

4.0 Context Statement

SECTION 4.1 HISTORY OF UNIVERSITY PARK HPOZ

University Park within its boundaries offers a unique insight of the history of Los Angeles from its Pueblo period, through its days as agricultural land, to one of the earliest subdivisions the Hoover Tract of 1975, and subsequent subdivisions by the entrepreneurs of the boom of the eighties, the development of elite enclaves, and finally multiple dwellings to provide housing adjacent to a vibrant downtown. The University Park built form provides a unique chronicle of the development of the City of Los Angeles and the interesting mix of people and social classes that provide a glimpse into our dynamic history as Angelinos. In 1781 the pueblo that later became the City of Los Angeles was founded on the banks of the Los Angeles River by 44 Spanish settlers of mixed ancestry. The pueblo grant included the four square leagues (36 square miles) surrounding a central plaza. The approximate boundaries of the original pueblo are Hoover Street, Fountain Avenue, a line continued east from Exposition Boulevard, and a line continued north from Indiana Street. The intersection of Hoover and Union shows the contrast between the city's rectangular grid determined from a compass base line and the Spanish pueblo land grant boundaries that required NE/SW orientation. The zanja madre (irrigation ditch) remains in front of St. Vincent's Church and the Stimson residence, a vestige of the days when irrigation flowed from the pueblo. The zanja along Figueroa Street brought water from the pueblo to irrigate the lands.

University Park contains one of the best, and most intact, groupings within Los Angeles of residential architecture constructed between 1887 and 1930, significant examples of which are the scarcely known works of major turn-of-the-century architects and builders. The St. James Park Subdivision portion of the district is a much noted and rare example in Los Angeles of nineteenth-century private residential park planning. University Park was home to significant numbers of persons who assumed prominent roles in the professional, economic, and social life of Southern California between 1890 and 1925.

University Park shows the full range of late nineteenth and turn-of-the-century domestic architecture in Los Angeles, including upper middle class two-story Italianate Style homes from the late 1880's; charming middle-class Victorian cottages with unusual decorative features from the 1890's; 1 and 1 1/2-story Queen Anne cottages/two-story Queen Annes from the early 1890's. During the late 1890's and opening years of this century upper-middle and upper-class families, such as the Creightons and Stearns commissioned mansions around the edge of St. James Park in American Colonial and Classical Revival styles. University Park district contains significant numbers of architect-designed buildings; many of those identified representing the most

distinguished firms working in the Los Angeles area during the 1890's and first decade of the twentieth century. This is logical given both the prestigious tone of much of West Adams before and after the turn-of-the-century, and the elite middle to upper-middle class economic and social standing of the majority of its residents.

Phase One: Agriculture and the Hoover Tract (1875)

Agriculture and Other Industries Prior to the late 1880's, University Park was largely unsubdivided large acreage devoted to orchards, barley cultivation, and vegetable farms. A dense eucalyptus grove covered the easternmost portion of University Park. The area within University Park was owned by ranchers who controlled large parcels of land for cattle grazing and orchards, reflecting the predominant agricultural pattern in the land west of downtown Los Angeles. The earliest residents of University Park were well-to-do individuals whose fortunes had been derived primarily through real estate and mining investments locally, and from resources brought with them to California from other sections of the country.

The first residential subdivision within the boundaries of University Park was recorded in May 1875 by Vincent A. Hoover: Hoover Tract (originally it extended from Adams Boulevard on the south to 23rd Street on the north along the west side of Toberman Street). This proved to be an optimistic gesture, for serious suburban settlement within the district did not underway until 1887, and lots in the Hoover Tract went largely unsold.

Phase Two: Pioneer Settlement (1875-1886)

The subdivision of most of University Park is a direct manifestation of the famous Southern California Real Estate Boom of 1886-88 – A spiral of speculation triggered by the advent of Santa Fe Railroad service to Los Angeles in 1885. A group of notable developers transformed the land within the district from small ranch acreage to residential tracts starting in 1886.

The pioneer families in University Park, began subdividing their land for residential development in 1886, Charles Ellis forming a partnership with Dan MacFarland and Leman T. Garnsey, to develop the Ellis Tract, and the Severance family subdividing their property (south of Adams Boulevard) during this time period. In 1887, Ellis built the first commercial facility within the district: The Marlborough Hotel (Scarff and Oak Streets) (Carroll H. Brown, Architect), probably to promote tourist-based real estate investment in the neighborhood (the hotel survived one year and then became Mary Caswell's Marlborough School for Girls).

