

CITY OF GLENDALE
INTERDIVISIONAL COMMUNICATION
STAFF REPORT

Date: October 17, 2024

To: Historic Preservation Commission

From: Ani Mnatsakanyan, Planner - Historic Preservation

Subject: **Cleveland Knoll Historic District Overlay Zone Designation Application**

Introduction

The Planning Department has received an application for a proposed Cleveland Knoll historic district overlay zone (Exhibit 1). The proposed area is located east of Grand View Cemetery, and south of the South Cumberland Heights historic district. A portion of the southern boundary of the South Cumberland Heights historic district serves as the northern boundary of the proposed Cleveland Knoll historic district. The western boundary is inclusive of the parcels on the west side of Bruce Avenue, and the eastern boundary is inclusive of the parcels on the east side of Graynold Avenue. The north side of Glenwood Road, inclusive of the corner property at Grandview Avenue and Glenwood Road, is proposed as the southern boundary of the property. The proposal includes 238 properties.

The neighborhood includes the Taylor House at 1027 Glenwood Road (GR No. 4, c. 1873), which is the second oldest wood-frame structure in the City, and the Cole-Carothers House at 1235 Glenwood Road (GR No. 132, c. 1910). However, much of the area was developed in the 1920s and 1930s in Period Revival styles that were gaining popularity at the time, as well as Minimal Traditional homes that came to prominence in the Postwar period.

The boundary proposed by the applicants contains properties within the following address ranges (see Exhibit 2, proposed boundary map):

- 1308-1458 Bruce Avenue
- 1312-1457 Cleveland Road
- 1009-1027 Glenwood Road
- 1301-1460 Graynold Avenue
- 1310-1458 Idlewood Road
- 1016-1112 Olmstead Drive

This application is the second to be reviewed under the streamlined designation process approved by City Council in 2023 (Exhibit 3: Designation Process Flowchart). Tonight's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) hearing is immediately preceded by a community forum at which the proposal was introduced to property owners and residents in an informal setting, with a question-and-answer session and the opportunity for participants to share their views about the proposed district. The HPC hearing allows the commissioners to formally review the nomination in terms of the requirements of the historic district ordinance.

On September 17, 2024, the City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Architectural Resources Group to prepare a historic district survey for the proposed Cleveland Knoll district. If the Commission makes the preliminary finding that the proposed historic district appears likely to meet the requirements of the historic district ordinance, it can vote to authorize staff to proceed working with the consultant to begin the survey.

Under the previous process, the Commission would need to authorize district proponents to circulate a petition among property owners to determine if the owners of over 25% of the properties supported conducting a survey. With the new designation procedure, this petition is skipped unless the commissioners believe the proposal may lack support in the neighborhood, in which case it can require a petition as under the previous process. Regardless of HPC's decision, no final determination about the district will be made at this hearing and such a decision only occurs after several public hearings and another community forum are held, with local owners and residents being informed of each.

Once the draft historic district survey is completed, which will likely occur in 2025, it will be made available to the area's property owners and residents for review and another Community Forum/HPC Hearing will be held to discuss and consider the results. If the draft survey finds the area is eligible for designation, HPC can vote to approve those findings and support the district's designation. At that time the commission will also authorize circulation of a petition among property owners requesting that City Council designate the district. This petition, which was also a requirement under the previous process, must be signed by the owners of over 50% of the owners within the final boundary approved by HPC. If this threshold is successfully met, the Planning Commission will review the nomination to make a recommendation regarding the historic overlay district zone change to City Council, which ultimately makes the final decision regarding the district's possible designation.

Although Planning staff considers the current application to be complete, as the designation process proceeds, its components may change or be superseded due to new information supplied by the applicants, City staff, the project consultant and/or the public. Any changes to the application, such as adjustment of the boundaries or supplements to the Historic District Design Guidelines, must be reviewed and approved

by the Commission as part of any final determination it makes regarding the adequacy of the historic district survey.

Historic Background and Description

The application submitted by district proponents provides an overview of the Cleveland Knoll neighborhood history and development. The applicants interpreted and compiled relevant information from previously prepared City documents, along with newspaper and library research.

The 1920s and '30s was a period of great population boom in the greater Los Angeles area due to several burgeoning industries. Glendale's natural beauty and the introduction of public transportation allowed for the city to connect to Los Angeles's urban core while providing a more suburban neighborhood for local residents. The citrus orchards and vineyards that once swept over Glendale, including the proposed historic district, were rapidly subdivided and developed into residential neighborhoods.

