

# SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

## LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

### Context: Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980



*Prepared for:*  
City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning  
Office of Historic Resources



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**National Park Service, Department of the Interior Grant Disclaimer**

This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>PURPOSE AND SCOPE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>HISTORIC CONTEXT</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Terms and Definitions</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Early Thai Settlement in Southern California, 1950-1965</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Thais in Los Angeles: Establishing a Community, 1960s-1980</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Placemaking and Strengthening Community Identity After 1980</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	
<b>Appendix A: Thai American Known and Designated Resources</b>	
<b>Appendix B: SurveyLA’s Asian American Historic Context Statement Advisory Committee</b>	

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

In 2016, the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources (OHR) received an Underrepresented Communities grant from the National Park Service to develop a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) and associated historic contexts for five Asian American communities in Los Angeles: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Filipino. This “Thai Americans in Los Angeles” context was developed as part of the grant project and to contribute to the Citywide Historic Context Statement developed for SurveyLA.

While this context provides a framework for identifying and evaluating properties relating to Thai American history in Los Angeles, it is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the Thai American community. Rather this context provides a chronological approach to this history and focuses on themes and geographic areas associated with important extant resources.<sup>1</sup> The context narrative is followed by a section that identifies the relevant property types associated with themes presented, and includes a discussion of their significance and eligibility standards (Appendix A). This context has been used to complete the MPDF form, which is similar in content. However, while the MPDF focuses on resources that meet eligibility standards for listing in the National Register, this context also addresses resources that meet eligibility standards for listing in the California Register of Historic Places and designation under the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Ordinance (Historic-Cultural Monuments) and Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Ordinance (HPOZs).<sup>2</sup>

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

### ***Consultant Team***

This context was completed by the NPS grant project team. Architectural Resources Group (ARG) served as the prime consultant and commissioned architectural historian M. Rosalind Sagara to complete the Thai American context. With expertise in the history of Asian Americans and the urban built environment, Rosalind brings a deep understanding of the contributions of Asian Americans to the city of Los Angeles. She holds a Master’s degree in Heritage Conservation from the University of Southern California.

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<sup>1</sup> The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended over time. The National Register of Historic Places has a 50-year end date for properties to be listed unless they are of exceptional importance.

<sup>2</sup> For the National Register MPDF the term “Registration Requirements” is used in place of “Eligibility Standards.”

***Project Advisory Committee and Community Outreach***

As part of the scope of work for the 2016 NPS grant referenced above, the OHR organized a project Advisory Committee (Committee) to work with the grant consultant team. Participants included key leaders in the Asian American community representing a wide range of interests, organizations, and institutions as well as professors, lecturers, scholars, and writers of Asian American history. A full list of participants is attached as Appendix B. The Committee played a critical role in identifying important places associated with each context and also advised on pertinent sources of research information. The Committee members also served as subject matter experts to review and comment on context drafts.

Following the first meeting of the Committee in November of 2016, the OHR organized a series of five community meetings in locations throughout Los Angeles. These working meetings (one for each associated context) also gave the community the opportunity to provide input on significant places to inform the contexts. In some cases, the outreach meetings led to one-on-one meetings with community members as well as access to photographs or other private collections of individuals in attendance.

This Thai American context has been greatly enhanced by the contributions of various individuals and organizations active within Los Angeles' Thai American community. Notable among them are Chancee Martorell, Founder and Executive Director of the Thai Community Development Center; Mark Padoongpatt, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Asian and Asian American Studies; and Mary Tila.

**PREFACE**

In the 1960s, the United States underwent significant social and cultural upheaval as many communities of color and other marginalized groups fought for civil rights and were involved in national and international movements for liberation. Grassroots organizing and landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Immigration Act of 1965 reshaped the collective consciousness of communities of color. During this era, the Watts Riots in 1965 and the East Los Angeles Walkout (or Chicano Blowouts) in 1968 helped empower communities of color in Los Angeles, and across the nation.

By the late 1960s, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans formed a movement of their own—an Asian American movement. It was with the Black Liberation Movement, the Anti-War Movement against the Vietnam War, and Third World Liberation Front movement that the concept of Asian American was formed as a political identity. Young Asian Americans mobilized in their communities across the nation and in Los Angeles to fight U.S. imperialism and the unequal treatment of Asian Americans. In 1968, students of color across California organized and held strikes as part of the Third World Liberation Front. This movement was instrumental in creating and establishing Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline—and subsequent Asian American, African American, Chicano American, and Native American Studies—on college and university campuses. It was as part of this larger movement that the Asian American Studies

Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was established in 1969<sup>3</sup> and Asian American community-based organizations were developed and strengthened to serve the community.

As community leaders, scholars, and leaders reflect on the past, it is fitting that the City of Los Angeles honor the historic and cultural contributions of Asian Americans. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have long and dynamic histories in shaping and continuing to shape the city. From the 1880s pioneering Chinese American settlements, to more recent recognitions of historic and cultural ethnic neighborhoods like Historic Filipinotown and Thai Town, tourists and residents alike often pose questions about these places, their signs, and the importance of Asian Americans in the building of Los Angeles.

### **Asian Americans in Los Angeles Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This *Asian Americans in Los Angeles* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) establishes a framework to guide the identification and designation of places significant to Los Angeles' Asian American communities. Geographically, the contexts cover the history and development of five Los Angeles neighborhoods that have been designated as Preserve America communities— Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Koreatown, Historic Filipinotown, and Thai Town—and also focus on other areas of the city in which these groups settled over time.

Topics covered by the contexts focus on extant resources associated with important individuals, organizations, businesses, industries, and movements. Themes addressed include commerce, religion and spirituality, health and medicine, deed restriction and segregation, community organizations, military history, media, cultural landscape, architecture.

While these five Asian American groups were the focus on this project, it is important to recognize the diversity within Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI). There are many other AAPI ethnic groups that have contributed and continue to contribute to the rich diversity of Los Angeles, including Pacific Islanders, South Asians, and Southeast Asians. This MPDF provides an opportunity to engage with City officials, community leaders, preservationists, scholars, and others to continue identifying and designating places that are important in telling both AAPI stories and all of the city's stories.

### **Asian Americans in Los Angeles**

Each of the MPDF's five contexts discusses the dynamic waves of immigration and settlement patterns of Asian Americans in Los Angeles. Within each group, the power of place resonates as Asian Americans find places of residence, work, and community as Angelenos. With a long history of discrimination, displacement, and associated demolition of property, Asian Americans resisted and struggled to maintain a sense of identity, as well as their homes, businesses, and cultural institutions. Ethnic neighborhoods in Los Angeles like Old Chinatown and Little Tokyo were established in the early

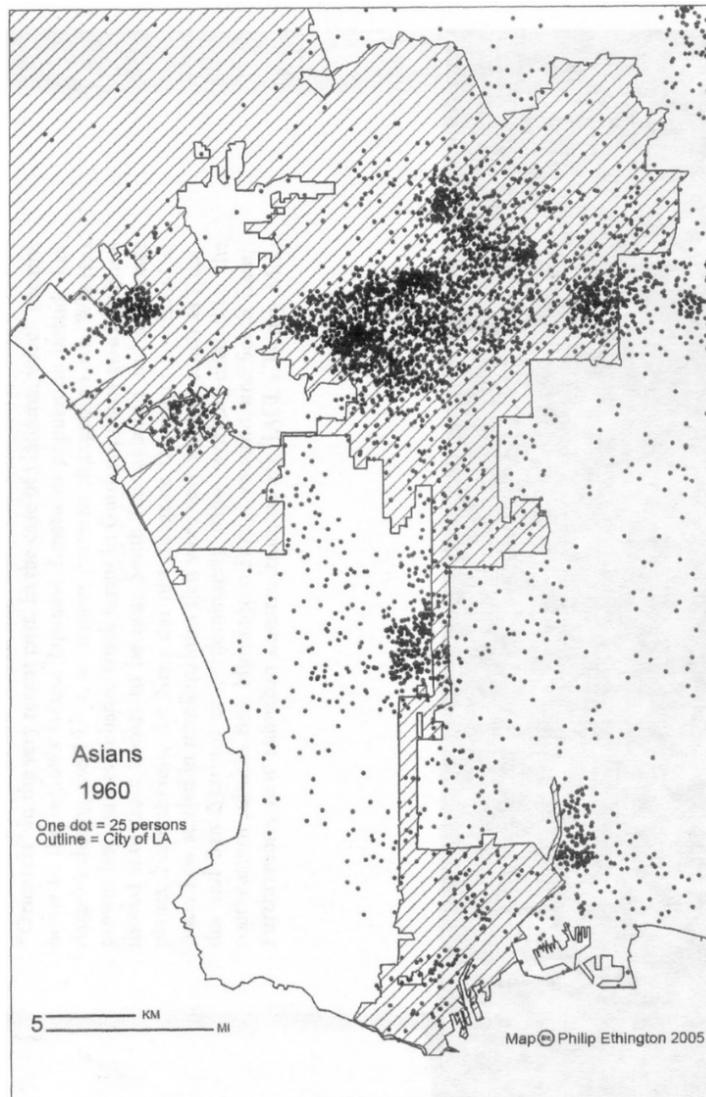
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<sup>3</sup> Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001).

twentieth century while others including Koreatown, Historic Filipinotown, and Thai Town were formed as subsequent waves of immigrants and their families settled and laid roots in the city.

These settlements were never formed in isolation. Many Asian American settlements were shaped alongside other Asian Americans and communities of color, often due to discriminatory policies and practices that limited where they lived, worked, and sought a sense of community. Places important to Asian Americans in Los Angeles were often rendered in the margins to other Angelenos, and were nonetheless significant for finding a place to call home, be it a single-room occupancy hotel in Little Manila or Little Tokyo, an employment agency in Chinatown, or a church in Koreatown. As Asian immigrants or seasonal migrants came to Los Angeles, they sought out familiar places for economic opportunities, a place to stay, and places that reminded them of their homelands.

As subsequent generations of Asian Americans in Los Angeles grew in size, alongside continuous waves of new immigrants, the landscape of Los Angeles also evolved. The power of place for these groups in the city helped forge a growing sense of identity as Asian Americans. By the 1960s, the population of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans in the city grew beyond the early ethnic neighborhoods and into the suburbs. During this pivotal time, cultural and community institutions began to broaden their focus of serving new immigrants to include services for families, older adults, and youth. Other immigrants from across Asia and the Pacific followed in significant waves, reuniting families and drawing in new immigrants, carving out their own sense of place in this booming and diverse city.



*Dispersion of Asian Americans in Los Angeles, 1960  
(Philip Ethington, USC, 2005)*

### **The Legacy of the Asian American Movement in Los Angeles**

The term Asian American is a political construct born in the 1960s as Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans (and other Asian ethnic groups) fought collectively for civil rights. In 1969, the Asian American Studies Center was established at UCLA in Campbell Hall. Community members, students, staff, and faculty sought to develop a center to bridge campus and community around the theme of liberative education and social justice. The Asian American Studies Center worked alongside three other ethnic studies research centers: the American Indian Studies Center, the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies (formerly Center for Afro-American Studies), and the Chicano Studies Research Center.

UCLA served as an active site for the development of Asian American Studies as a field of study. *Amerasia Journal* (established at Yale by Don Nakanishi and Lowell Chun-Hoon, moved to UCLA shortly after its start in 1971) became a leading journal for the field. The Center also saw the importance of fostering student projects like *Gidra*, founded in 1969 and “created alongside the rise of radical third world grassroots student coalitions, in addition to the Black Power movement and Civil Rights Movement. After being denied official recognition by the university, the students started publishing *Gidra* independently, using the university’s Asian American Studies Center as its headquarters.”<sup>4</sup> Following its inception as a student newspaper, it moved to the Crenshaw area to be housed closer to L.A.’s Asian American community.<sup>5</sup> One of the first Asian American Studies conferences was held in Los Angeles in 1971 with opening remarks by Congresswoman Patsy Mink, the first woman of color elected to Congress.<sup>6</sup>

The Center was also created to work closely with Asian American community organizations in Los Angeles. East West Players was founded in 1965 by Asian American artists Mako, Rae Creevey, Beulah Quo, Soon-Tek Oh, James Hong, Pat Li, June Kim, Guy Lee, and Yet Lock in the Pilgrim Church in Silver Lake. It was supported in its early stages at UCLA. East West Players is the nation’s longest-running professional theater of color and the largest producing organization of Asian American artistic work. Visual Communications is another Asian American cultural institution. Visual Communications was founded in 1970 by UCLA students Duane Kubo, Robert Nakamura, Alan Ohashi, and Eddie Wong to support Asian American film and media.<sup>7</sup> It was initially housed and supported by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. Both Visual Communications and East West Players have since moved to Little Tokyo in the historic Union Center for the Arts (formerly Japanese Union Church of Los Angeles).

### ***Chinese Americans in Los Angeles***

Chinese Americans first settled in Los Angeles in the 1850s with its first permanent settlement centered near Los Angeles Plaza (El Pueblo de Los Angeles) and later referred to as Old Chinatown due to a series of subsequent settlements developed near or around downtown Los Angeles. The Chinese Americans in Los Angeles context discusses the settlement patterns of Chinese Americans while noting key contributions to the city’s built environment and burgeoning economy. Chinatown, as it is known, has been studied as being shaped by economic and social dynamics of race, space, and power.<sup>8</sup>

One site of historic and cultural significance for Chinese Americans in Los Angeles is the Castelar Street School. Since 1969, the Asian Education Project (AEP), later known as the Asian American Tutorial Project (AATP)—with Asian American college students from UCLA, University of Southern California (USC), and Occidental College—has served Castellar Street School in Chinatown by tutoring low-income,

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<sup>4</sup> Haivan V. Hoang, *Writing Against Racial Injury: The Politics of Asian American Student Rhetoric* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 56–76.

<sup>5</sup> Mike Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism,” *Gidra*, 6 (April 1974):1, 34–46.

<sup>6</sup> Conference Proceedings of the First National Conference on Asian American Studies, Los Angeles, CA, April 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Karen L. Ishizuka, *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties* (Verso Books, 2016), 159-160.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Lin, “Los Angeles Chinatown: Tourism, Gentrification, and the Rise of an Ethnic Growth Machine,” *Amerasia Journal* 34, no. 3, (2008): 110-125, doi:10.17953/amer.34.3.v545v63lpj1535p7.

immigrant, limited English proficiency elementary school students. Castelar Street School was the first school in the Los Angeles Unified School District to provide tri-lingual instruction in English, Spanish, and Chinese. It also housed the Chinatown branch library of the Los Angeles Public Library from 1977 to 2003.