Pioneers within the district were joined by prominent Southern California developers, who did not reside in University Park but who acquired land here with the express purpose of subdividing it, including Theodore Wiesendanger, J. Downey Harvey, and Charles M. Wells, as well as builders like Henry Martz, who acquired lots to build speculative houses.

Phase Three: Initial Suburbanization: (1887-1890)

The coming of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1885 sparked a tremendous wave of real estate speculation in Southern California, and was a principal motive in the 350% increase in population of Los Angeles between 1880 and 1890.

Only scattered development occurred prior to 1891 however, most of this on Scarff Street, 23rd Street, Bonsallo and Estrella Avenues. 2119 Estrella (1888) by builder Henry Martz, the Seaman-Foshay House (2431 Scarff)(1887), and the George King House (917 West 23rd Street)(1887), by architect Abraham Edelman, are characteristic of this period, and reflect two stylistic trends of the late 1880's locally: The Italianate Revival and the modish Eastlake/Queen Anne Style (viz., Seaman-Foshay House).

Helping to establish the high social tone of this neighborhood were several noteworthy individuals and families prominent in local historical, and in some cases, national terms.

Mary S. Caswell, (-1924) whose preeminence as an educator is reflected in a profile in *Who's Who in America* (1920-21), founded the Marlborough School along the model of her previous Caswell School, Portland, Maine (1883-87) and St. Margaret's, Pasadena California (1887-88) (predecessor of the Ann Orton School for Girls). The current school originated at the north side of 23rd Street at Scarff Street in the very core of University Park. The school was housed in the Marlborough Hotel building (1887) (Carroll H. Brown, Architect) (demolished), after the hotel became insolvent and closed its doors. This prestigious school survives today as the oldest independent preparatory school for girls in Southern California (the school moved from the district in 1916).

Caroline and Theodoric Severance: (1820-1914 and 1814-1892 respectively). The Severances, who moved to Los Angeles from Boston in about 1875, were prominent figures within the nations' top literary/intellectual circles.

Mark Severance's importance in the cultural life of West Adams however was matched in the impact made by the construction in 1888-89 of his home at 758 W. Adams (Cullett, Eisen & Cuthbertson, Architects; 1888) (demolished), – known fondly within the St. James Park neighborhood as “The Big Red House,” this was probably the first time a Los Angeles home was showcased this way in a major, national architectural periodical – a point of major importance in understanding the social and architectural evolution of this neighborhood, between 1889 and 1910.

The 1894-95 Blue Book lists only eight elite private schools among its classified ads. Of these two were located in or abutting the district at that time (Marlborough School and the Froebel Institute). However, two schools listed but not then located in the district would be relocated there within the next nine years. This fact shows that a market for private preparatory schools existed in West Adams and further underscores its elite character.

As a Los Angeles society grew, so did demands for education, cultural institutions, and law enforcement. The University Addition of 1899 included Agricultural Park (now Exposition Park), the University of Southern California, and residential tracts such as the Park Villa Tract, the Brearly and Sinsabaugh Tract, and the West Park Villa Tract, among others. Primary motivation for the annexation of this area was the effort to restrict the bullfights, liquor, and gambling activities in Agricultural Park, which disturbed conservative citizens in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Phase Four: Further Suburbanization

In addition to the influence that the four previously profiled households had in shaping the genteel social tone of University Park, there were other developments by nearby residents that further reinforced its emergent character. The most salient of these was Thomas D. Stimson's (1828-1898) decision in 1891 to build an extravagant \$130,000 sandstone mansion (2421 Figueroa Street) (Carroll H. Brown, Architect; 1891) of unusual design. Local historians describe this house as being the most expensive home built in Los Angeles up to its time. The Thomas D. Stimson House is representative of the large estates built along Figueroa and Adams Boulevard between the mid-1880's and 1900.

This was followed by the building of Judge Charles Silent's estate in Chester Place (formally subdivided into a residential park in 1899). The subdivision of Judge Silent's property as Chester Place in 1899 provided tracts which featured the largest lots in University Park: 70' x 172'. The Stearns-Dockweiler Mansion (27 St. James Park; John Parkinson, architect; 1900) reflects this trend, as did the other elegant homes sited around the border of St. James Park. The most prolific of the architects designing in St. James Park and Chester Place was Sumner P. Hunt.

