistent with the species' known extents and it is possible that the trees were planted 50-150 years ago.

Archival Research

The 2015 historical resource study cites several sources as evidence for the subject trees' possible association with the Houghton family, including a 1928 aerial photograph, historic newspaper articles, and a 1927 narrative on the history of Long Beach.³ The 1928 aerial photograph indicates that by this time there were several trees present in the general vicinity where the subject trees are currently located. The newspaper articles and 1927 narrative also indicate that there were trees on the property that were planted by Colonel Houghton and later by his son. These trees were present when the current park land was ultimately acquired by the City of Long Beach in 1927. These accounts do not confirm the location and type of these trees, however, and subsequent aerial photographs indicate that a number of trees, including a line of trees terminating near the community center, were planted in the years after 1928.

Supplemental archival research was unable to definitively confirm that the subject trees were planted by the Houghton family or were present during the Houghtons' ownership of the property. Historic photographs on file with the Historical Society of Long Beach show mature Canary Island Palm and Eucalyptus trees on the Houghton property in 1925. However, due to the lack of recognizable reference points, the exact location of the trees depicted in these photographs could not be confirmed. Historic newspaper articles in the *Long Beach-Press-Telegram* and the *Independent* also discuss ongoing development in the park, which included the removal and planting of trees; however, these accounts often lack detail about the exact location and species. Historic aerial photographs also lack substantial detail, but depict the ongoing planting and removal of trees with different canopy sizes in the general area east of the clubhouse building. No other primary sources that conclusively date the subject trees to the Houghton era were identified.

³ GPA Consulting 2015, 11-12.



Summary and Recommendations

Per the guidance of the National Park Service, a property that is eligible for its associations with important individuals is one that is representative of the person's productive life and is generally restricted to a property that illustrates their important associations.⁴ An individual's association with the property must also be documented by accepted methods of historical research; speculative associations are not acceptable. Although many of the 10 trees identified in the study are of historic age, the tree study and supplemental archival research were unable to definitively date the subject trees to the period during which the period the Houghton family owned the property (1896-1927).

Further, the 2015 historical resources report indicates that the larger Houghton Park property may have potential significance for its association with the Sherman Otis Houghton and other members of his family; however, due to a lack of integrity from the removal of all buildings associated with the family and the continued redevelopment of the property as a park, it no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey these potential significant associations. Many of these integrity considerations also apply to the subject trees by default and in the absence of the integrity of the larger property, the subject trees would need to possess enough significance in their own right to be illustrative of the Houghton family's productive lives. The act of planting a tree, or of a tree simply existing during one's ownership of a property, does not rise to this threshold of significance. The subject trees therefore do not appear eligible as an individual resource for federal, state, or local designation for associations with important persons (National Register of Historic Places Criterion B, California Register of Historical Resources Criterion 2, and Long Beach Landmark Criterion B).

Similarly, while the current study was able to confirm that several of the trees are of historic age, this in itself does not denote significance. In consideration of other applicable federal, state, and local designation criteria, a property must have a direct association with significant events (Criterion A/1/A) or architectural trends (Criterion C/3/C) to be considered eligible for listing. No evidence was identified to suggest that the subject trees meet these criteria or have the potential to yield important information (Criterion D/4/D). In summary, the subject trees do not appear individually eligible at the federal, state, or local level under any applicable designation criteria and therefore do not meet the definition of a historical resource under CEQA.⁵

Although the subject trees do not appear to be a historical resource, they are of historic-age and contribute to the overall scenery and character of Houghton Park. Due to this and their unconfirmed history, Rincon recommends that a California Historical Resources Status Code of 6L be assigned to the subject trees, which would provide them with special consideration in local planning.⁶ The proposed project would not remove all of the trees that were previously identified in 2015 as potentially historic; however, as part of the conditions of approval of the project, Rincon recommends that those trees that would be retained are protected during construction to ensure that they are not damaged. Further, new trees of similar species and canopy should be planted in the park to mitigate the loss of the historic-age subject trees.

⁴ National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997).

⁵ Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines.

⁶ See California Office of Historic Preservation, *User's Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historic Resources Inventory Directory*, Technical Assistance Series #8 (Sacramento: California Office of Historic Preservation, November 2004).



Should you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-569-3997, or streffers@rinconconsultants.com

Sincerely,

Rincon Consultants, Inc.