### ***Japanese Americans in Los Angeles***

The history of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles dates back to 1869. Since then, shifting migratory, settlement, and development patterns have continued to be shaped by outside forces including discriminatory policies, redevelopment, and displacement as well as forces within, through cultural institutions, and small businesses. Little Tokyo is one of three remaining historic Japantowns (*Nihonmachi*) in California that survived the forced evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II and the demolition that occurred during urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. Japanese American institutions and services including community halls, language schools, Buddhist temples, Christian churches, markets, nurseries, and other nonprofit/cultural institutions have shaped Little Tokyo and other Japanese American settlements in Los Angeles.

The Union Center for the Arts, formerly known as the Japanese Union Church of Los Angeles, was established in 1918 as it merged three congregations: the Los Angeles Presbyterian Church (established in 1905), the Los Angeles Congregational Church (established in 1908), and the Japanese Bethlehem Congregational Church of Los Angeles (established by 1911). During World War II, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, just a little more than two months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Shortly after, a series of Civilian Exclusion Orders were publicly posted all along the West Coast of the United States, notifying persons of Japanese ancestry of their impending forced removal. "Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry" were the infamous words seen at the top of the posters. The Union Church was listed as a designated reporting location for Japanese Americans in 1942; many were able to store their belongings in the building during their incarceration. Union Church has evolved from a place of worship to a center for Asian Americans arts and culture as home to East West Players and Visual Communications (established in 1970). The Union Center for the Arts is listed as part of the Little Tokyo Historic District, a National Historic Landmark.

### ***Korean Americans in Los Angeles***

Los Angeles has one of the largest Korean populations outside of the Korean peninsula with a notable Koreatown, home to hundreds of Korean- and Korean American-owned small businesses, churches, and community institutions. Although large-scale migration and settlement occurred in the aftermath of the 1965 Immigration Act, a historic and important Korean American community dates to the turn of the twentieth century when laborers arrived in Hawai'i in 1903. Soon after, migration continued to the continental United States, especially to California where Korean Americans worked as migrant farm labor and some became small business owners.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bong Youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979). For general background on Korean American history.

The greater Los Angeles area has served as one of the hubs of Korean America for over a century. Koreatown experienced notable growth after World War II and the years that followed 1965. The 1992 Civil Unrest/Uprising/Riots marks a turbulent coming of age experience for the Korean American community. Layered beneath the contemporary and continually expanding borders of Koreatown are historic sites that have played a significant role in community life. One such site, located near USC, houses both the Korean Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles and the Korean National Association (KNA) building that share the same campus. The church dates to 1906, and is among the oldest Korean American congregations in the nation. The KNA building dedicated in 1938 serves as a testament to the independence movement that animated the struggles and hopes of the early Korean American community.

### ***Filipino Americans in Los Angeles***

The Filipino Americans in Los Angeles context traces the history of Filipino immigrants and subsequent generations in the city from 1903 to 1980. It spans from the arrival of the first known Filipino Americans in Los Angeles to subsequent movement of Filipino Americans in the city as shaped by immigration policies and discriminatory policies as well as community institutions. The context focuses on historical themes based on residential settlement patterns, economic activity, and the growth of cultural institutions including cultural centers, small businesses, service agencies, and churches.

What is known as Historic Filipinotown is influenced by earlier settlements of Filipino Americans in the Downtown area.<sup>10</sup> From Little Manila to Bunker Hill to Temple-Beaudry, these were places that immigrants and seasonal migrants knew to go to for services, culture, and a sense of community. Royal “Uncle Roy” Morales can trace his family’s roots to the Filipino Christian Church as his father immigrated to Los Angeles from the Philippines as a *pensionado* (scholar) and Christian missionary. Uncle Roy’s father, Silvestre Morales, helped establish the Filipino Christian Fellowship on First and San Pedro Streets in 1928, then Filipino Christian Church (the first in the nation) in 1933.<sup>11</sup> The church was first established in the Bunker Hill area of Downtown and later moved to 301 North Union Street. The Filipino Christian Church, under the leadership of Uncle Roy, served as a cultural hub as it incubated other community institutions like Search to Involve Pilipino Americans, Pilipino American Reading Room and Library, and Filipino Cultural School.

### ***Thai Americans in Los Angeles***

From the first known arrival of Thai Americans to Los Angeles in the 1950s to the designation of Thai Town in East Hollywood in 1999, this community has been shaped by the city’s growth and development in key areas like the entertainment industry and the culinary industry. Thai American community settlement patterns are traced through commercial development and foodways, notably with Thai

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<sup>10</sup> Michelle G. Magalong, “The Search for Filipino American Place(s) in Los Angeles,” *UCLA Critical Planning Journal* 10 (2003):13–23.

<sup>11</sup> Royal F. Morales, *Makibaka: The Pilipino American Struggle* (Los Angeles: Mountainview Publishers, 1974).

restaurants that date to the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> When Thais arrived in Los Angeles, they reinvented and repackaged Thai food in various ways to meet the rising popularity of Thai cuisine in urban and suburban areas.<sup>13</sup> Thai immigration and settlement patterns, identities, and community structure has changed in a relatively short period of time in Los Angeles. This is seen in the city’s built environment and through the establishment of Thai American culinary tourism and community identity. Institutions like Thai Community Development Center and Wat Thai were developed to meet the needs of the growing Thai American communities in Los Angeles.<sup>14</sup>

Bangkok Market opened its doors in 1971 in East Hollywood, established by Thai immigrant Pramorte “Pat” Tilakamonkul as the first Thai and Southeast Asian market in the United States. It provided Thai ingredients to a growing population of Thai Americans in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 70s. Before the existence of Bangkok Market, it was difficult to find Thai ingredients in the U.S. due to strict import policies. Tilamonkul and his business partners brokered deals with import/export companies to allow Thai ingredients to be imported in the country.<sup>15</sup> Bangkok Market also served as a de facto community center for Thai immigrants in Los Angeles.

### **Preserving Los Angeles’s Asian America**

This MPDF documents five Asian American ethnic groups that have shaped the built environment and cultural landscape of Los Angeles. While little to date is documented or designated as historic landmarks or monuments under city, state, or federal programs, the MPDF provides an overview of the historic and cultural contributions of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Thai Americans in Los Angeles.

Each of the five contexts provides great encouragement on reflection of the fifty years since the birth of “Asian America” and the subsequent efforts by these Los Angeles communities to create, preserve, and sustain historic and cultural roots. The MPDF serves as a platform through which communities can continue identifying, documenting, and preserving places, histories, and stories, within the five communities covered by this document, and across other AAPI ethnic groups that form part of Los Angeles’ vast and diverse landscape.

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<sup>12</sup> In this document, foodways refers to eating habits and culinary practices as it relates to Asian Americans in Los Angeles.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Padoongpatt, *Flavors of Empire: Food and the Making of Thai America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Chanchanit Martorell, *Images of America: Thais in Los Angeles* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Padoongpatt, *Flavors of Empire*.

## **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

This historic context examines the migration, settlement, and development patterns of Thai Americans in Los Angeles from 1950 to 1980, spanning the arrival of the first known Thai Americans in Los Angeles, through the early commercial establishment of the community in the 1970s, and completion of the Wat Thai of Los Angeles in 1979.

Unlike the histories of Asian immigrants who arrived in Los Angeles before, or shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the history of Thai immigration to Los Angeles is a later phenomenon. As such, the scope of this study is limited by the available literature and focuses primarily on historical themes associated with institutional development and commercial growth during the period of significance.

Future study will likely yield additional information about the experience and contributions of Thais in Los Angeles. U.S. Census records from 1950 will be available in 2020 and may reveal critical information about Thais and how they are shaping Los Angeles' built environment. Study of Thai language newspapers and media are other sources from which new information will likely be obtained.

While Thais in Los Angeles are believed to have first arrived in Los Angeles in the 1950s, it was not until the early 1960s that evidence of the community was observed via the establishment of the Thai Association of Southern California, the first known Thai community organization. As a result of U.S. Cold War intervention in Thailand and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Thais began to migrate in larger numbers to the U.S. and Los Angeles. In the 1970s, Thai commercial development was observed most notably in the community's diverse restaurant establishments, of which the largest concentration was in Hollywood. During this period, a Thai Chamber of Commerce was formed and examples of Thai investment began to emerge. The 1970s also saw the emergence of Thai-language newspapers in Los Angeles, though many were short-lived. By 1979, the Wat Thai of Los Angeles, the largest Thai Theravada Buddhist Temple in the U.S., was completed in North Hollywood, becoming the focal point of Thai life in Southern California.

Resources referenced throughout the context are considered extant unless otherwise noted.

### **Terms and Definitions**

As often as possible, both English and Thai terms are used in this document. Thai terms appear in italics with the exception of surnames, organization names, business names, and place names. Thai terms are translated as needed throughout the document.

Thai and Thai American: Because of the relatively recent arrival of Thai immigrants to Los Angeles the terms Thai and Thai American are used interchangeably. It should be noted that there is a long history of immigrants of Chinese ethnicity in Thailand that dates back to the fifteenth century. Thailand has the

largest Chinese population in Southeast Asia—the Chinese are largely assimilated, speak Thai almost exclusively, and have intermarried with Thais. According to scholar Jiemin Bao, the majority of the first wave of Thai immigrants to the U.S. were Chinese Thais (also known as Sino-Thais), though they were legally classified as Thais by both governments. Geographer Jacqueline Desbarats has argued that Chinese Thais were more prone than other Thais to emigrate to the U.S. during the early wave of immigration, and once granted a visa, more quickly arranged for departure, and were more likely to become American citizens after arrival.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese Thai diaspora in the U.S. generally identifies as Thai, though others make the distinction. This study concurs that the first wave of Thai immigrants in the U.S. and in Los Angeles were largely Chinese Thais. Other than this early mention, the context does not use the term Chinese Thai when referring to the Thai population in Los Angeles. Direct quotes that use the term Chinese Thai, Thai, or Thai American remain unaltered.

Wat: Thai term denoting a Buddhist monastery, or temple.

Theravada: This term denotes a branch of Buddhism mainly practiced in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

### **Early Thai Settlement in Southern California, 1950-1965**

Thais living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area form the largest concentration of Thais outside of Thailand. Only a few hundred Thais are believed to have been living in Los Angeles before the 1960s. Many early Thai immigrants to the U.S. were sponsored by the Royal Thai government and expected to return upon completion of their studies. Privately funded students immigrated to the U.S. during this time as well, and many stayed on in the U.S. and Los Angeles. Following the liberalization of U.S. immigration policy in the 1960s, Thai students were joined by professionals and wives of U.S. military personnel and civilians. Despite their relatively later arrival in comparison to other Asian Americans in Los Angeles, Thais in Los Angeles have contributed significantly to Los Angeles' economy, culture, and history.

Fewer than 500 Thais registered as immigrants in the U.S. between 1951 and 1960.<sup>17</sup> Representing the largest percentage of the pioneer wave of Thai immigration to Los Angeles in the 1960s and early 1970s were “Thai students, predominantly male and from the urban ethnic-Chinese Thai population in Bangkok,” writes Mark Tanachai Padoongpatt in *Thais that Bind: U.S. Empire, Food, and Community in Los Angeles, 1945-2008*.<sup>18</sup> In Los Angeles, early Thai students settled near their chosen schools, including

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<sup>16</sup> Jacqueline Desbarats, “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” *Geographical Review* 69 (1979): 308, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/214887>.

<sup>17</sup> See Jiemin Bao, *Marital Acts: Gender, Sexuality, And Identity Among The Chinese Thai Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 175.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Tanachai Padoongpatt, “Thais that Bind: U.S. Empire, Food, and Community in Los Angeles, 1945-2008,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2011), 36. Thailand has one of the largest overseas Chinese communities in the world, with a history of Chinese immigration to Thailand that dates over 200 years. Thai Chinese are Thai nationals with full, or partial Chinese ancestry. See Jiemin Bao, *Marital Acts: Gender, Sexuality, And Identity Among The Chinese Thai Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 176.

Los Angeles City College, California State University Los Angeles, University of Southern California, and University of California, Los Angeles, and California State University, Long Beach.<sup>19</sup> Padoongpatt argues that Thais and other immigrants benefited from the expansion of higher education in California during the postwar years. In 1960, out-of-state and international students' tuition was within financial reach for many, due to the passage of the Master Plan of Higher Education in California.<sup>20</sup>

To create a sense of community and to combat isolation and loneliness, in 1962 Thai students and some community members formed the Thai Association of Southern California, the first known Thai community organization in Los Angeles.<sup>21</sup> According to Sudurat Disayawattana, the mission of the organization was to be the center of social gathering and to organize ethnic activities. They launched a publication named *Puan Thai* (Thai fellows), which reported news from the home country.<sup>22</sup> In 1965, as part of UCLA's homecoming activities, Thai students held a dinner featuring Thai food and entertainment in the newly built UCLA International Student Center at 1023 Hilgard Avenue in Westwood.<sup>23</sup>



*Members of the Thai Association of Southern California with the King and Queen of Thailand in Beverly Hills during a visit to Los Angeles, ca. 1960 (Courtesy of Nixon Vayupakparnonde).*

### **Thais in Los Angeles: Establishing a Community, 1960s-1980**

The Immigration & Nationality Act of 1965 marked a fundamental shift in U.S. immigration policy, eliminating almost all of the historical restrictions placed on Asian immigrants. Unlike other migratory patterns of Southeast Asians who fled war or political strife, Thai immigration of this period was influenced by U.S. foreign policy and militarization in Southeast Asia. U.S. military intervention in Thailand—including the establishment of a U.S. embassy, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization headquarters in Bangkok, private businesses, educational and cultural exchange programs, organizations such as the Peace Corps and Fulbright Foundation, tourist-based infrastructure, and U.S. military bases—brought unprecedented American influence on Thai society and resulted in encouraging many Thais to immigrate to the U.S.<sup>24</sup> From 1975 to 1980, Thais with non-immigrant, F-1 student visas surpassed all other Thais arriving in Los Angeles.