This second group of residents purchase homes or built them knowing that they were residing in an emerging urban neighborhood. Typically less financially established than the pioneer settlers, these middle and upper-middle class residents, included professionals, government officials, and a large number of real estate developers – the numbers of later class reflecting the explosive real estate market in Southern California at the time. In at least two instances, individuals moved between occupational categories over time. These included:

Freeman G. Teed (Architect, 1870's; and City Clerk for the City of Los Angeles, 1887-88, 1889; City Councilmember, 1890's), 2365 Scarff Street (1889).

Edwin C. Hodgman (Real Estate Developer/Builder, 1880's; Los Angeles County Tax Collector, then Recorder, 1890's), 2377 Scarff Street (1889).

W.H.H. Russell (Attorney, 1880's; Real Estate Title Abstractor, 1890's), 2341 Scarff Street (1887).

William H. Allen (Real Estate Investor), 2125 Bonsallo Avenue (Ca. 890).

George W. King (Real Estate Investor, capitalist), 917 W. 23rd Street (1887).

Richard Alexander (U.S. Army Physician), 2115 Estrella Street (1888).

Park Villa Tract (Period of Significance 1887-1910)

Park Villa Tract is noteworthy for the early construction dates of the majority of its buildings – Among the earliest extant residential buildings in the University Park area. Several of these early buildings (1887-89) are the work of builder Henry Martz, and all are readily discernable from the later buildings in the grouping on account of their two-story floor plans, and Italianate Revival detailing. Because of the number of buildings designed by him, his work is a major component defining the architectural character of this neighborhood.

The St. James Park Tract (Recorded: September 12, 1887) of J. Downey Harvey, of San Francisco. Harvey was the nephew of former-governor John Downey (one of the three donors of the land on which the University of Southern California was built, 1879), and is best known for the development of the Rancho Providencia of David Burbank – site of the present day City of Burbank. The St. James Tract was named for one of the sons of Judge Charles Silent, an eminent jurist who resided on the large estate on the eastern border of the district later subdivided (1899) into Chester Place Tract. St. James Park is a rare, possibly unique local example of nineteenth century residential parks like those found in St. Louis and Washington D.C.

St. James Park Tract is an example of a feature denatured over time that nonetheless possesses an over-riding merit as a rare local example of nineteenth century residential community planning and urban design. The original 36-lot subdivision by J. Downey Harvey, consisted of a double row of lots between Adams Boulevard and St. James Park (originally 25th Street), and a single row of lots riding a square on three sides – the entire setting beautifully landscaped. Although much of the landscaping is now gone, and most of the mansions ringing the square razed, the original layout is still discernible from the more usual street patterns in the surrounding area, and conveys some of the character of the original development.

Phase Five Streetcar Suburb (1892-1900)

From the early 1890's the development of University Park proceeded rapidly. Many middle and upper-middle families move into the neighborhood, and with the flowering of St. James Tract and Chester Place around 1900, a new stream of upper class families settled and

built large architect-designed homes there and along Adams Boulevard. In the period between 1890 and 1905, University Park and the West Adams Boulevard corridor supplanted the older south downtown and Bunker Hill neighborhoods of the 1870's and 1880's as the most prestigious neighborhood in the city in which to live. And although the lavish developments in West Adams Park and West Adams Heights began to compete with University Park starting in the early 1900's, it still retained its genteel character until the early 1920's, when the creation of many lower income rental units mark its decline as an elite neighborhood.

University Park developed in two large growth spurts, the first dating from roughly 1893 to 1895, the second dating from 1900 to 1912. By 1905, in fact, the project, area had assumed much of its present form, including its mix of higher density apartment buildings with single-family residences (viz., The Albemarle, 2343 Scarff Street; A. Dudley, Architect; 1903). The 1905 G.W. Baist Real Estate Atlas indicates that University Park was largely developed by this time, with only scattered vacant parcels, there being four vacant lots on Scarff Street, seven in Park Villa Tract, and five on Portland Street (most of these on the southern end of the block where 1920's apartment buildings and a bungalow court stand today).