Dr. Kate Shephardson, a native of Greenfield, Indiana, received her medical degree in Cleveland, Ohio in 1874. She practiced medicine in Columbus, Ohio, where she married Dr. S. Black. They moved to California in 1883 and purchased land in Pomona and Glendale. After practicing medicine in Pasadena for 15 years, the couple moved to the west Glendale area, where she oversaw a ranch at Kenneth Road. In early 1923, she sold 20-acres of land to a Cleveland, Ohio, syndicate comprised of Antonio Farinacci, Joseph Fortunato, Michael Maccario, Secando Teodo, and Joseph Di Vittorio.

The lots in the development were sold on an initial payment of 25%, with the remainder to be paid in three years in equal payments. Lots were priced at \$2,000-\$4,000, with construction prices capped at \$5,000. The average cost of a home in the 1920s was about \$6,500. Cleveland Knoll was specifically developed with the average working class family in mind, with the intent of providing an opportunity to own land and live in one of Glendale's most desirable neighborhoods at relatively affordable prices. While the cost cap was an admirable change from the more market-rate structure of other subdivisions of the era, racially restrictive covenants were nonetheless still required, as they were in many residential neighborhoods in Glendale.

The sale of properties included a free architectural design and building construction service offered by Farinacci. He offered free plans and specifications to buyers with a stated openness to suggestions that would "add to the attractiveness and serviceability of the home." At that time, the developers had apparently planned and constructed more than one million dollars' worth of homes in Cleveland, Ohio.

The lot prices also included public utilities, road construction, sidewalks, curbing, and the Marbelite concrete lampposts that lined the streets of the neighborhood. Many Cleveland Knoll sidewalks still retain their original sidewalk concrete stamps.

Preliminary Staff Determination of Eligibility

In addition to assessing the nomination against the eligibility criteria established by the Historic District Ordinance, Planning staff also considers the apparent appropriateness of the district boundary, period of significance, and name proposed by the applicants, as follows:

Proposed Boundary

The boundary proposed by the applicants, if designated, will include 238 properties on the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Bruce Avenue, Cleveland Road, Idlewood Road, and Graynold Avenue and inclusive of the properties along Olmstead. The boundary excludes the Chabad Jewish Center at the northwest corner of Bruce Avenue and West Kenneth Road and the properties on the south side of West Kenneth Road as these are already included in the South Cumberland Heights Historic District. The district's southern boundary will encompass the north properties along Glenwood Road.

The proposed boundary appears to be appropriate because it is consistent with the purchase of 20 acres of citrus groves from Dr. Kate Black and the map of the Cleveland Knoll neighborhood that was advertised in the 1923 article. The setting and feeling of the neighborhood within the proposed boundary are consistent with the original map, as the streets are lined in lush trees with wide canopies that frame the streets. The parcels are all flat and rectangular with lot frontages of 60 feet. Staff believes that there is a general feeling of coherence in the neighborhood setting that suggests the proposed boundary is appropriate.

Staff believes the proposed boundary is appropriate.

Proposed Name

The proponents suggest the name *Cleveland Knoll* as the proposed name for the district. This is in keeping with the use of original names for other subdivisions that later became districts, such as Rossmoyne. Original newspaper and physical advertisements for the neighborhood called the tract the *Cleveland Knoll*, and it does not appear that there was ever any other name associated with the neighborhood.

Staff believes that the proposed name, "Cleveland Knoll," will be appropriate if the proposed district is designated.

Proposed Period of Significance

The proponents propose a period of significance of beginning in 1923 and extending into the 1940s. The initial date reflects when the area had been platted and opened to prospective buyers, as well as when the street pattern was established. While aerials suggest that most of the properties were already built by 1940, the neighborhood was completely built out by the 1950s. The survey consultant will ultimately determine the period of significance and whether including some of the properties developed later in the 1940s would be appropriate.

Staff believes the proposed period of significance is roughly appropriate but that careful consideration by the consultant could result in a recommendation to change the initial or, more likely, final dates.

Contributing Structures

Staff has visited the Cleveland Knoll neighborhood over the years and conducted an in-depth drive-through. Many of the properties in the area appear to be likely contributors based on their construction dates and limited levels of alteration. While it is impossible to state that the requirement that at least 60% of the properties be contributors, staff believes this is highly likely. If the survey consultant were to find this isn't the case, it might recommend boundary changes that could allow the threshold to be met.

Staff believes it is highly likely that the proposed district will meet the 60% threshold for contributing structures.

Eligibility Criteria

A proposed district must meet at least one of the nine criteria established by the historic district ordinance in order to be considered for designation.

Staff believes that the proposed Cleveland Knoll Historic District appears to meet at least three of the nine criteria, as follows:

A. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history.