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Senior Architectural Historian





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September 21, 2017
Project No. 17-03903

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Subject: Historical Resources Impacts Assessment for the Houghton Park Community Center Improvements Project

Dear Mr. Koontz:

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) was retained to conduct a historical resources impacts assessment for the Houghton Park Community Center Project (project). Located in Houghton Park at 6301 Myrtle Avenue in Long Beach, California, the proposed project involves improvements to an existing community center complex (subject property). The subject property was previously evaluated in April 2015 and a portion of the complex, identified as Building A, was recommended individually eligible as a Long Beach Historic Landmark;¹ it is therefore considered a historical resource for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because the project would demolish a non-contributing portion to the subject property and construct adjacent new construction, the following memorandum was prepared to assess whether the proposed project would have a negative impact on the resource's Long Beach Historic Landmark eligibility, which would constitute a substantial adverse change to the environment as defined by CEQA.

The impacts assessment detailed in this memorandum was conducted by Senior Architectural Historian Steven Treffers, M.H.P, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's *Professional Qualification Standards* (PQS) for architectural history and history. With eight years of experience in historic preservation planning in California, Mr. Treffers has extensive experience with CEQA historical resources assessments.

Project Description

The project involves construction of an approximately 6,480 square foot (sf) building addition to the east of the existing community center, which would connect via a breezeway. In addition, the project involves a partial renovation of the existing 1950s building (Building B) and also a demolition of part of the 1980s wing to the west (Building C) (4,340 sf) and a portion of the 1959 wing to the east (869 sf). The project would also include demolition of the restroom building (677 sf) south of the 1930s building

¹ GPA Consulting, *Historical Resource Report – Houghton Park and the Houghton Park Community Center Complex*. Prepared for the City of Long Beach, October 2014, Revised April 2015.

(Building A). Approximately 5,886 sf of total building area would be demolished, and the proposed project would increase total building area by approximately 594 sf.

The proposed building addition would create a courtyard that spans between the addition and the 1930s building (Building A), and would plant six trees within the space. This courtyard would be enclosed by a decorative fence on the south end so that it can be programmable space for use by the public as part of the community center. The building addition would house two large multipurpose rooms that could be further divided into two rooms each by a retractable wall. A set of restrooms that open to a small reception area would be centrally located in the proposed addition. The reception area would be accessed via the courtyard or a shaded gallery that would line the western edge of the proposed addition. The project would also include a pair of unisex restrooms that open to the east that park visitors could directly access without entering the building. The project would locate a bus drop off area adjacent to the proposed building addition with bicycle parking and concrete seating areas.

Lastly, the project would involve reconfiguration and expansion of the existing parking lot, and a modification to an existing picnic area south of the parking lot. The parking lot expansion would replace some existing parking spaces and would increase total parking from 113 spaces to 140 spaces.

Property Background

An approximately 28-acre municipal park, Houghton Park was developed on land that was donated and purchased by the City of Long Beach in the mid-to-late 1920s. The park has been continually developed since this time and currently contains a variety of buildings, structures, and objects, including recreational facilities, playfields, landscaping, paths, picnic tables, and restrooms. Previously known as the clubhouse, the Houghton Community Center complex is located at the center of the park and consists of three conjoined buildings and one hyphen. It was developed in three phases and includes Building A (1930), Building B (1959), and Building C (1987-89).

In 2014, GPA Consulting was retained by the City of Long Beach to conduct a historical resources evaluation of Houghton Park and the Houghton Park Community Center Complex in support of the preliminary planning stages of the current project. The findings concluded that Houghton Park did not appear eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) as a historic district or locally as a Long Beach Historic District. The Houghton Park Community Center complex was recommended ineligible for listing in the NRHP or CRHR as a contributing feature of the park because no historic district exists.

Although Building A of the Houghton Park Community Center complex was also recommended ineligible for individual NRHP- or CRHR listing due to a lack of physical integrity, it was found eligible for Long Beach Historic Landmark designation under Criterion D because it reflects a distinctive architectural style of its construction period, Spanish Colonial Revival.² Building B of the Houghton Park Community Center complex was found ineligible for federal, state, or local designation due to a lack of historical and architectural significance, and physical integrity, and Building C (completed in 1989) does not appear to have been considered as it had not passed the age threshold (45 years of age) generally signaling the need for evaluation; neither Buildings B or C are considered historical resources as a result.

² Since the 2015 GPA Consulting report was prepared, the City of Long Beach adopted revised criteria for designation of Landmarks, which more closely align with those of the NRHP and CRHR. The previous Criterion D can presumably be converted to the current Criterion C, which states a resource qualifies for designation if “it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or it represents the work of a master or it possesses high artistic values;” see Long Beach Municipal Code Section 2.63.050.