Along 24th Street, 22nd and 21st Streets (west of Toberman Street) and Park Grove another type of development for the middle class was occurring during the mid-1890's—Nicely detailed attractive Victorian cottages, some in the Colonial Revival Style (generally 1895 and later); others in the Queen Anne/Eastlake Styles (generally pre-1895). Although some architects participated in their design, (viz., Fred Darn (2122 Bonsallo Avenue): James H. Bradbeer (1038: 1042 W. 24th Street), most of these homes were designed and constructed by builders. The Johnson Keeney Company (1893-1900) and Lucien L. Bowen are salient among the builders. The former building firm built virtually all the homes on the southern half of the 1900 block of Park Grove between 1894 and 1895, while Bowen built several cottages on 22nd and 21st Streets.

The Urmston Tract (1886). The coming in 1891 of streetcar service down 23rd and Hoover Streets to USC, brought about a more earnest development of this area, both in the early 1890's, and during the opening years of this century. University Park east of Hoover consists almost entirely of one subdivision: The Urmston Tract (1886). Prior to 1891, probably no more than a dozen homes were constructed, most of these near Adams Boulevard. The vast majority of these homes were built by individual owners who hired builders rather than architects to build individual homes for their own use.

Park Grove Tract, (Period of Significance: 1894-1915), consists of primarily of a delightful and fairly homogeneous collection of Victorian cottages along the 1900 block of Park Grove Street, each differentiated from one another with a diverse assortment of Colonial Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Queen Anne details. This grouping on the 1900 block is one of the finest examples of Los Angeles subdivisions created by the Johnson &

Keeney Company (1893-1900), and a turn-of-the-century building firm that specialized in residential developments. At the time of the Park Grove development in 1894-96, it was seen as a trend-setting example of smaller house design. Each step toward the completion of this subdivision was covered in the local newspapers of the period, including the Los Angeles Daily Journal, and the real estate section of the Los Angeles Times. Accordingly, Park Grove drew a discriminating and distinguished group of early residents (as reflected in the social and biographical directories of the period).

In addition to Henry Martz-designed/built homes at 1970, 1976, and 2111 Bonsallo Avenue, and 1978, 2119, and 2110 Estrella Avenue, there are other individually significant buildings by architects James H. Bradbeer (2124 Bonsallo Avenue; 1892), Fred R. Dorn (2122 Bonsallo Avenue; 1893). These beautifully detailed and intact homes are among the best examples in the West Adams area of Queen Anne cottages. There is also a stunning example of the Shingle Style by an as-yet unidentified architect at 2121 Bonsallo Avenue (Ca. 1889) that ranks as one of the best examples of its style in the West Adams area.

Of the 479 households listed in the 1894-95 Blue Book, 68 or 14% resided in the relatively small area bounded by Figueroa Street on the east; Washington Boulevard on the north; Orchard Avenue on the west; and 28th Street on the south. A further survey of social directory listings over the period from 1895 to 1935 reveals that approximately 12% of the properties within this boundary had a Social Register-listed individual or family associated with it. Similarly, 11% of the district properties had individuals associated with them who were listed in various elite professional biographical directories (viz., *Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest* (1913); the *Press Reference Library* (1912); *The History of the Bench and Bar of California* (1912); *Southern California: A Historical and Biographical Record* (1902), etc.). These individuals included a large number of distinguished attorneys (Table 1), and business people whose services mirrored the Southern California economy of the period. Allowing for some slight duplication between Social Register/Blue Book and professional directory listings more than 30%, or nearly one-third of the neighborhood properties had associations with members of the Los Angeles professional and/or social elite.

Phase Six: Final Development Luxury Apartments, Institutions, and Businesses 1905-1934

Between 1903 and the early 1920's development occurred in two forms, for the most part: Luxury Apartment and Small middle class bungalows were built on the smaller parcels, or by subdividing larger lots. The homes built on these parcels ranged in size from small to large (2211 Toberman versus 2109 Toberman). 1903 brought the first large apartment house within University Park; The Albemarle. Early apartment houses such as The Albemarle and the Power Double House (2325 Scarff Street; George Wyman, Architect;

1908) were clearly designed as luxury units with large suites of rooms.

