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City Council Meeting Agenda Report

Subject: Lakeman House Certificate of Appropriateness (EA-2021-2316)
Date: July 20, 2021
Prepared by: Jarrett Ramaiya, City Planner
Reviewed by: Ivan Holler, Assistant City Manager
Approved by: Ivan Holler, Assistant City Manager

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the following:

1. Adopt a Resolution entitled: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MURRIETA, TO ADOPT THE ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION AND APPROVE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR DEMOLITION OR ALTERATIONS TO HISTORIC RESOURCES IN THE MURRIETA DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN AREA; and
2. Find that the proposed action is consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 for the reasons specified in this report.

PRIOR ACTION/VOTE

The Planning Commission provided a recommendation of approval to City Council, at their June 14, 2021 publicly held hearing (Vote: 32 with 3 Ayes, 2 absent).

CITY COUNCIL GOAL

Maintain a high performing organization that values fiscal sustainability, transparency, accountability, and organizational efficiency.

BACKGROUND

The owner of the property that has both the Lakeman House and Ray's Café, is requesting to acquire a demolition permit for the Lakeman House. Ray's Café would remain, and be restored. The approximately 0.61 acre site is located along Washington Avenue northeast of the intersection of Washington Avenue and Juniper Street. The Lakeman House has been determined by the City's Building Division to be unsafe to occupy in its current condition and has been red-tagged, as it is unfit for occupancy and cannot be restored. Because of the history tied to the Lakeman House, it has potential significance per local and State criteria. In order for the applicant to acquire a demolition permit, the City must analyze the impacts subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

The City will consider entitlements (Certificate of Appropriateness) for the demolition of the structure, whereby the owner of the property will focus on retaining items from the Lakeman House through an architectural and historic cultural materials salvage program consistent with City historic standards. The applicant will also be restoring another existing building on the same legal lot, known as Ray's Café. The



purpose of the Project is to provide for removal of an unsafe structure (Lakeman House) while retaining historical resources as outlined in Downtown Murrieta Specific Plan environmental document, providing adequate measures and conditions for the demolition process, and also provide for restoration of Ray's Café so that it can be ultimately used again for commercial purposes.

As researched and described by the Murrieta Valley Historical Society, the Lakeman House was constructed in 1885 by Abram and Rachel Burnett who constructed the home from a kit ordered from a catalog. In 1903, the property was purchased by Earnest and Mary Lakeman, who opened an ice cream parlor on the property a few years later, and by 1919, became known as the Lakeman Lunch Room. In 1924, the property was purchased and renamed as the restaurant, Henry's Place. Ray and Joanne Bezanson purchased the property in 1953 and renamed the restaurant, Ray's Murrieta Café. In 2006, the café closed and more recently was purchased by investors. Both buildings were identified as potentially significant historic resources in a 1983 historic survey conducted by the Riverside County Historical Commission.

The proposed Project seeks to demolish the Lakeman House and to rehabilitate and repair Ray's Café. As demolition of the Lakeman House could be considered a potential impact under CEQA, the loss of the resource will be addressed through General Plan conformance. An architectural and historic cultural materials salvage program will be included reduce the impacts to this area to a less than significant level. In addition, the site has the potential for below grade/surface cultural resources which may be potentially encountered during the demolition of the Lakeman House. An archeologist will be present during the period of demolition work, specifically while any excavation work is occurring. The applicant will also focus upon the Ray's Café building for repair and rehabilitation for ultimate use as a restaurant. As Ray's Café is considered a local potentially significant historic structure, rehabilitation of the building will also require a determination under the Certificate of Appropriate for alterations and be required to follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

In February of 2017, the City of Murrieta processed a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that included the adoption and implementation of the Downtown Murrieta Specific Plan to update the existing Historic Murrieta Specific Plan. The MND evaluated the updated Specific Plan and analyzed updates to the Historic Murrieta Specific Plan with specific mitigation measures to guide development of the entire old-town community. The Historic Murrieta Specific Plan contains six chapters providing a visionary land use framework to preserve and enhance the small-town resident oriented character, quality of life, and economic vitality of Downtown Murrieta with a smart-growth planning approach. Inclusive of this document, the Lakeman House was part of the historic inventory list as a potential historic resource. This was first documented in 1982 as a resource by the County of Riverside prior to the City's incorporation.