As specifically identified by GPA, the physical elements that are essential for Building A to convey its significance as an example of Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture are:

- Stucco cladding
- Arched recessed windows and doors
- Decorative vents and wrought ironwork

These character-defining physical elements are limited to the building itself and do not extend to the surrounding setting of the building. As discussed in 2015, Building A does not retain integrity of setting due to the construction of Buildings B and C. The large grouping of mature trees immediately adjacent to the east Building A was not identified as a contributing feature to the property; however, GPA Consulting did suggest in 2015 that they have the potential to be significant for their age or direct association with Colonel Sherman Otis Houghton and his family. A historical resources tree study prepared by Rincon Consultants in September 2017 did not find any evidence that the trees proposed to be removed under the current project were directly associated with the Houghton family or that they were individually eligible for federal, state, or local designation.³

Project Impacts Analysis

CEQA Section 21084.1 requires that a lead agency determine whether a project may have a significant effect on cultural resources. Impacts to significant cultural resources that affect the characteristics of the resource that qualify it for the NRHP or adversely alter the significance of a resource listed on or eligible for the CRHR are considered a significant effect on the environment.

In terms of historical resources, these impacts could result from “physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired.”⁴ Material impairment is defined as demolition or alteration “in an adverse manner [of] those characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for inclusion in, the California Register.”⁵ Further, under Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, a project that is found to conform with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Standards) is generally found to not result in significant impacts to historic resources under CEQA.⁶ The Standards establish professional standards and make broad-brush recommendations for maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations.

As discussed above, Building A is the only historical resource that has been identified in Houghton Park. It is eligible for Long Beach Historic Landmark designation under Criterion C (previously Criterion D) as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in Long Beach. The characteristics that convey its historical significance as an example of Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture are its stucco cladding; arched recessed windows and doors; and decorative vents and wrought ironwork. Although not expressly defined in the GPA report, other character-defining features of the property relate to its form and massing, including its tall one-story height and combination roof that consists of gabled,

³ Steven Treffers, Memorandum to Christopher Koontz at the Long Beach Development Services Planning Bureau Regarding a Historical Resources Tree Study for the Houghton Park Community Center Improvements Project, September 13, 2017.

⁴ CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.5 [b][1].

⁵ CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[b][2][A].

⁶ Kay Weeks and Anne Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2017.



hipped, and shed portions. The surrounding setting does not contribute to the significance of the property.

As currently proposed, the project would not result in the demolition, destruction, relocation, physical alteration or material impairment of any portion of Building A. Portions of Buildings B and C are proposed to be demolished; however, neither is eligible federal, state, or local designation and they are not considered historical resources under CEQA and their partial demolition would not constitute a significant adverse impact.

The Standards include ten specific standards, which provide guidance for alterations to historic properties. Two of these, Standards Nos. 9 and 10 specifically relate to related new construction and are the most relevant Standards for the current project. Standard No. 9 states that new construction should not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property and that new work should be differentiated from the old, yet compatible. Standard No. 10 states that related new construction should be completed in such a way that if removed in the future, the form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.

The project would not directly impact any historic materials of Building A. As discussed above, setting is not a contributing element of the building and therefore there are no features or spatial relationships that characterize the property and could be impacted by the proposed construction. Proposed new construction is adjacent but not connected to Building A and is compatible in its scale and massing, yet differentiated in its materials and architectural style. Further, if the new addition was removed at a future date, it would not result in any permanent effects to Building A's form or integrity. The proposed project is consistent with Standards Nos. 9 and 10; therefore, it meets the Standards and would not result in a significant impact to historical resources under CEQA.

In consideration of the partial removal of historic-age trees that is under the current project do not appear to be a historical resource, they were previously found to not contribute to Building A and are not considered a historical resource under CEQA. They are of historic-age however and contribute to the overall scenery and character of Houghton Park. Due to this and their unconfirmed history, Rincon recommends that a California Historical Resources Status Code of 6L be assigned to the subject trees, which would provide them with special consideration in local planning.⁷ The proposed project would not remove all of the trees that were previously identified in 2015 as potentially historic. Nevertheless, Rincon recommends protection of those trees that would be retained during construction to ensure that they are not damaged. Rincon also recommends planting of new trees of similar species and canopy in the park to offset the loss of the historic-age subject trees.

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-569-3997, or streffers@rinconconsultants.com

Sincerely,

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