In 1916, Marlborough School moved from the neighborhood to Hancock Park, the city's new emerging elite neighborhood. After 1920, the decline of St. James Park-Park Grove continued in a gradual way over the next several decades. The mid-1920's, however, starting in 1924, are marked by a flurry of subdividing activity. At that time many of the earlier groups of residents, or their heirs, had moved out of this neighborhood to Hancock Park, West Adams Park, Beverly Hills, etc. Carving their homes into apartments, or to develop their property for large apartment complexes (e.g., 848 West 23rd Street; 1928) geared to lower income residents.

Local commercial buildings in University Park included the retail facilities and offices, which formed the "main streets" at the nucleus of the residential area. The buildings that housed stores, offices, banks, groceries, and other commercial uses were often originally simple, low-rise structures, constructed of wood or brick; or, if two story, featured residential above and commercial on the first floor.

Phase Seven: Mortuary Row (1920-1940)

In addition to local commercial buildings, along Washington Boulevard a series of buildings were developed as funeral homes. Mortuary Row consisted of over two dozen funeral parlors clustered together on a half-mile strip that provided services to Los Angeles residents for over thirty years. That so many competing business entities operated in such close proximity was the result of several factors: a zoning philosophy of the time that called for "like" activities to be allowed in certain areas, the importance of having the socially right address on a prestigious Boulevard, accessibility to resources such as Rosedale cemetery, the Alameda Rail Corridor, and the Adams Boulevard Churches. Development of Mortuary Row occurred beginning in the 1920's and continued to the 1950's when the area was ripped apart by the construction of the Santa Monica Freeway Project. The influence and importance of "Mortuary Row" is recognized by the magnitude of its influence on the City. The 1930 Directories of the period list 19 mortuaries, eight of which or 42% of which were on the "Row", reflecting the tremendous influence. By the 1940's, with the dramatic growth in population of the City, 24 of 70 mortuaries or 33% were on the row, only a half-mile strip. The Mortuary buildings represent the work of pre-eminent Southern California architects and their facades continue to generate a serene dignity. Mortuary Row is linked to a pattern of events that define a development style of building related to the mortuary business; the developers of Mortuary Row were leading businessmen of their era, and the mortuaries create a property type with unifying architectural features, designed by preeminent architects that relate to their historic context. Further, many of the remaining mortuaries, have been adaptively reused while retaining their character defining features.

Summary

University Park is the largest remaining grouping of Victorian and Victorian transitional architecture in the City of Los Angeles. Approximately 70% of University Park's structures and sites are contributing. The pattern of its development, the front yards, massing and scale of buildings on each block, the lot coverage, tells a story of how that block was subdivided and developed. To preserve the context of this historic neighborhood, the City of Los Angeles created the University Park HPOZ by Ordinance in 2000, after over a decade of research and community encouragement of such action. Among the community's goals, is infill housing that moves on of a compatible structure from the University Park's period of significance, to vacant land. This was accomplished by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) moving the last Victorian at the Staples Center Development to 1965 Bonsallo (sold by lottery to a moderate-income family), and by a private developer on 22nd Street in 2003. The Urban Design Guidelines Program, established by CRA and City Council in 1991, creates the essential guidelines to preserve the character of University Park. This preservation Plan builds on that context; key is that contributing structures be preserved pursuant to the Standards, and that infill development be compatible in terms of massing, scale, setback, lot coverage, and patterns of development in order to preserve this areas character defining features. This is further explained in the Urban Design Guidelines.

SECTION 4.2 UNIVERSITY PARK HPOZ PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The University Park HPOZ is predominantly built in styles from the first three periods of significance, which correspond with the three building booms mentioned in the history above. They are 19th Century - High Victorian, Turn of the Century, and Eclectic Revival Styles. There are also styles within the district that come from a later Period of Significance - the Early Modern Style period.

19th Century Styles (circa 1860's-1900's)

- Eastlake/Stick
- Italianate
- Queen Anne
- Shingle
- Victorian
- Victorian Transitional

Turn of the Century (circa 1890's-1920's)

- American Foursquare
- Arts & Crafts
- Colonial Revival
- Commercial Vernacular
- Craftsman
- Mission Revival

Eclectic Revival Styles (circa 1915-1940)

- Chateausque
- Dutch Colonial Revival
- Mediterranean/Italian Renaissance Revival
- Spanish Colonial Revival

Early Modern Styles (circa 1900-1950)

- Art Deco/Moderne
- Prairie