



## DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING RECOMMENDATION REPORT



### City Planning Commission

**Date:** August 23, 2007  
**Time:** after 1:00 p.m.\*  
**Place:** Van Nuys City Hall  
Council Chamber 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
14410 Sylvan Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91401

**Public Hearing:** Required  
**Appeal Status:** None  
**Expiration Date:** None

**Case No.:** CPC 2007-3447-ICO  
**CEQA No.:** ENV-2007-3460-CE  
**Council No.:** 14, 1  
**Plan Area:** Northeast Los Angeles  
**Specific Plan:** None  
**Certified NC:** Historic Highland Park  
**GPLU:** Low Residential, Low Medium  
II Residential, Neighborhood  
Commercial, Open Space and  
Public Facility.  
**Zone:** R1, RD2-1, [Q]C4-1XL, OS-  
1XL, A1-1 and PF-1  
**Applicant:** City of Los Angeles

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The proposed Garvanza ICO is generally bounded by Pasadena City limits to the north; Metro Gold Line right-of-way bridge on the south; east side of Avenue 66 on the east; and east side of Figueroa proceeding to the west side of Avenue 63 at York on the west.

**PROPOSED PROJECT:** The establishment of an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) to temporarily prohibit the issuance of building and demolition permits for the erection, construction, demolition, addition to or alteration of any building or structure located in the Garvanza neighborhood. The ICO shall include an Urgency Clause making it effective upon publication and shall run for one year with two six month extensions by Council Resolution or until the adoption of appropriate land use regulatory controls.

**REQUESTED ACTION:** That the City Planning Commission recommend to the City Council the establishment of an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) in the Garvanza neighborhood.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. **Recommend** to the City Council the enactment of an Interim Control Ordinance (Exhibit E-2) imposing temporary regulations on the issuance of building and demolition permits for the erection, construction, demolition, addition to or alteration of any building or structure within the proposed Garvanza HPOZ.
2. **Approve** the Staff Report and the Exhibits as the Commission Report.
3. **Adopt** Categorical and General Exemptions No. ENV-2007-3447-CE (Exhibit E-3).
4. **Adopt** the attached Findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP  
Director of Planning

Signed Original in File  
Charles J. Rausch, Jr., Senior City Planner

Signed Original in File  
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## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Project Summary

The purpose of the Interim Control Ordinance is to protect the neighborhood's unique character and preserve its potential historic resources including buildings, landscaping, and natural features until a study of the proposed Garvanza Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) can be completed and the proper regulatory controls instituted.

The enactment of the proposed ICO would:

- Prohibit building permits, grading permits or demolition permits for any Project located in whole or in part within the proposed Garvanza HPOZ area, unless a Hardship Exemption is granted by City Council per Section 6 of the Ordinance (Exhibit 2).
- The provisions of this Ordinance shall not apply to the issuance of a building permit for interior remodeling of a legally constructed building or for construction consisting of routine maintenance, landscaping, re-roofing of the same materials or minor exterior repair work, which does not change a character defining exterior architectural feature.
- Remain in effect for a period of one year (with two six month extensions) or until the City Council can act on the establishment of appropriate land use regulatory controls or a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

### Background

Garvanza, located at the northern end of the Highland Park community, is the name originally given to the first township founded in Northeast Los Angeles. The name came from the garbanzo plants that once covered the surrounding hills. Garvanza has long been a transportation center. The El Camino Real originally crossed through Garvanza and in 1885, a railway from downtown to Pasadena began running through the area. In 1894, a streetcar line stopped at what is today York Boulevard and Avenue 64, further prompting the area's growth. Both Highland Park and Garvanza were annexed by Los Angeles at the turn of the century. The original town boundaries were Crescent Street on the north, Avenue 66 on the east, North Figueroa Street on the west, and Arroyo Glen Street on the south.

The Garvanza area soon became known as an important enclave of the American Arts and Crafts movement, whose adherents found inspiration by its natural location in the Arroyo Seco Valley. The neighborhood is the site of Los Angeles' first fine arts college, which continues in operation today as the historic Judson Studios, as well as early important artist colonies such as the Abbey San Encino, Garvanza Circle and Arroyo Guild of Craftsman. The legacy can be seen in Garvanza's rich variety of architecture, including the numerous Arts and Crafts influenced California craftsman bungalows, which were often built using river rock from the Arroyo.