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<sup>19</sup> Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 41; Sudurat Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making: A Study of the Negotiation of Culture in the Thai-language Newspapers of Los Angeles," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1993), 54.

<sup>20</sup> Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 40.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>22</sup> Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 55.

<sup>23</sup> "Open House Tours Homecoming Feature," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1965; "UCLA Dedicates Seven Student Center Areas," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1965; The building houses the Italian Cultural Institute Los Angeles.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Yu Danico and Anthony C. Ocampo, eds., *Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 893-894.

In “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” geographer Desbarats noted that the Thai Consul General in Los Angeles estimated the size of the city’s legal Thai residents to be 5,000 in 1975 as opposed to 10,000, which some members of the community offered.<sup>25</sup> Most of the Thais who entered the U.S. between 1969 and 2000 came during the 1980s (**Table 1**). Thais with limited skills and education who permanently settled in Los Angeles from the 1960s to 1980 found work in the service economy as food servers, cooks, parking attendants, among other low-wage occupations. In contrast, highly skilled, educated, and bilingual Thai immigrants found work as physicians, nurses, engineers, technicians, and accountants. Others became small business owners, primarily opening restaurants and catering businesses.

TABLE 1: Immigrants Admitted from Thailand to the United States between 1969 and 2000<sup>26</sup>

YEAR	ADMISSIONS
1969-1972	10,093
1973-1976	21,039
1977-1980	14,828
1981-1984	21,127
1985-1988	33,044
1989-1993	32,733
1993-1997	21,589
1997-2000	12,362
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>166,815</b>

Desbarats’ 1977 study of Thais in Los Angeles included some of the earliest known maps of Thai residential and commercial development in Los Angeles County. She found that many Thais settled in Los Angeles by the 1970s were living in neighborhoods bounded by Franklin Avenue to the north, 38<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, La Brea Avenue to the west, and Hoover Street to the east.<sup>27</sup> Residential areas corresponded well with the location of Thai businesses, where ethnic Thai goods and services could be found, as well as employment opportunities. Shifts in these residential patterns were not observed until successful Thai immigrants began to purchase homes in the suburbs of the City of Glendale and the San Fernando Valley.<sup>28</sup> Toward the end of the Vietnam War, Los Angeles experience a rise in Thai war brides

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<sup>25</sup> Desbarats notes that the disparate responses regarding Los Angeles’ Thai population in the 1970s reflect the widespread belief that Southern California, and Los Angeles, in particular, has large number of undocumented Thais. Jacqueline Desbarats, “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” *Geographical Review* 69 (1979): 313, accessed August 10, 2017: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/214887>.

<sup>26</sup> Data repurposed from Danny Anuphong Dechartivong’s “Who, Wat, Where, and Wai: The History of Wat Thai Los Angeles,” (Master’s Thesis, UCLA, 2012), 10. Sources include 1969-1975, Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and 1976-2000, Immigration and Naturalization Service Statistical Yearbooks.

<sup>27</sup> Jacqueline Desbarats, “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” *Geographical Review* 69 (1979): 316, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/214887>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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who joined their U.S. military servicemen.<sup>29</sup> Their use of G.I. mortgage loans to purchase homes added to the growing community of dispersed Thai suburban homeowners.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to 1980, the densest commercial development associated with Thais in Los Angeles could be found in East Hollywood along a two-mile stretch on Hollywood Boulevard.<sup>31</sup> In East Hollywood, Thai-owned businesses included Thai-language newspapers, travel agencies, auto repair shops, gas stations, souvenir shops, tailors, and beauty parlors.<sup>32</sup> In 1971, two important community touchstones opened in the neighborhood, the Royal Thai Consulate and Bangkok Market. Bangkok Market at 4800 Melrose Avenue (extant/altered) was opened by Pramote and Marasri Tilakamonkul, and was the first Thai and Southeast Asian food grocer in the U.S. In the early days, the market provided the local Thai population with Thai specialty items, and served as a “de facto community center and trading post.”<sup>33</sup> This was before they began importing items and growing their own Thai vegetables, according to Tilakamonkul’s son, and restaurateur Jet Tila. In 1986, the Tilakamonkuls purchased a building across the street at 4757 Melrose Avenue and relocated their market to the larger building, where it remains.



*Bangkok Market at 4757 Melrose Avenue, 2017 (Photo by author)*

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>33</sup> Mandalit Del Barco, “The Family-Run Thai Market That Feeds LA’s Eclectic Food Scene, transcript of *Morning Edition*, April 13, 2016

Another concentration of Thai-owned businesses and community institutions in the 1970s was in the Mid-Wilshire area near the intersection of Western Avenue and Olympic Boulevard.<sup>34</sup> In 1971, the Association of Thai Merchants (later Thai Chamber of Commerce) was established to serve the growing community of Thai entrepreneurs in Los Angeles with Khun Poonsak “Paul” Sosothikul elected as its first President.<sup>35</sup> According to Disayawattana, between the years of 1975 and 1980, many Bangkok business firms and financial institutions opened branches in Los Angeles to facilitate trade and investment.<sup>36</sup> In 1979, the Thai Chamber of Commerce shared office space with the newly established Thai Trade Center in Central Plaza One at 3440 Wilshire Boulevard.<sup>37</sup> The same year marked the tenth anniversary of the Tourism Authority of Thailand’s Los Angeles branch. By 1979, reflecting its growing investment in Los Angeles, Thailand’s Bangkok Bank opened an office in Downtown Los Angeles on the twelfth floor of William L. Pereira & Associates’ Pacific Financial Center at 800 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>38</sup>



*Jitlada Restaurant, 5233 ½ W. Sunset Boulevard, 2017 (Photo by author)*

In the late 1960s through the 1970s, Thai restaurants emerged on the Los Angeles restaurant scene. By the late 1970s, Desbarats observed a predominance of food and catering businesses in Los Angeles’ Thai community, with one-third of the businesses being restaurants.<sup>39</sup> According to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the first Thai restaurant to open in Los Angeles was Thai Kitchen at 851 S. Vermont Avenue in 1969. It was destroyed in 1992 during a nearby apartment-house fire, along with two other Thai restaurants—Arunee’s Restaurant next door, and Renoo’s Kitchen. Another early Thai restaurant was The Orient at 8303 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Many Thai restaurants were modest, family-operated businesses, with proprietors often cooking family recipes. Thai restaurants also employed other Thais as kitchen and wait

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<sup>34</sup> Desbarats, “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” 314.

<sup>35</sup> Chavapoj Thungsuwan “History,” (From “Association of Thai Traders to the Chamber of Commerce”), n.d., *Thai Chamber of Commerce of California*, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://thaiccccla.org/about-tccc/>.

<sup>36</sup> Disayawattana, “The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making,” 57.

<sup>37</sup> The Thai American Chamber of Commerce of California moved to the city of Glendale.

<sup>38</sup> Desbarats, “Thai Migration to Los Angeles,” 316.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

staff, making the Thai restaurant industry in Los Angeles a significant employer of the community in the 1970s, a practice that continues.

The greatest concentration of Thai restaurants in Los Angeles during this period was located in the Hollywood area. Believed to have been the first of these was former tennis professional and Thai pioneer Aroon Seeboonruang's Tepparod Thai No.1 at 4649 Melbourne Avenue. Just two doors down at 4645 Melbourne Avenue was Tepparod Tea House, run by the same family. Chow Burana took over Tepparod Thai No.1 when his parents-in-law opened Tepparod No.2 (later Kruang Tedd) at 5151 Hollywood Boulevard.<sup>40</sup> The Seeboonruang family also opened Tepparod No. 3 at 147 South Fairfax Avenue in the 1970s (not extant). Other notable restaurants in Hollywood during the 1970s were Chao Praya at 6307 W. Yucca Street, Chao Krung at 5529 Hollywood Boulevard (original owners moved to 111 N. Fairfax Avenue), Jitalda at 5233½ W. Sunset Boulevard (new owners at same location), and Siam Hollywood at 5158 Hollywood Boulevard.

During the 1970s, many Thai restaurants served as the main gathering places for Thai organizations, including Siam Hollywood, remembered by many first generation Thais as the location where community leader Punsak Sosothikul was shot and killed in 1974.<sup>41</sup> By 1977, fifty Thai restaurants were open for business throughout Los Angeles.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the concentration of restaurants in the Hollywood area, restaurants in the San Fernando Valley opened in the 1970s. Patrons of Lanna Thai at 4457 Van Nuys Boulevard, opened in 1977 in Sherman Oaks by Surapol Mekpongsatorn, recall the eight-foot deep koi pond in the center of the restaurant, a remnant of the location's previous swimming pool business.<sup>43</sup> Serving a broad clientele, including Thais transitioning to life in the San Fernando Valley, were restaurants that opened in North Hollywood and along Ventura Boulevard from Encino to Studio City. Though Little Orchids replaced the Number One Son Restaurant at 21614 W. Ventura Boulevard, the Number One Son restaurant's sign remains a visible reminder of the early period of Thai restaurant development in the area.

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<sup>40</sup> Lois Dwan, "Roundabout," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1972; Coleman Andrews, "Thai One On: Restaurants Featuring the Food of Thailand are Thriving, Here's Where to Sample the Fare," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1976.

<sup>41</sup> Author in conversation with Dr. Mark Padoongpatt, Project Advisory Committee member, April 10, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Bobbie Justice, "Going Native: Where Foreigners Go in L.A. When They Want Home Cooking," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1977.

<sup>43</sup> Dick Roraback, "Where Thai is Obligatory," *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1979.



The original 1970 Number One Son sign at 21614 W. Ventura Boulevard as repurposed by current Thai restaurant owner (SurveyLA)

In addition to Thai restaurants, Thai-language newspapers played an important role in the development of the Los Angeles Thai community. According to Disayawattana, Thai-language newspapers of Los Angeles began from student newsletters in the 1960s.<sup>44</sup> It was not until 1970 that the first official Thai-language newspaper, *Thai Phon-Tale*, appeared in Los Angeles, though its run was short-lived, as its staff, mostly students, did not have enough time to work on the publication.<sup>45</sup> New financial backers tried to revive the publication, and were unsuccessful. In 1973, Kittiratna Sivayavirojana, one of the founders of *Thai Phon-Tale*, started a new tabloid-sized publication called *Sarn Thai*, the first commercial Thai-language publication with a paid staff, though it too failed in a year.<sup>46</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s several Thai-language newspapers were started, and most ceased publication because of financial loss. None of the Thai-language newspapers started in the 1970s are known to exist. For this reason, it is worth including a brief discussion of a few of the Thai-language newspapers with the largest circulation from the early 1980s.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>47</sup> According to Sudurat Disayawattana, *Siam Media* and *Sereechon* both claimed to have the largest circulation among Thai-language newspapers in the U.S. *Sereechon*'s local circulation was about 2,000 to 3,000 in the 1990s. See Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 68.

*Sereechon* began in 1975 as a monthly magazine-sized publication started by Chaiwat Paknilarat.<sup>48</sup> It was the first to have out-of-state subscribers and to make money from circulation as well as advertising from local Thai businesses.<sup>49</sup> New ownership and a new name came in 1985: *Sereechai*, originally located at 1901 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, later moved to 1253 N. Vine Street, where it remains.<sup>50</sup> Another notable Thai-language newspaper started in Los Angeles in the early 1980s was *Siam Media Newspaper*, located at 4032 Wilshire Boulevard, in the same office building as its owner's law office. The newspaper continues operations in Rosemead, California. In 1985, *Thai L.A. Newspaper* was established in Chinatown at 675 N. Spring Street, on the second floor of Thai-owned A.C. Supermarket.<sup>51</sup> According to Disayawattana, the paper was established as a major vehicle for advertising goods and services of the parent company, A.C. Group, Inc., then one of the largest Thai-owned food retailing and manufacturing companies in Los Angeles.<sup>52</sup>

In 1970, a small group of Thai students formed a committee to establish a *wat* to meet the spiritual needs of the growing Thai community in Los Angeles. The Theravada Buddhist Center, Inc. unofficially became the first Thai Buddhist temple in the U.S. in 1971, offering services in a suburban home in what became North Hills.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, a mission of Thai monks, led by Ven. Phra Dhammakosacharn, arrived in Los Angeles and worked together with members of the Thai community, namely Punsak Sosothikul, to raise funds to purchase 2.2 acres of private land in Sun Valley for the purposes of constructing a temple.<sup>54</sup> The property is located on the eastern block of Coldwater Canyon Avenue, between Roscoe Boulevard on the north and Cantara Street on the south, and includes parcels on Van Noord Avenue to the east. According to Dechartivong, the land had previously been the location of a garden nursery operated by a Japanese American family.<sup>55</sup>

On May 19, 1972, in a ceremony to bless the construction of the new *wat*, Supreme Patriarch of Thailand Somdej Phravanarat laid the first stone foundation into the ground.<sup>56</sup> The main assembly hall, or *sala*, where all religious functions and rituals occur, was designed by architects from the Religious Ministry Department of Thailand and features imported window frames, roof tiles, and doors from Thailand.<sup>57</sup> In May 1974, the lower level of the temple was completed at a cost of \$258,000. It consisted of two classrooms, two restrooms, a library, and a large dining room. Construction of the upper level was delayed for several years, due to lack of funding. In November 1975, a Buddhist Sunday School opened at the temple and provided free Thai-language classes, among other programs. Full construction of the school facility was not completed until 1980. In 1976, some other small buildings on the campus

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<sup>48</sup> Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 63, 66.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 213; Thai Trade Center *Los Angeles Times* advertisement, September 4, 1979.

<sup>51</sup> Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 68.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* The newspaper operates out of the Thai-owned LAX-C at 1100 N. Main Street in Chinatown.

<sup>53</sup> Phrah Rajavaramuni, *Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World* (North Hollywood: Wat Thai of Los Angeles), 154; Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 161.

<sup>54</sup> Wendy Cadge, "Theravada Buddhism in America," accessed March 26, 2017, <http://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/089002.html>; Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 161.

<sup>55</sup> Dechartivong, "Who, Wat, Where, and Wai," 27.

<sup>56</sup> This date is regarded by Thais as the birthday of the Wat Thai in Los Angeles. Dechartivong, "Who, Wat, Where, and Wai," 27-28.

