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State Historical Resources Commission
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April 30, 2025

RE: University High School Administration Building

Dear Members of the State Historical Resources Commission,

The Los Angeles Conservancy fully supports the nomination of the University High School Administration Building to the National Register of Historic Places. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C due to its architectural merits and its association with the historic Japanese American community in Sawtelle.

The original administration building built in 1924 and the 1925 addition are designed by notable architectural firm Russell & Alpaugh. Among the firm's best known works is the Beaux Arts Temple Emanuel, which was the first temple on Wilshire Boulevard at the time of its construction in 1920. University High School, built four years later, incorporated more whimsical Romanesque features perhaps inspired John Parkinson's designs at USC. An octagonal lantern complete with a cupola perched atop the roof, and an ornate portico dominated the main entry. The use of the Romanesque style on the school predated the more well-known Romanesque campus of nearby UCLA.

After the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) worked to seismically strengthen the building with funding provided by the Public Works Administration (PWA). These changes included some simplification of the façade and rooflines, but maintained the overall Romanesque appearance. Many of the notable features including the Venetian window, arched porticos and windows and decorative brick remained. This retention of the style was uncommon for the period, as many LAUSD schools were restyled in more popular styles when they were seismically reinforced post-1933.

The school also tells an important story about the early settlement and development of the Japanese American community in Sawtelle. The once



independent city did not have the racially restrictive deed restrictions that were common in Los Angeles or other cities on the Westside, and therefore it became a place where Japanese Americans could settle. Industry in the area included plant nurseries and agriculture, mainly focused on supplying nearby, upscale neighborhoods.

Second generation Nisei who grew up in the Sawtelle neighborhood were among the earliest students at University High School upon its completion. Among the Japanese Americans that were incarcerated at Manzanar Concentration Camp during World War II, were students from University High School. The school was without Japanese Americans between 1942 and 1946. 85% of all students at Manzanar Concentration Camp came from the Los Angeles area. Many who started their high school careers at University High School would receive their diplomas from Manzanar High School. University High School helps tell the story of Japanese and Japanese American settlement and development of Sawtelle and West Los Angeles, and was a critical place for one of its most troubled chapters. We ask that you approve the nomination of University High School Administrative Building for listing in the National Register.

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