In addition to the preponderance of Craftsman architecture, Garvanza also features an impressive array of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century styles including Eastlake, Italianate, Queen Anne, Victorian, Shingle, American Foursquare, Mission Revival and Colonial Revival. Several commercial blocks along York Boulevard and Avenue 64, are also included in the proposed district.

Garvanza encompasses approximately 45 continuous residential and commercial blocks, roughly bordered by the Metro Gold Line, Avenue 66, Pasadena city limits and Avenue 63/Figueroa St. Situated in a hilly portion of the Arroyo Seco, Garvanza is blessed with a beautiful natural setting and has maintained a unique small town feel. The plentiful trees, covered hillsides, parks and views allude to the fact that Garvanza was home to the founder of the precursor to the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Garvanza is surrounded by Pasadena, South Pasadena, Highland Park, Montecito Heights, and in close proximity to Mt. Washington and Eagle Rock. The majority of properties are zoned low or medium residential, with the residential higher density (RD2) on the blocks roughly comprising the original residential portion of the historic town of Garvanza. There is a commercial core of mixed character along York Street and portions of Avenue 64. A small portion of the area is currently located within a non-continuous portion of the existing Highland Park HPOZ (the Thorne Street - South Avenue 66 District). This area is proposed to become part of the Garvanza HPOZ area, because of its historical associations with Garvanza.

The Garvanza area is in close proximity to neighborhoods that have different kinds of design regulation already in place, including the Highland Park HPOZ, Mt. Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan, Avenue 57 Transit Oriented Development Specific Plan and Lincoln Heights HPOZ. This has left Garvanza's multiple-family zoned historic architecture at particular risk as developers and property owners seek out unprotected areas.

## **Issues**

Due to Garvanza's unique character, proximity to other desirable communities and its lack of protection, the area has seen increasing construction activity, including demolitions, additions and new construction. There have been eight demolition permits recorded by the City since 2000<sup>1</sup>, and at least two additional historic homes are under direct threat of demolition currently<sup>2</sup>. A total of 19 new construction permits have been issued since 2000, five of which were for new main structures. Four of those five were approved in the last two years. Of the 26 additions since 2000, 21 were permitted during the last three years. Each of these projects has the possibility to negatively impact the historic character of the Garvanza community.

Concurrent to the quickening pace of construction activity, Garvanza, has experienced a real estate boom in recent years. In 1997, the median sale price in Garvanza was \$128,000<sup>3</sup>. By 2006, the median sale price had increased to \$535,000 – a 318% increase in values. This compares to a citywide growth rate of 273%. Rapidly rising property values and construction activity is often associated with increased speculation.

Unfortunately, speculation and property “flipping” has led to frequent remodels and additions, which are often out of character with the historic integrity of the neighborhood as demonstrated by photographs shown in Exhibit E-4. Beyond the additions, demolitions and new constructions mentioned previously, even alteration permits pulled in the last few years such as window change-outs, new stucco, replacement of original porch materials, etc. can have negative consequences to the historic integrity of the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Data on building permit activity in Garvanza was obtained from the Department of Building and Safety and compiled by the City Planning Department's Citywide Demographics unit.

<sup>2</sup> The side by side properties at 405 N. Avenue 66 and 6517 E. Crescent currently have demolition applications pending with the City.

<sup>3</sup> Garvanza real estate data was compiled by Bob Taylor Properties, Inc, as reported by the Multiple Listing Service. The data is based on Thomas Book page numbers and includes slightly more area than the proposed Garvanza ICO.

**Conclusion**

In spite of these recent development trends, Garvanza remains an important historic and cultural resource to the City. The area retains much of its original charm and features including its street pattern, the size, scale, and architectural integrity of most of the historic homes and mature landscaping. The neighborhood is home to 11 City Historic/Cultural Monuments including the Judson Studios, San Encino Abbey, Garvanza Pumping Station and several beautiful homes associated with historic Garvanza. Without protection, Garvanza will continue to be susceptible to re-development resulting in the loss of irreplaceable buildings and damaging the unique historic character of the neighborhood.