<sup>57</sup> Dechartivong, "Who, Wat, Where, and Wai," 28.

were completed, including living quarters, or *kuti*, for monks and nuns living on-site. These buildings were not constructed in traditional Thai temple architecture style, and instead made compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood.<sup>58</sup>

Completed and dedicated in 1979, the Wat Thai of Los Angeles is the largest Thai Theravada Buddhist temple in the U.S. In the late 1980s through 2007, the Wat Thai operated an outdoor food court in its parking lot. In 2007, the surrounding community complained about the weekend crowds creating too much garbage and parking issues, and food selling was eventually banned.<sup>59</sup> The City of Los Angeles eased the ban on food selling at the temple in 2015 and food vendors returned. Since its opening, the Wat Thai of Los Angeles has remained the center of spiritual, social, and cultural life for the Los Angeles' Thai community, attracting thousands of Thai and non-Thai visitors each year. The temple, the surrounding purpose-built buildings, and several adjacent residential properties owned by Wat Thai of Los Angeles constitute a cultural/spiritual campus for the Los Angeles Thai community.

### **Placemaking and Strengthening Community Identity After 1980**

The construction of the Wat Thai of Los Angeles was a catalyst for growth of Thai businesses along Sherman Way in North Hollywood. This coincided with the growing acculturation to American society and economic stability reached by the pioneer generation. In the 1980s, increasing numbers of Thai residents began to disperse to nearby cities like Glendale, and also to areas of Los Angeles including North Hollywood and Eastern San Fernando Valley neighborhoods such as Van Nuys, Panorama City, Sun Valley, Arleta, and Pacoima. By 1990, more Thais lived in the San Fernando Valley than in East Hollywood.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the Wat Thai, community members recall that the Hollywood Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 1711 N. Van Ness Avenue had Thai congregants.<sup>61</sup> Thai Christians living in Los Angeles also gathered at White Memorial Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Los Angeles to worship every Saturday between 1975 and 1985. After this period, they moved their congregation to Pomona to accommodate Thais throughout Greater Los Angeles County. According to scholar Huping Ling, less than half of one percent of Thai immigrants are Muslim.<sup>62</sup> In 1993, Majid Al-Fatiha, the first Thai mosque in the U.S., was established in the City of Azusa in the County of Los Angeles.

Many Thai immigrants faced acculturation barriers as they started their lives in Los Angeles. Beginning with the Thai Association of Southern California in the early 1960s, the local Thai community formed various social, service, and professional organizations. A Western Chapter of the Thai Physicians of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>59</sup> Lara Rabinovitch, "This Buddhist Temple Serves Some of the Best Thai Food Outside of Bangkok," September 3, 2015, *Munchies*, accessed March 26, 2017, [https://munchies.vice.com/en\\_us/article/this-buddhist-temple-serves-some-of-the-best-thai-food-outside-of-bangkok](https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/this-buddhist-temple-serves-some-of-the-best-thai-food-outside-of-bangkok).

<sup>60</sup> Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 316.

<sup>61</sup> Information was provided by Thai community members at a historic context meeting held at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles on April 15, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> See Huping Ling and Austin Allan, *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharp, 2010).

America, originated in New York, and the Thai Nurses Association of Southern California were established in the late 1970s to bring together Thais working in the medical field in Southern California. Between 1979 and 1982, the Thai Association of Southern California and the Wat Thai of Los Angeles saw a surge in activity supporting the local Thai community. The Thai Association of Southern California helped immigrants with legal matters, filling out passport and visa applications, and with day-to-day issues, such as providing help for broken-down cars.<sup>63</sup> Since its opening, the Wat Thai remains the focal point for Thai life in Southern California. In addition to five annual religious festivals celebrated at the temple, free Thai-language lessons, classical dance, traditional music concerts, art exhibits, and other cultural events have been offered.<sup>64</sup>

In 1982, the Thai Chamber of Commerce, inactive for a few years, was reinvigorated by a group of twenty Thai entrepreneurs, including Dr. Vibul Vichit-Vadakan, Surapol Mekponsathorn, and Chow Burana.<sup>65</sup> The organization was renamed Association of Thai Businesses and Trade of California at this time and Thongchai Teepratew was elected as its new President. During this period, Dr. Vichit-Vadakan, active in the local branch of the national organization Thai Physicians of America, served as an advisor to the organization and published a regular newsletter for the Thai Chamber, *Siang Vanich* (Voice of Traders).<sup>66</sup>

As the Thai community continued to thrive in Los Angeles, its leaders and new community organizations became more involved in preserving and promoting Thai culture and arts, and giving back to the community. In 1980, Thai Smakom, a university student group, was established to increase visibility of the rich Thai and Thai-American culture at UCLA.<sup>67</sup> Aroon Seeboonruang, owner of the Tepparod restaurants, was involved in establishing the Wat Thai of Los Angeles. He later served as the President of the Thai Association of Southern California and became involved in the work of the Thai Community Development Center. He also founded the Thai Senior Citizen Club of Los Angeles and taught Thai children tennis throughout Southern California through his informal Thai Tennis Association.<sup>68</sup>

In 1991, award-winning visual artist Vibul Wonprasat created the mural *East Meets West* on an exterior wall of the Bangkok Market. The mural, since removed, was sponsored and commissioned by the Social and Public Art Resources Center (SPARC) and depicted Asian immigrants moving to Los Angeles, integrating traditional Thai motifs with contemporary life.<sup>69</sup> Wongprasat, also a painting instructor, opened Vibul School of Painting in Marina Del Rey in 1984. The studio was later moved to Venice and is located at 11101 Ventura Boulevard (Bay #6). With Wongprasat as its founding director, the Thai

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<sup>63</sup> Disayawattana, "The Craft of Ethnic Newspaper-Making," 62, 56.

<sup>64</sup> Coleman Andrews, "With Satay and Tiger Prawns, Fiery Thai Food is a hit in L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1990.

<sup>65</sup> Chavapoj Thungsuwan "History," (From "Association of Thai Traders to the Chamber of Commerce"), n.d., *Thai Chamber of Commerce of California*, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://thaicccla.org/about-tccc/>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "Thai Smakom at UCLA," accessed August 10, 2017, <https://orgsync.com/15969/chapter>.

<sup>68</sup> Padoongpatt, "Thais that Bind," 58; Martorell and Morlan, *Images of America: Thais in Los Angeles* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 12.

<sup>69</sup> "East Meets West," *Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles*, accessed March 26, 2017, [www.muralconservancy.org/murals/east-meets-west](http://www.muralconservancy.org/murals/east-meets-west).

Community Arts and Cultural Center (TCACC) was established in 1992 (based in Venice) to preserve Thai arts and culture in the U.S. through education and entertainment.<sup>70</sup> Beginning in 1993, the TCACC organized the Thai Cultural Day festival at the Wat Thai. The following year the festival moved to Barnsdall Art Park, where it remains a popular annual community event.



*East meets West mural by Vibul Wonprasat on the exterior of Bangkok Market, c. 1991 (USC Libraries)*

A growing appreciation of the contributions of Asian Americans in Los Angeles, including Thai Americans, was evidenced as early as 1972 with the launch of The Day of the Lotus (later Lotus Festival), organized by the City's Department of Recreation and Parks and the Council of Oriental Organization (COO).<sup>71</sup> The festival, which continues to be held at Echo Park, was created to promote awareness of the contributions by Asian Americans to the city's culture and communities, and focused on a different Asian ethnicity each year.

Though not as widely known as the destruction experienced by the Korean American community, the 1992 Los Angeles riots resulted in the destruction and looting of several Thai businesses. The riots activated a new generation of politically conscious Thais in Los Angeles. Created in 1994, the Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC) has worked to advance the social and economic well-being of low and moderate income Thais and other ethnic groups in greater Los Angeles through community development strategies, including human rights advocacy, affordable housing, healthcare access, small business promotion, neighborhood empowerment, and social enterprises.<sup>72</sup> Their work on the El Monte

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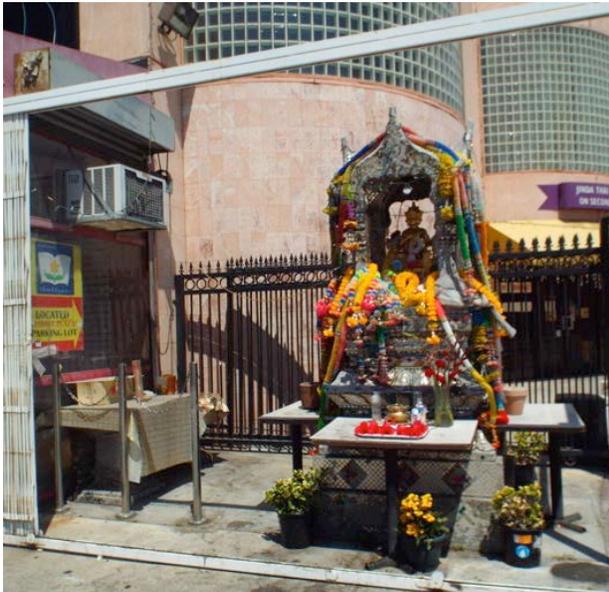
<sup>70</sup> There is no known physical address as headquarters for the Thai Community Arts and Cultural Center.

<sup>71</sup> Kelly, "Brief History of the Lotus Festival," July 10, 2010, *Echo Park Now*, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://www.echoparknow.com/2010/07/10/brief-history-of-the-lotus-festival/>.

<sup>72</sup> "Our Work," *Thai Community Development Center*, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://thaicdc.org/about/what-we-do/>.

Thai Slavery Case in the mid-1990s placed the issue of modern-day slavery and human trafficking in the national spotlight and brought about landmark legislation in the Trafficking Victims' Protection Act (TVPA) and new initiatives to raise awareness of modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

In 1999, after a long campaign that lasted nearly five years, the Thai CDC and the Thai Town Formation Committee worked with then-Councilmember Jackie Goldberg and the City of Los Angeles to establish the nation's first Thai Town on a six-block stretch of Hollywood Boulevard. The corridor from Western to Normandie Avenues in East Hollywood is home to over 50 Thai-owned small businesses. To enhance the visual cultural amenities in Thai Town, the Thai CDC initiated a public art project in 2006 with funding from the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) in association with the Department of Public Works to mark the entrance to Thai Town. This public art installation consists of



*Thai spirit house, a shrine to the protective spirit of a place, in front of a Thai establishment at Thailand Plaza in Los Angeles' Thai Town, 2017. (Photo by author).*

Thai angel statues, known as Aponsi, that serve as entrance gates on the east and west entrances to Thai Town. The bronze angel statues represent the mythical half-woman, half-lion creatures of the legendary Ramayana tales, believed to be protectors that safeguard against harm. In their locations on Hollywood Boulevard, they stand as the symbolic guardians of the Thai Town corridor.<sup>73</sup> In 2008, Thai Town was designated a Preserve America community, along with Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Koreatown, and Historic Filipinotown. Since 2003, the Thai New Year's Songkran Festival is celebrated in April on Hollywood Boulevard in Thai Town, where Thais and the greater Los Angeles community come together to enjoy and appreciate Thai food, culture, and entertainment.

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<sup>73</sup> "Art Projects: Thai Community Development Center," 2006, Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, accessed March 5, 2018, [http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Other/Art\\_Program/artist\\_list/Thai\\_Community\\_Development\\_Center.cfm](http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Other/Art_Program/artist_list/Thai_Community_Development_Center.cfm).

**SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement**  
Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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In 2013, the City of Los Angeles was gifted Kinnara lampposts by the government of Thailand. The gift coincided with the signing of a friendship agreement between Los Angeles, United States and Bangkok, Thailand. This agreement, presided over by then-Councilman Tom LaBonge and former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, formalized the bond between the two cities named City of Angels, and recognized Los Angeles as home to the largest population of Thais outside of Thailand.<sup>74</sup>



*Kinnara lamp posts at Hollywood and Hobart in Los Angeles' Thai Town, 2017 (Photo by author).*

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<sup>74</sup> "Flight of the Kinnara," Thai Community Development Center, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://thaicdc.org/flight-of-the-kinarra/>; "City of Los Angeles and Bangkok sign an agreement officially recognizing the friendship between the two cities named, City of Angels," May 27, 2013, Thai Community Development Center, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://thaicdc.org/2013/05/27/city-of-los-angeles-and-bangkok-sign-an-agreement-officially-recognizing-the-friendship-between-the-two-cities-named-city-of-angels/>.

## **ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

The “Property Types and Eligibility Standards” were developed as part of the Asian American in Los Angeles National Register Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) form and are applicable to all five Asian American contexts of the MPD. Though they focus on eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, they are easily adaptable for use in evaluating property eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CR) and/or as a local Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). The criteria for these programs parallel criteria used for the National Register. Some considerations in applying the standards under HCM and CR criteria for designation are below.

- Criterion A of the National Register is the equivalent of Criterion 1 for HCM and the CR.
- Criterion B of the National Register is the equivalent of Criterion 2 for HCM and the CR.
- Criterion C of the National Register is the equivalent of Criterion 3 for HCM and the CR.
- There is no 50 year rule for eligibility for listing in the CR or as an HCM. Therefore, Criterion G, “must be of exception importance if less than 50 years of age” does not apply.
- Integrity considerations may vary in some cases when applied under CR and HCM criteria.
- Commercial signs are not included as a property type eligible for the National Register. However, signs may meet significance threshold for local listing as an HCM. To evaluate signs see the “Commercial Signs” theme of the Citywide Historic Context Statement.
- The local Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) ordinance criteria may apply to historic districts.

This section assists with the identification and evaluation of properties that may be significant for their association with Asian American history in Los Angeles under one of the five historic contexts of this MPDF. A wide range of property types has been identified and the different types are referenced throughout the contexts.

Properties may be eligible under Criteria A, B, C, and/or D of the National Register:

- A: that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history,
- B: that are associated with the lives of persons significant in the past,
- C: that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction,
- D: that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### **Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties**

A religious property is eligible if it derives its primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.

### **Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties**

A property removed from its original or historically significant location can be eligible if it is significant primarily for architectural value or it is the surviving property most importantly associated with a historic person or event.

### **Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces of Graves**

A birthplace or grave of a historical figure is eligible if the person is of outstanding importance and no other appropriate site or building exists directly associated with his or her productive life.

Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries

A cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, age, distinctive design features, or association with historic events.

Criteria Consideration E: Reconstructed Properties

A reconstructed property is eligible when it is accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan and when no other building or structure with the same associations has survived. All three requirements must be met.

Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties

A property primarily commemorative in intent can be eligible if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance.

Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years

A property achieving significance within the past fifty years is eligible if it is of *exceptional importance*.

Fifty years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the National Register is a list of truly historic places. Exceptional importance sufficient to satisfy Criteria Consideration G is a measure of the property's importance within the appropriate historic context, at the local, state, or national level of significance.

Most extant resources meeting this requirement are associated with the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean populations. There are fewer resources associated with the Filipino and Thai communities. Those properties not of exceptional importance may become eligible when more time has passed. It is anticipated that this MPDF will be amended over time to include expanded periods of significance and other Asian American populations in Los Angeles, and to address additional themes and property types not yet known.

### ***Integrity***

Properties eligible for the National Register must also have integrity, the ability to convey their significance. Integrity is based on significance: why, where, and when a property is important. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment. It must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Only after significance is fully established can integrity be evaluated. Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the **identity** for which it is significant.

Historic properties either retain integrity (convey their significance) or they do not. Within the concept of integrity, the National Register criteria recognizes seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity:

- *Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- *Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- *Setting* is the physical environment of a historic property.
- *Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period

of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

- *Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- *Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- *Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant.

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity more than others to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. A property important for association with an event, historical pattern, or person(s) ideally might retain some features of all seven aspects of integrity. Integrity of design and workmanship, however, might not be as important to the significance, and would not be relevant if the property were a site. A basic integrity test for a property associated with an important event or person is whether a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists at the time of nomination.

All properties change over time. It is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features or characteristics. The property must retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity. The essential physical features are those features that define both why a property is significant (Applicable Criteria and Areas of Significance) and when it was significant (Periods of Significance). Street-facing elevations should retain most of their major design features; some original materials may have been altered or removed. Resources should retain the overall shape and rhythm of window openings and entrances, even if storefronts have changed. Replacement of storefronts is a common alteration, and a missing storefront may not automatically exclude commercial buildings from eligibility.

If there are a number of proximate resources relatively equal in importance, or a property is of large acreage with a variety of resources, and most of those resources retain integrity, the group of resources should be evaluated as a historic district. For a district to retain integrity as a whole, the majority of the components that make up the district's historic character must possess integrity even if they are individually undistinguished. Contributors to a district may have a greater degree of acceptable alterations than properties individually eligible. Properties with reversible alterations to the exterior, such as enclosed porches and replaced windows on residential properties, should not automatically be excluded from consideration. The relationships among the district's components must be substantially unchanged since the period of significance.

Architectural and physical attributes of some properties associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be modest, and some may have been altered, compromising integrity of design, materials, and/or workmanship. Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses). Original use may have changed. Properties may still be eligible under Criteria A or B on the strength of their association with historic events or people. Retention of location, feeling, association, and sometimes setting, may be more important than design, workmanship, and materials. Properties eligible under Criterion C must

retain those physical features that characterize the type, period, or method of construction that the property represents. Location and setting is important for those properties whose design is a reflection of their immediate environment.

In general, property types associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles that meet the registration requirements for significance and integrity can be considered rare; in some cases, there may be only one or a few eligible resources. Registration Requirements for property types were developed based on knowledge and comparative analysis of physical characteristics and/or historical associations. The integrity requirements and considerations take into account rarity of resources, knowledge of their relative integrity, and significance evaluations based primarily on eligibility under Criteria A and B.

### ***Registration Requirements***

All property types must date from within the period of significance for the associated context, retain most of the character defining features from their period of significance, and retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance. Properties must have been constructed or used by Asian Americans and represent an important association with the Asian American community in Los Angeles.

Properties must be eligible in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Asian, where Asian may serve as a placeholder for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and/or Thai to be specified as appropriate in the individual nomination. Nominations for properties eligible in the area of Ethnic Heritage must also identify areas of significance that closely relate to the events, activities, characteristics, or information for which the property is significant. Registration requirements and/or special integrity considerations particular to specific property types are identified as needed.

### **Property Types Associated with Prominent Persons in Asian American History**

Description: Properties associated with prominent persons in Asian American History in Los Angeles are common to all contexts and comprise one of the largest groups of historic resources identified under this MPDF. They include residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and agricultural resources and cover the full period of significance for each related context. Resources can be found citywide, with some concentrations in the geographic areas of settlement and migration as discussed in the context narratives. Architectural type, style, and detail vary widely and are generally based on the date of construction.

Significance: Properties associated with prominent Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B at the local, state, or national level. A property must be directly associated with the productive life of a significant Asian American or associated with Los Angeles residents of other cultures and ethnicities who have been instrumental in furthering opportunities for Asians Americans. Individuals may be important in a wide range of areas of significance including, and not limited to Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Agriculture, Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Communications, Entertainment/Recreation, Exploration/Settlement, Industry, Art, Performing Arts, Health/Medicine, Politics/Government, Military, Religion, and Social History. Individuals include important civic leaders and activists, business owners, educators, doctors, actors, writers, politicians, farmers, athletes, and artists. Residential properties and professional offices may be associated with persons significant in civil rights and issues related to deed restriction and

segregation. While the associated historic context narratives identify numerous persons significant in Asian American history whose associated properties may be evaluated under this property type, more may be identified with additional research.

**Registration Requirements:**

- Directly associated with the productive life of a significant Asian American or associated with Los Angeles residents of other cultures and ethnicities who have been instrumental in furthering opportunities for Asians Americans
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to one or more areas of significance as it relates to Asian American history
- Individual must have lived in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- Contributions of individuals must be compared to those of others who were active, successful, prosperous, or influential in the same field
- Each property associated with someone important should be compared with other properties associated with that individual to identify those resources that are good representatives of the person's historic contributions
- For multi-family residential properties, the apartment or room occupied by the person must be readable from the period of significance
- Properties associated with the lives of living persons *may* be eligible, if the person's active life in their field of endeavor is over AND sufficient time has elapsed to assess both their field and their contribution in a historic perspective
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Settlement: Residential Historic Districts**

**Description:** Residential historic districts associated with Asian American settlement and migration patterns are primarily comprised of tracts, subdivisions, or neighborhoods of residential buildings, and may also include other property types and, in particular, commercial buildings. Enclaves exclusive to Asian Americans are not common. There are some areas of migration and settlement with mixed ethnicities whose Asian populations grew in size—particularly in the postwar period, and after racially restrictive covenants were outlawed in 1948. There are no known extant residential enclaves from the prewar period. Known enclaves associated with the postwar period are primarily associated with the growing Japanese population of Los Angeles and in the areas of Harbor Gateway, the Crenshaw District, and Jefferson Park.

While some are settlements of earlier residential neighborhoods (dating from the first half of the twentieth century), others were developed as tract housing in the late 1950s and are comprised of ranch houses. Some feature vernacular Japanese gardens and landscape features giving a distinct sense of place. A noteworthy residential ethnic enclave is the Crenshaw Seinan neighborhood in the Crenshaw District, which features single-family ranch houses, multi-family buildings, and commercial buildings associated with Japanese businesses. Although the postwar Seinan community was far more widespread than the boundaries of this district, this concentration of resources is significant because it was developed by and marketed to Japanese Americans and promoted for its ethnic character through visual characteristics evocative of Japanese design traditions.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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Significance: Residential historic districts associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for the National Register at the local, state, or national level of significance under Criterion A and Criterion C. Areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Exploration/Settlement, and Social History. Other areas of significance may be identified. Only residential districts associated with settlement of the Japanese American population of Los Angeles after World War II have been identified as part of this MPDF. They evidence migration patterns throughout the city and increased ability for homeownership. Other districts may be identified over time.

#### Registration Requirements:

- Must have a significant association with the settlement and/or migration of Asian Americans over time
- May be associated with numerous historic personages who lived in the neighborhood for the cumulative important of those individuals to the community
- May represent issues relating to deed restriction and segregation
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

#### Property Types Associated with Business and Commerce

##### **Commercial Buildings**

Description: Commercial properties associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles housed a variety of businesses and vary widely. Although they cover the full period of significance for each related context, most date from the 1940s and later. Some businesses are still in operation. Businesses include retail stores, neighborhood theaters, and restaurants that served basic neighborhood needs as well as professional offices/services and lodging. Property types also include buildings housing organizations that supported commerce and business development. Commercial retail buildings associated with herbal medicine are discussed in the Property Types Associated with Health and Medicine.

- Restaurant/Bar/Club
- Motion Picture Theater
- Professional Office/Service
  - Mortuary/Funeral Home
  - Bank/Financial Institution
  - Employment Agency
  - Law Office
  - Barber Shop
  - Tailor
- Lodging
  - Hotel/Motel
  - Boarding House
- Retail
  - Store/Shop
  - Market/Grocery
  - Bakery
  - Nursery
  - Florist

- Chambers of Commerce and other business development/support organizations

Commercial buildings are located citywide within areas of settlement and migration as indicated in the historic context narratives. In particular, they can be found in areas including Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Koreatown, Sawtelle, Jefferson Park, the Crenshaw District, and the Harbor area. Buildings may or may not have been purpose built. Size, massing, form, and architectural style vary over time. Buildings types range from stand-alone buildings to small, one-story single-storefront varieties to larger, multi-story multi-storefront examples. Of the property types listed above, restaurants and markets constitute a large percentage of known commercial resources and are common to all contexts. Known mortuaries, florists, nurseries, and gardening-related business are associated with the Japanese American community. Business support organizations include the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (Chinatown), the Southern California Gardeners Federation (Little Tokyo), and the Thai Trade Center/Chamber of Commerce.

Significance: Commercial properties associated with Asian American businesses in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level. Resources may be significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Social History for their association with significant Asian American businesses of various types. Hotels, motels, and boarding houses may also be significant places associated with the resettlement of Japanese after World War II and in the area of Industry for their association with Asian American labor history. Movie theaters may also be significant in the area of Entertainment/Recreation.

Significant businesses and business organizations evidence patterns of settlement, migration, and changing demographics and played an important role in the commercial growth and development of Los Angeles' Asian American populations. The importance may relate to the particular goods and services provided by businesses or to the role businesses played in local, regional, or even national commerce. Resources may be the founding location or the long-term location of a business. It is common for early businesses to have relocated over time to new locations particularly in the postwar period. As Asian Americans were excluded as customers and sometimes employees at white-owned businesses, they formed their own businesses to provide services and employment opportunities to members of their communities. Some business also served as cultural hubs and popular places to meet and socialize. The customer base for a business may have included all Asian American communities and, in some cases, reached beyond these communities to serve other populations.

Under Criterion B, a resource may be significant for its association with an Asian American who made important individual contributions to commercial development in Los Angeles. Some commercial buildings may also be significant under Criterion C, as excellent examples of their respective styles including the Asian Eclectic style, particularly in Chinatown and Little Tokyo. Many individuals who established these businesses emerged as community leaders.

Registration Requirements:

- Strongly associated with the commercial and professional development of the Asian American community
- Associated with a business that made important contributions to commercial growth and development in Los Angeles and specifically to the Asian American community
- Founding or long-term location of a business significant to the Asian American community

- May be associated with a business/corporation that has gained regional or national importance
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, materials, and association

### **Commercial Historic Districts**

Description: A significant concentration of commercial buildings associated with Asian American businesses in a defined geographic area may constitute a historic district. As discussed in the contexts, identified commercial districts within the period of significance for this MPDF include Little Tokyo (a designated National Historic Landmark district, New Chinatown (1938-1960), and Greater Chinatown (1947-1950). No commercial historic districts have been identified within the period of significance relating to the Korean, Filipino, or Thai communities.

The Chinatown districts are characterized by one and two-story attached commercial buildings, with storefronts directly on the sidewalk. While they are primarily mixed-use commercial, they also include institutional use building. The Asian Eclectic architectural style is most often employed for buildings and other design features, displaying complex rooflines with colorful tiles, flared eaves with decoratively carved roof beams, geometric window screens, and representations of various animals, including dragons, lions, and fish. The districts also include open plazas with Asian-influenced fountains, sculptures, murals, and other contributing features (such as pai-lou or gateways) designed by noted Asian American artists. Some storefronts and windows may have been altered over time and some buildings may have been constructed outside the periods of significance.

Significance: Commercial historic districts associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Identified districts are significant in areas including Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and Social History. Commercial districts may also be significant in the area of Architecture under Criterion C as a distinctive and cohesive collection of Asian Eclectic-designed buildings associated with noted Asian American architects and in the area of art for public art features designed master artists or for their high artistic value. Districts evidence the direct influence of Asian American business and civic leaders in the planning, development, and operation of key commercial centers associated with the Asian American community. They served as the hub of day-to-day commercial and social activities for Asian Americans but were also intentionally designed to evoke a sense of the exotic and attract a tourist base to contribute to the local economy.

### Registration Requirements:

- District must include a substantial number of buildings designed by Asian American architects and/or be influenced by significant business/civic leaders in the Asian American community.
- Conveys a strong sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
- Represents an intact grouping of commercial buildings which, as a whole, exemplify the Asian Eclectic style
- Has a strong cultural association to the community in which it is located
- May be important for its association with numerous historic personages who operated businesses or provided services for the cumulative importance of those individuals to the Asian American community

- Should retain integrity of location, design, materials, setting, and feeling

### **Property Types Associated with Religion and Spirituality**

**Description:** Property types associated with religion and spirituality are common to all contexts and comprise one of the largest groups of historic resources identified under this MPDF. They include individual buildings as well as religious campuses with multiple buildings, which, in addition to churches and temples, house living quarters, schools, and community and sports activities. Campuses may be evaluated as historic districts. The oldest Asian American religious buildings in Los Angeles are primarily associated with the early settlement period of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean communities and are located in areas discussed in the contexts including Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Boyle Heights, South Jefferson, and Sawtelle. Property types also comprise cemeteries, including Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights.

Specific property types include churches that served a variety of Christian congregations (Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, and Catholic, among others). These church buildings, were often originally constructed by and for other congregations, and subsequently used as churches for Asian American congregations, while others were purposes built. It was common for congregations to move locations over time, first renting and then purchasing or constructing new buildings. For this reason, many church locations date from the postwar period although congregations may have been established much earlier. In addition, many religious campuses were expanded over time with new larger buildings replacing the earlier ones. Some church properties were founded by non-Asians as part of local Christian missions, particularly in the prewar period. An intact early example is the Saint Francis Xavier Church and School at 222. S. Hewitt Street, a rare example of a religious facility specifically constructed by the Catholic Church to serve the Japanese community (1921-1939). Later churches include the Korean Presbyterian Church (since 1938) and the Filipino Christian Church (since 1950), the oldest Filipino-serving church in the U.S. Christian churches were generally designed in architectural styles of their period of construction. Size, massing, and form vary over time. Most extant churches have undergone some degree of alterations over time.

