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May 30, 2025

Cultural Heritage Commission
Attn: Denise Otero
200 N. Spring St., 10th Floor, Room 1010
Los Angeles, CA 90012
chc@lacity.org

**Re: CHC-2025-1064-HCM
Terminal Island “Furusato” Tuna Street Buildings**

Dear Members of the Cultural Heritage Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy in support of the Historic-Cultural Monument nomination of the Terminal Island “Furusato” Tuna Street Buildings and ask that you favorably recommend for HCM designation. These two modest commercial buildings, originally home to Nanka Dry Goods Store and the A. Nakamura Company Grocery Store are a symbol of the resilience of the Terminal Islander community. They teach an important lesson about one of the United States’ darkest chapters, where the Japanese American community was forcibly removed from their homes and businesses and incarcerated in remote concentration camps.

The buildings survive against all odds, most notably the U.S. Navy’s bulldozing of the majority of the Japanese American Fishing Village in 1942, but also the repeated efforts by the Port of Los Angeles to diminish all other industries on Terminal Island other than international trade. It is important to remember that after returning from Manzanar and other camps, many of the original Terminal Islanders returned to the general vicinity, settling in San Pedro, Long Beach and Wilmington, and working in the fishing and cannery industries. Though the two buildings were altered in the late 1940s, those Terminal Islanders working on Terminal Island would continue to recognize the properties. They have remained part of the collective memory even after all these years – among those original Terminal Islanders and their descendants.

In the past year, the Conservancy has engaged with the Terminal Islanders Association on plans by the Port of Los Angeles to demolish the two buildings. We support their efforts to honor and interpret the role of the Terminal Islander community on ‘Furusato,’ but it is important the buildings survive as a physical reminder. If the physical structures are lost,



there would be little indication of the once vibrant community on the island. Due to this apparent threat, the National Trust recognized the site as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in May of 2025. This follows the Trust's prior listing of all of Terminal Island as in 2012, due to repeated threats against Terminal Island's greater context.

In the future, the task of rehabilitating and reactivating the buildings will prove difficult, but a strong coalition has emerged to support the process, including Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation (APIAHIP), who provided early support and technical assistance. The historic buildings have deferred maintenance, but are simple vernacular buildings that can be easily adapted. Combined, the two buildings have a footprint of only 3,600 ft², inclusive of the narrow alley that runs between them. We do not believe of the structures will impede or inhibit the productivity of the surrounding area, which is largely undeveloped or underutilized, and could open up incentives such as the State Historical Building Code.


Finally, we express sincere gratitude to Councilmember McOsker, who initiated this designation in recognition of the site's historic value. The nomination will contribute to the diversity of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance, where less than 3% of designated HCMs have an associated Asian American & Pacific Islander context. It is important that the City of Los Angeles takes an active role in the designation due to the historic injustices against the Japanese American community here, and the initiation was an important step towards restorative justice.

We thank you for receiving our feedback, and ask that you recommend these two buildings for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument.

About the Los Angeles Conservancy:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with nearly 5,000 member households throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Sincerely,



Andrew Salimian
Director of Advocacy

cc: Tim McOsker, Council District 15