The Interim Control Ordinance is necessary at this time to provide protections to the historic buildings, structures, landscaping, fences, natural features, and/or lots, within the Garvanza neighborhood until the City Council can act on the establishment of appropriate land use regulatory controls or a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

## FINDINGS

### General Plan/Charter Findings

**Charter Section 253.** For the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the proposed ordinance contains an Urgency Clause making it effective upon publication. The Planning and Land Use Management Committee of the City Council instructed the Planning Department to initiate proceedings to establish a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) for the Garvanza neighborhood and to prepare and process an Interim Control Ordinance on April 24, 2007. This interim measure is essential to prevent the loss or degradation of irreplaceable historically and culturally significant structures and features and to protect the neighborhood from development that is inconsistent with its unique character and intent of the proposed Garvanza HPOZ.

The need for such an ordinance is demonstrated by the fact that increasing numbers of building permits have been issued in recent years that have the potential to alter the historic character of the community. There have been eight demolition permits recorded by the City since 2000, and at least two homes are under direct threat of demolition currently. Of the 19 new construction permits since 2000, five were for new main structures. Four of those five were approved in the last two years. Of the 26 additions since 2000, 21 were permitted during the last three years. Other possibly inappropriate work in recent years includes the construction of a front yard garage, window replacement, new stucco, replacement of original porch materials - all of which could compromise the historic integrity of a structure. A delay in the implementation of this ordinance could result in a window of time during which building and demolition permits could be issued, which could result in the continued loss or major alteration of important historic structures.

**General Plan Consistency.** The subject Interim Control Ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan and is in conformity with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice in that it provides protections to the historic and culturally significant buildings in the proposed Garvanza HPOZ until appropriate land use regulatory controls become effective.

The proposed ordinance is also consistent with the following objectives of the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan (a land use element of the General Plan adopted September, 2001) in that it imposes temporary prohibitions on the issuance of building permits for the addition, alteration, construction, demolition, reconstruction, rehabilitation, relocation, removal or restoration of the exterior of any building, structure, landscaping, natural feature, or lot in order to preserve the unique residential character of the Garvanza neighborhood and its important historic and cultural resources.

Opportunities: Development of regulations and incentives to preserve historic and architecturally important structures, context elements, and neighborhoods.

Objective 1-4: To preserve and enhance neighborhoods with a distinctive and significant historical or architectural character.

Policy: Protect and encourage reuse of historic resources in a manner that maintains and enhances the historic appearance of structures and neighborhoods.

Objective 14-1: To ensure that the Plan Area's significant cultural and historical resources are protected, preserved and/or enhanced.

Policy: Establish one or more Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ) to protect and enhance the use of historic structures and neighborhoods.

Objective 14-2: To protect and enhance historic and architectural resources in Commercial areas in a manner that will encourage revitalization and investment in these areas.

Policy: Encourage the preservation, maintenance, enhancement and adaptive reuse of existing buildings in commercial areas through the restoration of original facades and the design of new construction which complements the old in a harmonious fashion, enhancing the historic pattern.

**Boundaries.** The proposed Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) would cover the Garvanza neighborhood, which is generally bounded by Pasadena City limits to the north; Metro Gold Line right-of-way bridge on the south; east side of Avenue 66 on the east; and east side of Figueroa proceeding to the west side of Avenue 63 at York on the west.

### **CEQA Findings**

The proposed Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), exempt from CEQA pursuant to Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8, which "consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment". The proposed Interim Control Ordinance will place a temporary prohibition on construction activities that could result in incompatible alterations and new construction or the demolition of irreplaceable historic structures (including fences) in the Garvanza neighborhood. Ultimately these construction activities could jeopardize Garvanza's eligibility for Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) status. Thus, the use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 from the State CEQA Guidelines for the Interim Urgency Ordinance is consistent with other California jurisdictions, which find that the regulations placed upon historic districts are necessary for the protection of the environment and will make sure that maintenance, repair, restoration, and rehabilitation does not degrade the historic resource. Moreover, the proposed Interim Control Ordinance is exempt from the City's CEQA Guidelines pursuant to Article II Section 2 (m) in that it is only a temporary measure to protect the historic and culturally significant buildings in the Garvanza neighborhood until appropriate land use regulatory controls or an HPOZ becomes effective.

## **PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

As of the date of this report, staff has not received any oral or written communications regarding the proposal.

A Public Hearing on this matter will be held at the City Planning Commission meeting on August 23, 2007.