

OZAWA BOARDING HOUSE/OBAYASHI EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

564-564 1/2 N. Virgil Avenue

CHC-2021-5001-HCM

ENV-2021-5002-CE

FINDINGS

(As amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on October 7, 2021)

- The Ozawa Boarding House/Obayashi Employment Agency “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an excellent and rare example of a 1912 apartment house representing the earliest pattern of multifamily residential development in the Madison/J Flats enclave in East Hollywood. The subject property is also significant as a pre-World War II Japanese rooming house.
- The Ozawa Boarding House/Obayashi Employment Agency “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” as the property of three generations of the Ozawa family, who were significant to the development of the Madison/J Flats neighborhood and leaders within their community.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Ozawa Boarding House/Obayashi Employment Agency meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

First, it “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an excellent and rare example of a 1912 apartment house representing the earliest pattern of multifamily residential development in the Madison/J Flats enclave in East Hollywood. The subject property is also significant as a pre-World War II Japanese rooming house. For most of the 19th century, the East Hollywood and Wilshire Center areas were sparsely populated and consisted of open pastures and farmlands. However, by 1910, this area was one of Los Angeles’s most desirable suburbs and development, encouraged by the growing streetcar line, was booming. During the early 20th century, multi-family residences played a critical role in meeting the widespread need for housing created by the city’s exponential population growth. For many Angelenos, multi-family dwellings were more desirable than a detached single-family house; like the subject property, they were generally more affordable, and close to urban amenities such as employment centers, shopping districts, and transit lines. Early examples of multi-family residential development such as the subject property are becoming increasingly rare.

Furthermore, between 1910 and 1915, the Japanese community began to expand into small enclaves outside of Downtown Los Angeles such as in the Hollywood/Madison/J Flats area. By 1936, there were 150 Japanese American residences with about 1,000 Japanese Americans in the neighborhood. The subject property’s location on Virgil Avenue, an early streetcar line and a corridor for Japanese American commerce in the 1930s, links it to the growth of Japanese American commercial and social activity in the pre-war period. Boarding houses, such as the subject property, from 1900-1930, served as an important and affordable type of residence for Japanese immigrants, largely single men who worked as laborers and gardeners. In addition, boarding houses like the subject property stand as physical manifestations of the ways Japanese immigrants formed community and networks of support amidst xenophobic and racist policies and practices in existence during the pre-World War II era.

The Ozawa Boarding House/Obayashi Employment Agency also “is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history” as the property of three generations of the Ozawa family, who were significant to the development of the Madison/J Flats neighborhood and leaders within their community. The Ozawas included first generation Japanese immigrants Sukesaka (1879-1954) and Tsuya (1885-1971), their son George (1912-1988), and his wife Shizuka (1919-2009). The subject property was owned and operated by the Ozawa family from 1914 through 1980 and served as the primary residence for Sukesaka and Tsuya from 1914 until the 1950s. The family also came to own several other properties in the area including the boarding house to the south at 560-562 N. Virgil Avenue. The family was integral to the Madison/J Flats neighborhood. Sukesaka served as the district captain for the Japanese Division of the Community Chest, a civic organization that raised money for Japanese organizations. Tsuya was the matriarch of the family boarding house, and it was her strategic and industrious work ethic that established the family’s role in the community. Over several decades, the Ozawa family provided crucially needed housing and employment for Japanese Americans, aiding in the stabilization and growth of the Japanese American middle class in Los Angeles and the creation of a community within the Madison/J Flats enclave.

Although the subject property has experienced a few alterations on the interior and exterior, it retains its original plan and has a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, design, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.*”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.*”

The designation of the Ozawa Boarding House/Obayashi Employment Agency as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions

to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2021-5002-CE was prepared on September 7, 2021.