The varied styles and designs of the homes in the proposed district reflect tastes and trends that mark significant aspects of Glendale's cultural, social, aesthetic, and architectural heritage over several decades. The developer's original intent was to provide affordable homes for the average middle class working family in one of Glendale's most desirable neighborhoods, with building restrictions placed so that a home's average cost was no more than \$5,000 at a time when a homes averaged about \$6,500. The neighborhood is lined in mature trees and primarily features single-family properties in Period Revival styles, which represents how the developer was able to successfully create a walkable and scenic neighborhood using the popular architectural trends of the time while maintaining affordability for the middle class.

*Staff believes the proposed district **appears to meet** Criterion A.*

B. Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history.

The proposed district is associated with Dr. Kate Black, who relocated to the area after receiving her medical degree in Cleveland, Ohio. She practiced medicine in Pasadena for 15 years before settling in Northwest Glendale with her husband. She sold 20 acres of her property to the Cleveland-based development syndicate

which resulted in the ultimate development of the Cleveland Knoll neighborhood. Although further research could indicate that Dr. Kate Black was a significant figure in local history, she nonetheless does not appear to have had any direct association with the development of the district beyond selling her land. Should the survey consultant discover that she had more involvement in the area's development, the district may meet Criterion B.

*Staff believes the proposed district **probably does not meet** Criterion B.*

C. Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

The proposed historic district contains a concentration of homes that reflect the architectural styles that were popular from the 1920s through the 1940s, including Period Revival and Minimal Traditional styles, with a large number of Spanish Colonial Revivals. While the individual houses vary,, the neighborhood expresses a generally cohesive character, due to the uniform setbacks and similar building massing seen throughout the area. Many of the properties are single-story residences with an L-shaped plan and feature either an open courtyard or a covered patio at the front yard. However, these qualities are typical of properties and neighborhoods throughout Glendale and the Cleveland Knoll area does not appear to distinctively represent the characteristics of any specific style or type.

*Staff believes the proposed district **probably does not meet** Criterion C.*

D. Represents the work of notable builders, designers, or architects.

The neighborhood was developed by a Cleveland-based syndicate and parcels were sold to people who may have taken advantage of the free architectural design and building construction service provided by developer Antonio Farinacci. We do not know which houses he designed and many other designers and builders were undoubtedly involved at other properties. While most of the houses in the neighborhood were well designed and remain desirable today, such is the case in many parts of the city and there is nothing to suggest that they were the work of any notable designers or builders.

*Staff believes that the proposed district **does not appear to meet** Criterion D.*

E. Has a unique location or is a view or vista representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood community or of the city.

The proposed district is located in a generally flat area of Northwest Glendale and does not have a have a unique location, view, or vista. While the tree-lined streets have created a canopy that is a welcome feature of the neighborhood, it is not a unique view or vista that represents the city or the neighborhood.

*Staff believes that the proposed district **does not meet** Criterion E.*

F. Embodies a collection of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship that represent a significant structural or architectural achievement or innovation.

While the proposed district has a variety of Period Revival styles that are reflective of the 1920s-1940s, in their overall context, the properties in the proposed district are not representative of any significant architectural achievement or innovation.

*Staff believes that the proposed district **does not appear to meet** Criterion F.*

G. Reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning.

The proposed historic district reflects a significant era of growth in Glendale during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the further development of single-family residences after World War II. The development of the Glendale-Burbank line of the Pacific Electric railway spurred single-family suburban housing development as residents would be able to commute Downtown Los Angeles for work. Cleveland Knoll was within walking distance of the streetcars that ran along Glenoaks Boulevard and its development was supported by this proximity. The area's target audience of working class families would have particularly benefited from this convenient location.

*Staff believes that the proposed district **appears to meet** Criterion G.*

H. Conveys a sense of historic and architectural cohesiveness through its design, setting, materials, workmanship or association.

Although the neighborhood varies in architectural style, the neighborhood retains consistent setbacks, predominantly one-story massing, and many of the properties feature either an L-shaped plan with a front yard courtyard or rectangular-plan with a covered patio at the front elevation. The streets are defined by lush trees that create a canopy over the roads. "Marbelite" concrete streetlamps found in the neighborhood also provide a sense of cohesive setting and thoughtful design of the neighborhood.

*Staff believes that the proposed district **appears to meet** Criterion H.*

I. Has been designated a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources.

The area has not been previously designated or determined eligible for the National or California Registers.

*The proposed district **does not meet** Criterion I.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information submitted with the nomination and the assessment above, staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission preliminarily find that the proposed Cleveland Knoll Historic District is eligible as a historic district overlay zone and authorize staff to begin the process of retaining a consultant to conduct a historic resources survey.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: Historic District Application

Exhibit B: Map of Proposed District Boundary

Exhibit C: Flow Chart Summarizing Historic District Designation Process