Property types also include purpose built temples, mostly Buddhist. Most date from 1930s and later and are designed in the Asian Eclectic style. The Koyasan Buddhist Temple (Koyasan Beikuku Betsuin) in Little Tokyo is one of the oldest continually operating Buddhist sects in Los Angeles, dating to 1912. The temple dates to 1940. While many second- and third-generation Chinese Americans practiced Christianity, local benevolent associations also served religious or spiritual functions for those who continued traditional practices of Taoism, Buddhism, or Confucianism. Benevolent association buildings frequently included shrines on the second floor and were also used for instruction of children in religious practices. One example is the Kong Chow Temple in New Chinatown, which is located on the second floor of the Kong Chow Benevolent Association. Another example is the Chinese Confucius Temple School, established by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (1952) to provide Chinese language instruction with the tenets of Confucianism. The more recent Wat Thai temple (1979) in the San Fernando Valley is the largest Thai Theraveda Buddhist temple in the United States.

**Significance:** Religious properties associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Religion, Community Planning and

### Development, and Social History.

Religious buildings and institutions provided spiritual support for Asian Americans, and served as social and cultural hubs in the community in which they were located. Many offered new immigrants basic social services as well as housing, language classes, and employment counseling. Some also featured recreational facilities, meeting rooms for clubs and other organizations, and sponsored activities such as dances and school programs for local children. They also represented springboards for community leadership, business networks, and civil rights activism. For the Japanese community, properties associated with religion and spirituality may have also played a role in safekeeping possessions during incarceration and providing assistance or temporary housing following their return until about 1947.

Many individuals associated with religion and spirituality emerged as community leaders. Under Criterion B, a resource may also be significant for its association with an individual. Some religious buildings may also be significant under Criterion C, as excellent examples of the Asian Eclectic style or other styles of their period of construction.

### Registration Requirements:

- May be important for its association with numerous historic personages for the cumulative importance of those individuals to the community
- May reflect the changing demographics of a Los Angeles neighborhood
- May represent a significant event or movement in the social history of Los Angeles
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

### Property Types Associated with Education

Description: Properties associated with education may include colleges/universities, public high schools and grammar schools, and language schools. Parochial schools are included in the Religion and Spirituality property type. Schools may include stand-alone buildings or campuses of multiple buildings comprising historic districts. Size, massing, form, and architectural style of education-related resources vary over time. The majority of education-related resources identified are Japanese language schools dating from the pre- and postwar periods and located in various areas of settlement for Japanese Americans including Boyle Heights, Little Tokyo, Sawtelle, Venice, and the Harbor area. The earliest ones typically utilized existing buildings, whereas the postwar schools were often purpose built by Japanese Americans. Public high schools and grammar schools related to this property type are less common and typically served Asian populations in areas of Los Angeles with diverse ethnic populations. College and university-related resources date from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The most prominent is the Asian American Studies Center. Located on the campus of UCLA, it houses one of the first, and nationally recognized, academic program in Asian studies dating from 1969.

Significance: Educational resources associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance may vary over time and include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Education, and Social History. Language schools are significant for the role they played in supporting and promoting Japanese American cultural traditions and practices. The later college/university facilities are significant for their strong association with the Asian American Movement and the development of the nation's first Asian Studies academic programs. For the Japanese community, properties associated with

education may have also played a role in providing assistance or temporary housing following their return after incarceration, and until about 1947.

Some individuals associated with education may have emerged as community leaders. Under Criterion B, a resource may be significant for its association with an individual. Some educational resources may be significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of the Asian Eclectic or other architectural styles of the period of construction. Historic districts may also be significant under Criterion C.

**Registration Requirements:**

- Represents an important association with the Asian American community in Los Angeles
- May be important for its association with numerous historic personages (who attended the school) for the cumulative importance of those individuals to the Asian American community
- May represent issues relating to civil rights
- May represent a significant event or movement associated with education and social history of Los Angeles
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Community Organizations, Social Services, and Institutions**

Description: Property types associated with community organizations, social services, and institutions are common to all contexts and comprise one of the largest groups of historic resources identified under this MPDF. They cover a wide range of facilities serving many functions including, and not limited to, the following:

- Community and Cultural Centers
- Fraternal Lodges, Associations, and Organizations
- Benevolent Associations (Chinese context only)
- Senior Citizens Centers
- Youth Organizations
- Women's Clubs and Organizations
- Children's Homes/Orphanages

Known property types are located citywide within areas of settlement associated with each historic context. While they may cover the full period of significance for each context, most date from the 1940s and later. Some organizations and institutions may have been established earlier in different locations and most are no longer extant, such as those in Old Chinatown. Chinese Benevolent Associations are exclusively associated with the Chinese American context and are located in Chinatown.

Associated buildings may be purpose built or utilize existing buildings constructed for other purposes. Many associated resources may be in their original location, but have had significant new construction or renovation over time. Resources include stand-alone buildings as well as attached one and two-story mixed-use storefront examples (common in Chinatown). Size, massing, form, and architectural style vary over time.

Significance: Institutional building associated with community organizations, social services, and institutions associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of

significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Social History, Politics/Government, and Community Planning and Development. These organizations served as social and cultural hubs in the communities in which they were located and played a critical role in the lives of Asian Americans of all ages. Many provided a range of services to new immigrants settling in Los Angeles to assist with housing, employment, language, and education needs. Others provided activities and services to promote Asian cultural traditions and practices as well as health, social services, and community development programs. Still others supported political activism, equality, and civil rights.

For the Japanese community, properties associated with community organizations, social services, and institutions may have played a role in providing assistance or temporary housing following their return after incarceration, and until about 1947.

Many individuals associated with Asian American community organizations, social services, and institutions may have also made significant individual contributions to their respective field and associated resources may be eligible under Criterion B. Some buildings may also be eligible under Criterion C as excellent examples of the Asian Eclectic style or other architectural style of their period of construction.

**Registration Requirements:**

- May be important for its association with numerous historic personages for the cumulative importance of those individuals to the community
- May reflect the changing demographics of a Los Angeles neighborhood
- May represent a significant event or movement in the social history of Los Angeles
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Health and Medicine**

**Description:** Properties associated with health and medicine primarily include institutional and commercial buildings such as hospitals, homes for the aged, medical offices, medical clinics, and herbal medicine stores. They cover the full period of significance for each related context. Most resources are associated with the Chinese and Japanese communities. The only known hospital is the Japanese hospital in Boyle Heights, which opened in 1929. The hospital was established by Japanese doctors, who were not granted staff privileges by other hospitals, but opened its doors to people of all ethnicities. Though not common, research may also reveal single-family residences or other facilities (particularly in Boyle Heights) associated with Japanese sanba, or midwives, who provided health care facilities for pregnant women in the early twentieth century. Property types also include medical offices and clinics of noted doctors and practitioners that served Asian American clientele. Of note is the Dr. Primitiva Demandante Asprin clinical laboratory in Wilmington. Dr. Asprin was the first Filipina doctor to be licensed to practice medicine in California. Also of note is the Yu Family Acupuncture Clinic. Dr. Moses Yu, well known for his acupuncture practice in China, successfully fought for legalization of acupuncture in California in 1976, and opened his clinic in a converted residence in the Westlake neighborhood soon thereafter.

Herbal medicine stores are also included in the health/medicine property types and are primarily associated with Chinese American businesses. Herbal medicine was both familiar and likely the only medical treatment available to early immigrants, and Chinese were typically denied access to public medical facilities. Herbal medicine was also a rare example of a profession that allowed Chinese

immigrants to make a long-term living using an ethnic skill. Because legislation prevented Chinese herbal doctors from becoming licensed physicians, leaving them vulnerable to lawsuits and arrests, Chinese herbal doctors often promoted their businesses as merchants selling herbs. Even in Chinatown, practitioners kept a low profile, often occupying nondescript storefronts. Successful entrepreneurs established import networks and set up mail order businesses to ensure a steady supply of medicines from China. An early herbal store, Sun Wing Wo, occupied a commercial space in the Garnier Building. Later examples of long-term herbal stores were established in New Chinatown, during the 1930s, and then Greater Chinatown. These resources are generally attached one and two-story mixed-use storefronts.

Significance: Health and medicine-related resources associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Health/Medicine, and Social History. Identified resources played a significant role in supporting the health and welfare of Asian Americans against racial discrimination in medical care. They also reflect the struggle for the recognition and legalization of traditional Asian medical practices.

Some resources may also be significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of the Asian Eclectic style. Individuals associated with health and medicine may have also made significant individual contributions to the field and may be significant under Criterion B above.

Registration Requirements:

- Represents an important association with health and medicine in the Asian American community in Los Angeles
- Represents an important association with the history and practice of Asian medical traditions such as Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Visual and Performing Arts**

Description: Property types associated with visual and performing arts include venues for live performances associated with drama, dance, and music, as well as artist studios, museums, galleries, and other exhibition spaces.

Buildings may be purpose built or non-purpose built. Size, massing, form, and architectural style vary over time. In some cases, more research is needed in the fields of visual, performing, and literary arts to identify significant resources. Research for the Korean context revealed that these topics have not been well documented in English. Identified resources include the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (1980, Little Tokyo)—which houses one of the largest collections of ethnic art in the nation and features a large performance theater—and East West Players, a nationally recognized Asian American theater organization established in 1965 in the basement of the Pilgrim Church in the Silver Lake neighborhood and moved to the Union Center for the Arts in Little Tokyo (old Japanese Union Church). It is anticipated that over time more associated resources will be identified.

Property types also include works of art by noted Asian American artists such as murals and sculptures. Murals and sculptures are contributing features of commercial historic districts discussed under Property Types Associated with Business and Commerce. Other works have been identified in areas of

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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settlement associated with each context that postdate the related periods of significance. As such, no registration requirements for works of art have been developed at this time. Resources may become eligible as more time passes.

Significance: Resources associated with Asian Americans in the visual and performing arts may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Performing Arts, Art, and Social History. Identified resources served as important venues to promote Asian American culture and traditions as well as significant actors, writers, musicians, visual artists, and others.

Many individuals associated with Asian American Visual and Performing Arts may have made significant individual contributions to their respective field and may be significant under Criterion B. Some resources may also be significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of the Asian Eclectic style or other styles of their period of construction.

#### Registration Requirements:

- Represents a strong association with Asian Americans in the arts, including performing, visual, and literary arts
- Primary interior spaces, especially performance spaces, should remain intact
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

#### Property Types Associated with Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television

Description: Property types associated with media include commercial buildings used by newspapers and publishing companies as well as television and radio stations. In some cases, newspapers were published in offices of Asian American organizations. The Shin Han Min Bo and The New Korea newspapers were headquartered in the Korean Independence Memorial Building. Newspapers may also have been published in residences, although no extant examples have specifically been identified as part of this MPDF. There are few newspaper-related associated resources from the period of significance for each context. Many newspapers moved locations frequently or were in print for only short periods of time. Others were in locations that are no longer extant (such as those in Old Chinatown) or that no longer retain integrity from the period of significance. Of those identified, none appear to be purpose built and were located in commercial buildings with multiple uses and tenants. For example, the New Kown Tai Press, the first ethnic Chinese newspaper, was published in the basement of mixed-use commercial building in New Chinatown. Radio and television resources dating from the period of significance for each context are sparse. Those identified are associated with the Korean American community and require additional research. All media resources associated with the Thai community date beyond the period of significance and require additional research over time.

Significance: Buildings associated Asian American media may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Communications, and Social History. Newspapers and press served as the independent voice of the Asian American community in Los Angeles. Media provided general information, helped Asian Americans adjust to life in Los Angeles, and were springboards for social and political activism. Many individuals associated with Asian American media may have also made significant individual contributions to their respective field and may be significant under Criterion B.

Registration Requirements:

- Founding or long-term location of a publication, radio, or television station significant to the Asian American community
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Sports and Recreation**

Description: Although sports played a significant role in the social and recreational life of Asian American, few resources are extant. Those identified include martial arts studios. Although martial arts may straddle the definition of a sport and discipline, for purposes of this MPDF, it is categorized as a sport. Those identified are associated primarily with the Japanese American community (called dojos). An exception is Bruce Lee's Martial Arts Studio located in Chinatown (1967). No known studios have been identified for their association with the Thai, Korean, or Filipino communities as part of the MPDF. Martial arts studios in the Japanese community were located citywide in areas of settlement by Japanese Americans in the prewar era; most were closed down during the war and some subsequently reopened.

This property type includes commercial buildings specifically housing martial arts schools and studios. Identified examples are located in modest commercial storefronts and were not purpose built. One example, Seinan Judo Dojo in South Los Angeles, is located in a single-family residence. The property type also includes churches, community centers, and other buildings that offered a wide range of services, programs, and activities as identified under Property Types Associated with Community Organizations, Social Services, and Institutions. The Tenrikyo Church in Boyle Heights established a Judo program in 1964 instrumental in making Japanese martial arts an Olympic sport. The dojo boasts a long roster of national and international competitors.

Significance: Martial arts resources associated with Asian American in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated areas of significance include ethnic history, social history, and entertainment/recreation. Martial arts played a central role in the Asian American community, reinforcing traditional cultural practices. Particularly important are studios that reestablished following World War II as well as those that included well-known instructors of various martial arts disciplines and contributed to the professionalism and mainstream popularity of the sport. The first organized martial arts Kendo activity in Los Angeles emerged in 1914 and by the end of the 1920s, the majority of participants were Nisei. Judo clubs also became common in Southern California and tournaments were held regularly in Little Tokyo.

Individuals associated with martial arts may have also made significant individual contributions to the field and may be significant under Criterion B above.

