



CITY OF POMONA COUNCIL REPORT

February 1, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: James Makshanoff, City Manager

Submitted By: Anita D. Gutierrez, Development Services Director

**SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF REMOVAL OF DESIGNATION
OF SINGLE HISTORIC LANDMARK (SHISTORIC 15211-2020) FOR
THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 395 S. THOMAS STREET**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION NO. 2021-12 – A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF POMONA, CALIFORNIA, DENYING THE REMOVAL
OF DESIGNATION OF THE SINGLE HISTORIC LANDMARK
(SHISTORIC 15211-2020) FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 395 S.
THOMAS STREET**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The matter before the Council is a request to remove the designation of the Masonic Temple located at 395 S. Thomas Street, a local historic landmark, which was originally designated in 1982, *Attachment No. 1*.

FISCAL IMPACT: *NONE*

PUBLIC NOTICING REQUIREMENTS: Pursuant to Section .5809-13.E of the Zoning Ordinance, a public hearing notice was published in the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin on December 25, 2020. A public hearing notice was not sent to the applicant/owner of the property by first class mail, 30 days prior to the hearing date, at the request of the owner/applicant as they provided their consent and waived their noticing requirement.

PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION: On January 6, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the application requesting removal of designation of the Single Historic Landmark, for the property located at 395 S. Thomas Street, and recommended City Council denial the request, with a 7-0-0-0 vote, *Attachment No. 2*. The Historic Preservation Commission concluded that the

original designation in 1982 by City Council Resolution 82-114, was not based on “erroneous or false information relied on by the city council in making the original designation.” The Commission further agreed that Resolution No. 82-114 was correct in, “determining that certain buildings or structures or sites in the City of Pomona are of particular historical, architectural and cultural significance to the city of Pomona as historical buildings, or structures, or sites,” as the Masonic Temple met these descriptors based on the historical evidence provided by staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, this action is not a project. Section 15060 of the Guidelines exempts actions from CEQA that would not result in either an indirect or direct impact on the environment and that do not meet the Section 15378(a) definition of a project. Section 15378(a) defines a project as one that has the potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment. No physical change to the environment is anticipated with the retention of the single historic landmark designation.

DISCUSSION: The property located at 395 S. Thomas Street permanently hosts the “Masonic Temple,” a two-story 15,684 square-foot commercial structure, defined by its distinctive terra-cotta detailing on the cornice and roof, Corinthian style pillars at the front entrance, and intricate character-defining details. The 1909 neo-classical brick beaux arts building was designed by the notable Pomona architect Ferdinand Davis and constructed by the well-known Wilton brothers, William Wilton and Edwin Wilton. The founder and first Master of the Pomona Masonic Lodge was William T. “Tooch” Martin, a resident who played a prominent role in Pomona’s history both civically and socially. The structure is an exemplary visual representation of Pomona’s cultural, social, and political history as it served as critical gathering place for various established groups early in the 19th century, and has adapted over the years as a meeting place for a wide range of local and outside groups.

Single Historic Landmark Designation Criteria

Prior to the current adopted Historic Preservation Ordinance .5809-13, Ordinance 2637 adopted in 1973 outlined the procedures and standards for “Historical Monument” designation, *Attachment No. 3*. Staff analyzed the previously existing criteria and found three key distinctions to the current ordinance. The previous ordinance did not require owner consent, did not establish individual criteria findings, and did not require recordation on the property of the historical monument. However, the process outlined at the time of designation still involved a public hearing and notice to the owner and to the local paper, and required any potential “monument” to meet the following definition:

“shall be any site, building or structure of particular historical, architectural or cultural significance to the city of Pomona, such as historical structures or sites in which the cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historical personages or with important events in the main currents of nations, state or local history, or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or a method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.”

Section .5809-13(D) of the current Zoning Ordinance, establishes the procedure for reviewing historic landmark applications, and states that a building may be designated a historic landmark if

it is at least 50 years old and meets one or more of ten criteria. Records show that the Masonic Temple is well over 50 years old, as it was built in 1909. The structure, based on staff's analysis, would meet both the previously existing requirements for "Historical Monuments" and the current following criteria for Single Historic Landmark Designation:

1. *It exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City of Pomona's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history.*

The Masonic Temple is an exemplary visual representation that displays special elements of Pomona's cultural, social, and political history as it served as critical gathering place for various established groups early in the 19th century. A multitude of events took place in the banquet hall such as dedications, receptions, and social dances that were important to Pomona's history. Over time, this use of the temple as a gathering or meeting place was adapted over the years by a wide range of local and outside groups.

2. *It is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history;*

The founder and first Master of the Pomona Masonic Lodge was William T. "Tooch" Martin, a resident who played a prominent role in Pomona's history, as he actively participated in civic and social activities. Tooch was a justice of peace and taught school for four years and was on the school board in Pomona, and raised bees and fruit on his 15 acre ranch, formerly on Towne Avenue and Fifth Street. The construction of the Masonic Temple also the marked the fourteenth Masonic lodge in Southern California and attracted Mason from all over to visit the lodge.

3. *It is the work of a notable builder, designer, landscape designer or architect;*

The builders associated with the Masonic Temple were well known builders at the time of the Masonic Lodge's construction, the Wilton brothers. William and Edwin Wilton, also built the Elks Home, First Christian Church, Trinity Methodist Church, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and the Ebell Club. Additionally, the architect who designed the structure was Ferdinand Davis, a Pomona architect who designed the Ebell Club, the Pilgrim Congregational Church, Pomona City Stables, and the Phillips Mansion; some of which are also local historic landmarks.

ALTERNATIVE:

The City Council has the following alternative:

- 1) Approve the request for removal of designation of Single Historic Landmark (SHISTORIC 15211-2020) for the property located at 395 S. Thomas Street.

Prepared by:

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ATTACHMENT(S):

- Attachment No. 1 - Draft City Council Resolution No. 2021-12 denying the removal of designation of Single Historic Landmark (SHISTORIC 15211-2020)
- Attachment No. 2 - Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report (with attachments), Dated January 6, 2021
- Attachment No. 3 - Ordinance No. 2637