



CITY OF POMONA COUNCIL REPORT

August 3, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Anita D. Scott, City Manager

Submitted By: Betty Donovanik, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING A PORTION OF THE POMONA FAIRPLEX LOCATED AT 601 WEST MCKINLEY AVENUE AS A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (HDD-000111-2026)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council take the following actions:

- 1) Conduct a public hearing and receive public testimony; and
- 2) Adopt the following Resolution (Attachment No. 1):

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-075 – A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF POMONA, CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING A PORTION OF THE POMONA FAIRPLEX, LOCATED AT 601 WEST MCKINLEY AVENUE AS A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (HDD-000111-2026)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Historic Preservation Commission at their meeting of April 1, 2026, recommended that a portion of the Pomona Fairplex located at 601 West McKinley Avenue be designated as a Local Historic District. Staff worked closely with the Fairplex to protect our important historic resources while still providing the Fairplex the flexibility to develop their 500 acres in the future. This designation also ensures that there are no historic resources conflicting with improvements needed for the 2028 Summer Olympic Games.

SB1439/GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLICABILITY:

☒ When this box is checked, it indicates the agenda item is subject to the Levine Act SB1439 requirements. Councilmembers are reminded to check their campaign contributions and determine whether they have received a campaign contribution of \$500 or more that would require disclosure and/or recusal from discussing or acting on this agenda item. Campaign contributions of \$500 or more made 1) by any person or entity who is identified in the agenda report as the applicant or proposer or 2) on behalf of the applicant or participant, including a parent, subsidiary or otherwise related business entity, or 3) by any person who has a financial interest in the agenda item requires a councilmember to comply with SB1439.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact at this time

PUBLIC NOTICING REQUIREMENTS:

The property owner, County of Los Angeles, was notified 30 days prior to the hearing as required in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance. In addition, properties within 400 feet of the proposed district boundary were notified 10 days prior to the public hearing and a notice was posted in the Inland Valley Daily bulletin 10 days prior to the public hearing (Attachment No. 2).

PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION:

At the April 1, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission recommended City Council designate a portion of the Fairplex as shown on the attached exhibit as historic and determined other structures at the Fairplex were not historic (Attachment No. 3).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

None.

DISCUSSION:

In 2011, a cultural Assessment was prepared for the Fairplex (part of Attachment No. 3). The history identified in the report shows that the Fairplex has been an important part of Pomona's

history. The LA County fair started in 1922, on a 40-acre plot of land that the City of Pomona purchased next to Ganesha Park. The first buildings constructed were a half-mile racetrack, a grandstand seating 4,000, two cattle barns, two livestock buildings, a livestock barn, and an administration building. 10,000 people attended opening day of the fair with estimates of between 50,000 and 100,000 people attending the first year. This is an extraordinary number considering Pomona's population in 1920 was only 13,505 and only about 3,400 people lived in La Verne and Claremont combined.

The next year, the fair expanded with the purchase of 63 additional acres and construction of permanent fair buildings. The fair slowly expanded. The biggest construction boom at the Fairplex happened during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Most of the fair buildings we see today were constructed in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration, better known as the WPA.

At the beginning of World War II, the Fair was put on hold, and the Fairplex played a role in the internment of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans as the Pomona Assembly Center. A complex of prefabricated buildings was constructed in the west parking lot (between Gates 17 and 19 today). The complex was built in March 1942 and could hold 5,514 people. The first "evacuees" as they were referred to, arrived on May 7, 1942. The Pomona Assembly Center was always meant to be a temporary facility and most people were sent to Heart Mountain Confinement Site in Wyoming. The center was vacant by August 27, 1942. The site remained under Army control and used as a POW camp for German and Italian prisoners until 1946.

The fair reopened in 1948 and has continued to grow. Today, the Los Angeles County Fair is the largest county fair in North America and in 2009, had an attendance of 1,372,383 people, which was the fourth largest of all fairs and exhibitions in North America that year (Fairplex 2010:35). Except in 1963, attendance has topped one million at each fair since 1948 and nearly 83 million people have visited the fair since its inception in 1922.

The Pomona Fairplex appears eligible for listing in the National Register as a historic district under Criterion 1 for its associations with the development of agricultural fairs and the WPA and under Criterion 3 as a property type (county fairgrounds) with several extant contributing buildings and features including: the Administration Building 1; Palace of Agriculture; Grandstand; Administration Building 2; Millard Sheets Building; WPA barrelroofed Exhibition Halls (Buildings 5–8); Avalon; NHRA Motorsports Museum; Flower Building; the Longboard Bar; and horse racing stable 1. The horse racing stables 2–12A and 14–28; no longer have integrity or context to be considered historic. The drag strip is not being considered at this time, but could be considered at a later date.

The Fairplex also appears eligible for listing in the California Register as a historic district under Criterion 1 for its associations with the development of agricultural fairs and the WPA, potentially Criterion 2 for its association with Millard Sheets and Peter Ficker, and under Criterion 3 as a property type (county fairgrounds) with several extant contributing buildings and features including: the race track; Administration Building 1; Palace of Agriculture; Grandstand; Administration Building 2; Millard Sheets Building; WPA barrelroofed Exhibition Halls (Buildings 5–8); Avalon; NHRA Motorsports Museum; the Longboard Bar; horse racing stable 1; and the Flower Building.

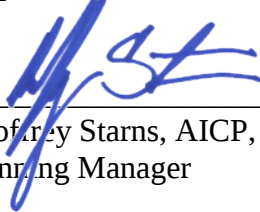
The Fairplex meets the local designation criteria for the various building architecture and their architects, and important people and events in local history.

In addition, while evaluating and determining the boundaries of the proposed district, the Historic Preservation Commission also evaluated all the other buildings on the Fairplex site and determined they were not historic. The only resource not yet evaluated is the drag strip, but the structures around the drag strip were determined not to be historic.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES & GOALS:

GOAL F: Establish a specific plan for the Fairplex. The proposed designation helps facilitate a future specific plan by identifying which existing structures are historic.

Prepared by:



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Planning Manager

ATTACHMENT(S):

- Attachment No. 1 – Resolution No. 2026-075
- Attachment No. 2 – Property Owner and Public Notices
- Attachment No. 3 – HPC Agenda Report Packet
- Attachment No. 4 – Staff Presentation