Registration Requirements:

- Founding or long-term location of a martial arts studio/program significant in Asian American history
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Military History**

Description: Property types associated with Asian Americans and the military mostly date from the World War II period. They include Wartime Civil Control Association (WCCA) civil control stations (also known as processing centers) and temporary detention centers associated with the incarceration of Japanese Americans during the war. Control stations were established throughout Los Angeles and located in existing buildings such as churches, schools, and community centers. Control stations were established throughout Los Angeles in areas including Little Tokyo, Downtown, Sawtelle, Venice, Hollywood, and South Los Angeles. Japanese residents were required to register at one of the stations and then reported on their designated day of travel. Extant locations include the Japanese Union Church in Little Tokyo, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, the Japanese Institute of Sawtelle, and buildings at 923 Venice Boulevard and 360 S. Westlake Avenue.

In addition to the control centers, temporary detention sites were established at Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) camps in Griffith Park and the Tujunga area of the San Fernando Valley. The CCC buildings are no longer extant. The center in Tujunga is locally designated as the Site of the La Tuna Canyon Detention Center.

Military property types also include commemorative war monuments and memorials associated with the Korean and Japanese American communities. Identified examples are the Japanese American 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team memorial (1949), Garden of the Pines memorial to Issei pioneers (1966), and the Go For Broke Monument and National Education Center honoring Japanese Americans in WWII (1999) all in Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights. The Korean Bell and Belfry of Friendship (1976) is dedicated to American veterans of the Korean War and located in San Pedro's Angels Gate Park.

Following the war and their return to Los Angeles after incarceration, some Japanese Americans found temporary housing at many religious institutions, schools, and community centers in Los Angeles. These are discussed above in the property types relating to education, religion and spirituality, and community organizations, social services, and institutions.

Significance: Military properties associated with Asian American in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Resources may be significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Military, and Social History. These properties represent a significant chapter in American history, specifically the treatment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government during World War II. It was the culmination of a pattern of discriminatory treatment toward Japanese Americans reinforced through laws.

Registration Requirements: Civil Control and Detention Centers

- Facility used as a civil control center or temporary detention center for Japanese Americans during World War II
- Has a clear association with the Japanese American population during World War II
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

Registration Requirements: Commemorative War Monuments and Memorials

- A war monument/memorial specifically designed to honor or commemorate the role of Korean and Japanese Americans in the Korean War and World War II
- Should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association

### **Property Types Associated with Agriculture**

**Description:** There are few known resources in Los Angeles relating to Asian Americans and agriculture. Property types include vernacular agricultural landscapes and ranch/farm houses.

Historic vernacular landscapes depict agricultural activity from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. They generally include at least one agricultural building that serves as a focal point of agricultural activity (e.g. a barn or stable) and adjacent agricultural land. Excellent examples will also include related structures for a full range of farming activity such as irrigation, harvesting, storage, or livestock containment. The landscape may be located on a larger lot and be visibly older than surrounding development.

The only known resource identified as part of the MPDF is the Jue Joe Ranch at 16608 Vanowen Boulevard in Van Nuys (Lake Balboa). The ranch, which once stretched some 100 acres and included numerous residential and work buildings, supplied asparagus to the produce markets in Downtown Los Angeles. Joe was also one of the directors of the San Fernando Valley Asparagus Marketing Association, and by 1925 was considered one of best-known Chinese growers in the Valley. A small piece of this land remains, containing a barn and what appears to be an asparagus packing shed. A residence and swimming pool, constructed by Jue Joe's son after his father's death in 1941, is also extant. Other ranch houses may be identified in the San Fernando Valley and the West Adams areas of Los Angeles, but would no longer have the historic association with a ranch. They may still be eligible as the only extant property types associated with Asian American agricultural history of Los Angeles.

There is little if any clear difference between the design of a farmhouse and a non-farm residence from the same era of development. Farmhouses are generally of wood-frame construction and reflect popular architectural style of the period of construction. They may be significant when they can visibly convey their historic use through the presence of an associated vernacular agricultural landscape. Due to their relative rarity, intact farmhouses constructed prior to 1900 may have the smallest suggestion of its former setting (a larger lot, landscaped with fruit trees and/or vegetable gardens) and still be eligible, particularly at the local level of significance. Properties from the twentieth century may require a more expansive historic landscape with some additional agricultural features, such as one or more outbuildings, related structures such as canals, standpipes, corrals, and tanks, agricultural land, or a related grove/orchard. Properties associated with agriculture may also be associated with Asian Americans who made important individual contributions to the field under Criterion B.

**Significance:** Agricultural properties associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Resources may be significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Agriculture, and Social History.

Truck farming was an important part of agricultural production in Los Angeles, particularly for local markets. It provided a livelihood for thousands of small farmers in rural parts of the city, including farmers from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Their contributions when viewed in aggregate, were critical to the local economy. Furthermore, some truck farms represent a notable movement within early twentieth century residential development to provide self-sufficient acreage in a systematic way to newcomers who wanted a rural lifestyle.

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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Intact farmhouses are rare and may be significant remnants of a once expansive agricultural landscape within the city. They represent truck farming for the local market, once a critical component of the agricultural economy of Los Angeles. Farmhouses are the properties that are most intimately associated with the farmers themselves, and some may reflect the agricultural traditions of Asian Americans.

Vernacular agricultural landscapes may be significant remnants of a once expansive agricultural landscape within the city. They represent truck farming and/or ranching for the local market, both of which were once critical components of the agricultural economy of Los Angeles. Of all potentially eligible property types, the vernacular agricultural landscape has the strongest historical associations through the retention of several related features. This more complete and expansive property type allows for the fullest understanding of historical agricultural practice and conveys a more all-encompassing sense of place.

#### Registration Requirements: Vernacular Agricultural Landscape

- Agricultural property owned and/or operated by an Asian American farmer/rancher
- Open landscape with agricultural features that may include a farmhouse, farmland, orchard/grove, agricultural outbuildings and related features such as corrals, irrigation systems, standpipes, and tanks.
- May have played a significant role in agricultural development for local and/or regional/national markets
- Relationships between buildings/structures and landscape features should be retained
- Should retain integrity of location, setting, materials, and feeling

#### Registration Requirements: Ranch/Farm House

- Associated with a significant Asian American farmer/rancher
- Constructed as a farm/ranch house
- Wood-framed single family residence
- Often designed in prevalent architectural styles of the period
- May convey historic use through an associated historic vernacular landscape
- Because of their rarity, pre-1900 examples may have minimal associated agricultural landscape feature
- Associated historic vernacular landscape features may include barns or stables, corrals, irrigation features, standpipes, tanks, farm land, and or a grove/orchard
- Should retain integrity of setting, materials, design, feeling, and association

#### Property Types Associated with Industry

Description: Industrial properties related to Asian Americans in Los Angeles during the period of significance are very rare due to ongoing development at the Port of Los Angeles and demolition of resources associated with Terminal Island and the canning industry as well as demolition of the areas associated with the wholesale produce and flower industries. Known resources are primarily related to food processing and manufacturing and wholesalers of produce and other foods. Extant industrial buildings are generally one-story and utilitarian in design; some may have also included commercial retail space for sales of products. One of the most notable is the Oriental Food Products founded in 1923 in South Los Angeles and operated at the original location until about 1954. Although the owners were Korean, their well-known brand, Jan-U-Wine, was marketed to Asian Americans throughout Los Angeles. K&S Company was established in 1928 and became one of the most successful wholesale operations in

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

---

Los Angeles' Korean Community. A more recent resource is the Kim Bang Ah (1977) rice mill and rice cake factory in Koreatown. Known properties also include a rare, remaining and intact building from City Market associated with Jue Joe Company, a significant wholesale produce company owned by San Fernando Valley Chinese American rancher Jue Joe (see above under Properties Associated with Agriculture).

Property types associated with Asian American industries also include small commercial hotels and boarding houses that provided temporary housing for workers, mostly men. Most date from the early twentieth century to the 1930s. Though not many remain, those that are extant are located citywide with a small concentration in the area east of Downtown which housed workers in the nearby produce and flower markets – mostly Chinese and Japanese Americans. The buildings are generally masonry construction and typically four stories in height. Some are mixed-use buildings with retail on the first floor operated by Asian American businesses serving the residents. Other examples outside of the Downtown urban core are in residential neighborhoods with a low-scale residential character. Examples are typically one and two stories and wood frame, such as those which housed Japanese American men working as gardeners in boarding houses on the 500 block of Virgil Avenue in the area of Madison/J Flats and in the Sawtelle area.

Although not resulting from research and outreach completed as part of this MPDF, additional research may yield resources associated with Asian American in Los Angeles' garment industry as well as labor history in areas east of Downtown.

Significance: Industrial properties associated with Asian Americans in Los Angeles may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local, state, or national level of significance. Resources may be significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian, Industry, and Social History. They are rare remnants of the contributions of Asian Americans to Los Angeles' industrial history. They evidence the types of industries Asian Americans engaged and excelled in based on skills, knowledge, cultural traditions brought with them to Los Angeles and, in some cases, passed on through generations. They also represent a sense of entrepreneurship that triumphed despite racial discrimination and competition with Anglo industries over the years.

#### Registration Requirements: Industrial Building

- A key manufacturing or processing location for a significant Asian American-owned company whose branding and/or products had a significant impact on Los Angeles industrial history
  - May have included retail sales of products
  - One or more related utilitarian buildings
- May possess branding or company logos on the building exterior
- May retain distinctive equipment or building elements that reflect a particular kind of manufacturing process
- Often designed in prevalent architectural styles of the period
- Industry may have been a large employer of Asian Americans, although company may not have been Asian American owned
- Should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association

#### Registration Requirements: Hotel/Boarding House

- Rare remaining example of a hotel/boarding house that provided housing for Asian

American workers during the period of significance for the associated context

- Often designed in prevalent architectural styles of the period
- Should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with Cultural Landscapes: Designed Historic Landscapes**

Description: Designed historic landscapes associated with Asian Americans include Japanese style gardens. Other types may be identified over time. Japanese style gardens are examples of vegetation and/or hardscape material consciously laid out by a master gardener, landscape architect, architect, or horticulturalist, or an owner or other amateur using Japanese-inspired design principles, associated with a residential, commercial, civic, industrial, or institutional area, and constructed between 1946 and 1969. Extant examples of pre-World War II gardens in the Japanese style are extremely rare. Post-WWII examples of Japanese style gardens are typically constructed as public gardens, such as sister city or friendship gardens, and many have a direct association with Japanese American community organizations. Known examples of Japanese style gardens include the garden at the Donald C. Tillman Water Reclamation Plant (designed by landscape architect Koichi Kawana) in the Encino area and the garden at Stoner Park in Sawtelle.

Significance: Japanese style gardens may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C at the local, state, or national level of significance. Associated resources are significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Japanese and Landscape Architecture. They may be significant for their design quality as well as the work of a master landscape architect.

Japanese style gardens represent the influential contributions of Japanese design traditions and Japanese American gardeners and designers on the evolution of designed landscapes in Los Angeles. Popularized during the early years of the twentieth century in Southern California, garden designs in the Japanese style influenced generations of designers. Japanese style gardens are significant as a reflection of Japanese American immigration patterns and Japanese American acculturation in Southern California. Japanese style gardens may also be significant as a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect.

The introduction of Japanese garden design to Southern California occurred in 1894, with the opening of the California Mid-Winter International Exposition in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. A Japanese Village, originally conceived as a temporary exposition exhibit, was incorporated into Golden Gate Park. Baron Makoto Hagiwara, a Japanese landscape designer, constructed the permanent version, named the Japanese Tea Garden. The Baron and his descendants occupied Golden Gate Park's Japanese Tea Garden until their eviction and relocation to an internment camp in 1942. Japanese garden pavilions at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco (1915) and the Panama-California Exhibition in San Diego (1915) inspired the construction of Japanese-inspired tea gardens in a number of Los Angeles parks, including Eastlake Park (Lincoln Park), and the Japanese influence was a popular ornamental element in residential gardens.

The fascination with Japanese arts, design traditions, and culture remained strong throughout the 1920s and 1930s and produced many exquisite examples of Japanese-inspired gardens in Los Angeles. Japanese nationals or first-generation Japanese Americans (Issei) typically provided the technical expertise, labor, and continued maintenance of Japanese style gardens. Despite the widespread popularity of Japanese-influenced design in Los Angeles, anti-Asian sentiment was high in Southern

California during the first half of the twentieth century with the passage of numerous examples of discriminatory legislation. During World War II, many Japanese style gardens were demolished, abandoned, defaced, or relocated.

Following the war years, Japanese-inspired gardens quickly shed their wartime stigma. The abundance of newspaper articles in the post-World War II era regarding the care and maintenance of backyard Japanese style gardens further attest to the widespread appeal and popularity of the style. The contemplative beauty of Japanese style gardens also appealed to the economy and design principles of the Modern style that emerged in Southern California in the post-war era.

In the Postwar era, gardening and nursery work represented one of the few occupational areas available to Japanese Americans with extensive agricultural expertise. By the early 1970s, increased opportunities for Japanese Americans meant that the era of the Japanese gardener was coming to an end.

**Registration Requirements:**

- Uses Japanese-inspired design principles associated with a residential, commercial, civic, industrial, or institutional area
- An excellent example of the type and/or represents the work of a significant landscape architect or designer
- Retains significant character defining features such that the visual, spatial, and contextual relationships of the property may be understood
- Use of natural materials, such as large boulders, rock, sand, and logs
- Use of borrowed views, asymmetrical configuration of design elements, attention to ground plane patterns, varied textures, and closely clipped vegetation
- May include winding paths, waterfalls, ponds, and traditional symbolism (e.g., karesansui (dry gravel gardens), horesai (decorative islands), reihaiseki or sansom (stone arrangements) or shrines representative of aesthetic values associated with Zen Buddhism
- May include examples of traditional Japanese art forms or architectural and design elements, such as lanterns, half-moon bridges, pagodas, stepping stones, koi ponds, bonsai, and statuary
- May include traditional ceremonial buildings, such as a teahouse
- May include plant species typical of Japanese and/or California environments (e.g., Japanese maple, camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons, ferns, pines, bamboo, redwoods, elms, sycamores)
- A sufficient number of original materials should be extant such that the historic fabric, character, and overall visual effect has been preserved; some plants may have been replaced in kind
- Should retain integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association

**Property Types Associated with the Asian Eclectic Architectural Style**

**Description:** The term Asian Eclectic was coined by SurveyLA to convey a fusion of Asian architectural styles and ornamentation, frequently assembled in fantastical combinations to appear exotic. For purposes of the National Register, the style is classified as Other: Asian Eclectic and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Period Revival: Eclectic Period Revival. Properties associated with the Asian Eclectic style include

residential, institutional, industrial, and commercial buildings and historic districts. Properties that meet the 50-year threshold for significance are generally concentrated in the Chinatown and the Little Tokyo areas of Downtown Los Angeles. Later examples are located in Koreatown and sparsely scattered citywide such as the Wat Thai temple in North Hollywood. No specific example associated with the Filipino community have been identified as part of this MPDF.

The Asian Eclectic style features both pagoda-influenced forms and simplified modern forms with oriental detailing that includes wide, overhanging upturned eaves, decorative applied ornament with oriental and geometric motifs, and brightly colored clay tile roofs. The distinctive, sweeping upturned eaves and steep roofs of early buildings gave way to decorative upturned beams and eaves supporting flat roofs, creating more linear and boxy forms.

The Asian Eclectic style in Los Angeles was primarily used for commercial and institutional buildings, beginning in the 1920s and reached its peak with the construction of New Chinatown and Greater Chinatown from the late 1930s to 1950s. These developments represent historic districts. The style represented a connection to the traditional architecture found in the homelands of recent immigrants and long-established Americans of Asian ancestry. Many of the buildings in this style were designed and planned by neighborhood associations that intentionally used an architecture and design language to signify identification with a specific community's heritage, and to create master planned neighborhoods with ethnic themes as tourist attractions and retail centers. Chinatown also includes significant individual examples of the style, which during the postwar period, blend Modernism with simplified Asian design references, and represented the forward-thinking postwar Chinese American architect community of the period.

Significance: Properties associated with the Asian Eclectic style may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C at the local, state, or national level. Associated resources are significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian and Architecture. Individual properties and districts reflect the distinctive qualities of the Asian Eclectic style and were designed or influenced by significant Asian Americans including noted architects and civic and business leaders.

## **Individual Resources**

### Registration Requirements:

- Designed by an Asian American architect and/or influenced by significant business/civic leaders in the Asian American community
- Must be an excellent example of the Asian Eclectic style and retains most of the character defining features which may include:
  - Sweeping roofs with flared gables or upturned rafter tails
  - Carved brackets and rafter tails
  - Flat roof with decorative post and beam supporting system
  - Ornamented roof ridge
  - Brightly colored tile roofs
  - Elaborate surrounds on entryways and windows
  - Decoratively distributed mullions on windows
  - Recessed entryways
  - Geometrical patterned window grilles

## SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980

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- For mixed use, may have second floor balconies
- For retail, neon signage in fonts evoking calligraphy
- For Chinese-influenced, may be painted red and gold
- For Chinese-influenced, ornament may include dragon or lion statuary
- Should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association

### Historic Districts

#### Registration Requirements:

- Must include a substantial number of buildings designed by Asian American architects and/or influenced by significant business/civic leaders in the Asian American community.
- Conveys a strong sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
- Represents an intact grouping of commercial buildings which, as a whole, exemplify the Asian Eclectic style
- May also include open spaces with Asian influenced fountains, sculptures, murals, and other features
- Has a strong cultural association to the community in which it is located
- May include some buildings, constructed outside the period of significance.
- Primarily commercial but may include some institutional, residential, or mixed-use buildings.
- District as a whole should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association

#### Property Types Associated with Important Asian American Architects

Description: Property types designed by Asian American architects include residential, commercial, mixed-use commercial/residential, institutional, and industrial buildings. Extant works by identified architects primarily date from the 1940s through the end of the period of significance for each associated context. Geographically the resources are located citywide, but in particular, the places associated with settlement of Asian Americans as discussed in the contexts. Asian architects worked citywide with concentrations of commercial and institutional work in Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Koreatown, Boyle Heights, Crenshaw District, Jefferson Park, and Sawtelle. A concentration of postwar residential work, including homes architects designed for their own families, is located in Silver Lake.

There is very little scholarship on Asian American architects of Los Angeles. Some are referenced throughout the historic contexts, but others may be identified over time. Generally, the Asian American architect community was small in the prewar period; works that are known appear to be designed for Asian American clients and are mostly institutional buildings. Japanese American architect Yos Hirose is one of the earliest known Asian American architects working in Los Angeles. No early residential examples have been identified as part of this MPDF.

More is known about the postwar architect community; during this time many Asian American architects attended local universities such as USC, became members of the American Institute of Architects, worked with well-known firms, and opened their own firms. Many Asian American architects

from this period worked in the Mid-Century Modern style as well as the Asian Eclectic style, often combining elements of both in their designs. The development of Chinatown in the postwar period provided many opportunities for Chinese American architects and the work of Eugene Choy and Gilbert Leong is perhaps best known. Construction dating to the 1970s and later in the area of Koreatown has been commissioned by Korean business owners and designed by Korean architects; to date little is known about these architects and their work. This study did not identify any work by Filipino American architects. The only known resource associated with Thai architects is the Theravada Temple, designed by architects from the Religious Ministry of Thailand.

Significance: This property type is used to identify resources associated with Asian American architects considered to be masters in their field and who made important contributions to Los Angeles' architectural legacy. In particular, the type reflects buildings designed by Asian Americans whose work was influenced by Asian American culture and aesthetics and designed in the Asian Eclectic style. Properties may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C at the local, state, or national level, depending on the architect's sphere of influence. It is expected that more research on the topic will reveal rich information and that the period of significance will be expanded over time to encompass later periods of architecture in Los Angeles.

Some architects may also be significant under Criterion B for their association with struggles against and rising above racial discrimination in the architecture profession.

Registration Requirements:

- Associated with an Asian American architect/designer who made an important contribution to Los Angeles' architectural legacy
- A significant example of an architectural style or combination of styles influenced by Asian American culture and aesthetics, in particular the Asian Eclectic style
- To be eligible as the work of a master architect/designer, the property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career or an aspect of his/her work
- Should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association

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## Appendix A: Thai American Known and Designated Resources

This document includes designated and known historic resources identified as part of the development of the “Thai Americans in Los Angeles, 1950-1980,” historic context and is not all inclusive. The list may be expanded over time to include resources identified through additional research and public input as well as resources dating from beyond 1980. More information on some of the resources on this list can be found in the historic context.

Known resources may be eligible for designation under local, state, and/or federal programs. However, inclusion in this list as a resource does not ensure eligibility. Properties must be fully evaluated under relevant criteria to determine if they meet significance and integrity thresholds.

### Property Types Associated with Business and Commerce: Commercial Buildings

Name	Location	Property type	Comments
Bangkok Bank	800 W 6th Street	Finance - Bank	In 1979, Thailand's Bangkok Bank opened an office in Los Angeles on the 12th floor of the Pacific Financial Center, reflecting the growing Thai investment in the city.
Thai Chamber of Commerce	3440 Wilshire Blvd	Chamber of Commerce	The Thai Chamber of Commerce was started in 1979 and located here.
Thai Trade Center	3440 Wilshire Blvd	Office	The Thai Trade Center was established in 1979 at Central Plaza One; shared office with Thai Chamber of Commerce during this time.
Chao Krung	111 N Fairfax Avenue	Food - Restaurant	Originally located at 5529 Hollywood then moved to this location soon after (circa 1974-1976). Website indicates they were the second Thai restaurant in Los Angeles.
Jitalda	5233 1/2 W Sunset Blvd	Food - Restaurant	Jitalda first opened in the late 1970s and operated until late 1990s under original ownership. In 2006, new owners Jazz Singsanong and Tui Sungkamee took over the restaurant. See Coleman Andrews, "Tinselstown Thai," published in <i>Gourmet Magazine</i> in July 2008.
Kruang Tedd	5151 Hollywood Blvd	Food - Restaurant	Historic location of Tepparod No. 2 owned and operated by Seeboonruang in the 1970s.
LannaThai	4457 Van Nuys Boulevard	Food - Restaurant	The historic location of LannaThai opened in 1977 by Surapol Mekpongsatorn. Known for having an eight-foot deep pool which was converted into a koi pond in the center of the restaurant. The pool was a remnant of the previous pool business. Mekpongsatorn had previously owned the historic Siam Restaurant at 5158 Hollywood in the 1970s. No longer in business.
Siam Hollywood	5158 Hollywood Blvd	Food - Restaurant	Location of early Thai restaurant. No longer in business.

Tepparod Tea House	4645 Melbourne Ave	Food - Restaurant	Historic location owned and operated by Seeboonruang family in the 1970s. No longer in business.
Tepparod Thai	4649 Melbourne Ave	Food - Restaurant	Also known as Tepparod No. 1. The historic location of early Thai restaurant (circa 1970), opened by Aroon and Sakuntala Seeboonruang. Later taken over by son-in-law Chow Burana. Aroon Seeboonruang was a notable Thai community leader. No longer in business.
The Orient	8303 W 3rd St	Food - Restaurant	Location of the Orient, one of the first Thai restaurants to open in Los Angeles. No longer in business.
Bangkok Market	4757 Melrose Ave	Retail – Neighborhood Market	Opened in 1971 across the street at 4800 Melrose Avenue by the Tilakamonkul family and moved to this location in 1986. Bangkok Market is the First Thai food grocer in Los Angeles and in the U.S.
Number One Son Sign/Little Orchids Cuisine of Thailand sign	21614 W Ventura Blvd	Sign - Pole	Excellent example of commercial sign on Ventura Boulevard dating to ca. 1960. Unusual design related to the original use of the building as a Thai restaurant. The sign may not meet significance thresholds for the National Register.

**Property Types Associated with Religion and Spirituality**

Name	Location	Property type	Comments
Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church	1711 N Van Ness Avenue	Church	Community members recall that the Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church had Thai congregants between 1975 and 1985; after this period, the congregation moved to Pomona.
White Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church	1800 E Cesar E Chavez Avenue	Church	Thai Christians living in Los Angeles formed part of the White Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles between 1975 and 1985; after this period, the congregation to Pomona.
Wat Thai of Los Angeles	8225 N Coldwater Canyon Ave (resource as campus includes addresses: 8201-8243 N Coldwater Canyon Ave; 8200-8222 N Van Noord Ave; 8235-8255 N Van Noord Ave; 8240 N Van Noord Ave; 8246 N Van Noord Ave; 8254 N Van Noord Ave; and 12930 W Burton St)	Temple (campus)	Completed and dedicated in 1979, the Wat Thai of Los Angeles is the largest Thai Theravada Buddhist temple in the U.S. The Wat Thai of Los Angeles is the center of spiritual, social, and cultural life of the Los Angeles' Thai community, attracting thousands of Thai and non-Thai visitors each year. Today, the temple, surrounding purpose-built buildings, and several adjacent residential properties together form a cultural/spiritual campus and center of Thai life in Los Angeles. Resource is of exceptional value and significance to the community.

**Property Types Associated with Community Organizations, Social Services, and Institutions**

Name	Location	Property type	Comments
Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)	6376 Yucca St	Social Services	The Thai Community Development Center was created in 1994 and has worked to advance the social and economic well-being of low and moderate income Thais and other ethnic groups in greater Los Angeles through community development strategies, including human rights advocacy, affordable housing, healthcare access, small business promotion, neighborhood empowerment, and social enterprises.

**Property Types Associated with the Visual and Performing Arts**

Name	Location	Property type	Comments
Vibul School of Painting	11101 Ventura Blvd (Bay #6)	Visual Arts – Art School	Visual artist and painting instructor, Vibul Wonprasat, opened Vibul School of Painting in Marina Del Rey in 1984, the studio was later moved to Venice and is presently located at this location. Wongprasat is the founding director of the Thai Community Arts and Cultural Center (TCACC) established in 1992 to preserve Thai arts and culture in the U.S. through education and entertainment. There is no known headquarters for the TCACC.
Two Golden Thai Aponsi Angel statues	On Hollywood Blvd, west of Western Ave	Visual Arts - Public Art - Sculpture	2006. Aponsi are half-woman, half-lion figures of Thai folklore. Traditionally, they are believed to be protectors and safeguard against harm. In their current locations on Hollywood Boulevard they mark the eastern entrance to, and stand as the symbolic guardians of the Thai Town corridor. This project was initiated by the Thai Community Development Center with funding from the CRA/LA in association with the Department of Public Works' Neighborhood Matching Fund. The statue may not meet significance thresholds for the National Register.
Thai Spirit House at Thailand Plaza	5321 Hollywood Boulevard	Visual Arts - Public Art	Spirit houses are shrines to the protective spirit of a place. This shrine exists adjacent to a Thai-owned establishment and is believed to have been installed by the business and/or building owner. May not meet significance thresholds for the National Register.

**Property Types Associated with Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television**

Name	Location	Property type	Comments
Sereechai Newspaper	1253 N Vine Street	Office - Newspaper	Formerly named <i>Sereechon</i> and located at 1901 W 8th Street, moved to this location and changed newspaper name to <i>Sereechai</i> . <i>Sereechon</i> began in 1975 as a monthly magazine-sized publication. New ownership, location, and name came in 1985; remains at 1253 N Vine Street today.
Siam Media Newspaper	4032 Wilshire Blvd	Office - Newspaper	Notable Thai-language newspaper started in Los Angeles in the early 1980s. Headquartered on Wilshire Blvd in the same office building as its owner's law office. Today, the newspaper continues operations in Rosemead, California.
Thai L.A. Newspaper	675 N Spring Street	Office - Newspaper	Newspaper established on the second floor of Thai-owned A.C. Supermarket at this location in 1985. It is said to have been established as a major vehicle for advertising goods and services of the parent company, A.C. Group, Inc. which was one of the largest Thai-owned food retailing and manufacturing companies in Los Angeles. Today the newspaper operates out of the Thai-owned LAX-C at 1100 N Main Street in Chinatown.

**Property Types Associated with the Asian Eclectic Architectural Style**

Properties may also be significant examples of the Asian Eclectic style (see Associated Property Types and Eligibility Standards section of the Historic Context).

**Property Types Associated with Important Asian American Architects**

Properties may also be significant examples of the work of important Thai American architects (see Associated Property Types and Eligibility Standards section of the Historic Context).

## **Appendix B: Asian Americans in Los Angeles Advisory Committee and Participants**

In preparing this context statement, the Office of Historic Resources and the team of consultants, led by Architectural Resources Group (ARG), were advised by a diverse panel of Asian American community members, historic preservation professionals, and historians. The following is a list of project contributors and advisory committee participants.

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