The request for the application for Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition or alternations to historic resources is required to be approved by the City Council, and staff is bringing forth the Resolution as a recommendation from staff and the Planning Commission.

Before a jurisdiction can authorize the demolition of a historic structure, an evaluation must be conducted to demonstrate consistency with State law, which provides the qualifying criteria (e.g., Criterion A: Event, Criterion B: Person, Criterion C: Design/Construction, and Criterion D: Information Potential. Also for Integrity). The Lakeman House does have applicable criteria (A, B, C).



For Criterion A: Association with the residential development from 1880's to 1900's. Criterion B: Association with early Murrieta resident A.B. Burnett and early builder Daniel Buchanan. Criterion C: Association with architectural development of the Murrieta community from 1880 – 1900. The Lakeman House has been reviewed for significance under the California Environmental Quality Act (see Attachment 2), and adequate project design features have been identified that are consistent with State law. Because the status of the structure is to a point where it cannot be salvaged, it has lost the necessary criterion necessary for integrity and cannot be determined for eligibility under significance criteria (see Attachment 7 for a more in-depth explanation by Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc.). Although the Lakeman House cannot be retained, the adjacent structure, Ray's Café, will be restored and will adhere to State law standards for restoration requirements. The Historical Resource Commission is no longer in existence, therefore, that role is now with the City Council to make the final CEQA determination.

CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION

City Council adopted Ordinance No. 363-06 on May 16, 2006, which added Section 2.36 of Title 2 of the City of Murrieta Municipal Code establishing the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC). Because of a reduction in projects being requested for review, a reduction in resources to support the HPAC and difficulty in recruiting qualified members, the duties of the HPAC were transferred to the Planning Commission. As designated by City Council per Municipal Code Section 2.44.050.B. Cultural Resources, the functions, powers and duties of the Planning Commission are as follows (see number 5 below for the specific request of this staff report):

1. Recommend to the city council, the designation of cultural resources, including individual properties, archaeological districts, and historic preservation districts;
2. Maintain the register of cultural resources within the city, including all pertinent information for each designation;
3. Review and comment on land use, redevelopment, municipal improvement, and other planning matters and programs undertaken by the city, as they relate to cultural resources of the community when so directed by the city planner or city council;
4. Make recommendations to the city council, on the use of various federal, state, local or private funding sources and mechanisms available to promote cultural resource preservation in the city;
5. Review applications for certificates of appropriateness related to demolition permits for any designated cultural resource within the city and make recommendations to the city council, including considerations of economic hardship. (See "Demolition/Relocation Permit," Section 16.26.100);
6. Review and make recommendations on applications for Development Plan Approval in compliance with the Development Code when so requested by the city planner. In general, the following projects shall be submitted to the planning commission for their review and recommendation:
 - a. Any exterior alteration or addition to and improvement that requires a building permit and that is a designated cultural resource or contributing resource; and
 - b. The new construction of a non-residential structure over 5,000 square feet within a Historic Preservation District. (Modifications and approvals to the Town Square Project are exempt from this review.);



7. Make recommendations to the city council, for recognition of owners of cultural resources who have rehabilitated their property in an exemplary manner; and
8. Undertake any other action or activity directed by the city council to fulfill the objectives of cultural resource preservation in the city.

As per Section 16.26.100 of the Development Code, no person shall carry out or cause to be carried out any demolition or relocation of a designated cultural resource or contributing resource without first receiving approval of a demolition/relocation permit from the City. A permit shall not be issued unless one of the following events has occurred: A.) A certificate of appropriateness has been applied for and approved by the city council; or B.) an initial certificate of appropriateness for relocation only has been applied for and denied and a period of ninety (90) days has expired from the date of the initial city council denial.

Staff presented the proposal to the Planning Commission on June 14, 2021 (see Attachment 9), resulting in a Commission recommendation of approval for City Council consideration. Staff is bringing forth the recommendation of approval from the Planning Commission to the City Council to allow for the Development Services Department to process the 'Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition or alternations to historic resources' application in order to allow the owner to demolish the Lakeman House.

MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Staff has discussed the proposal with Jeffery Harmon, President of the Murrieta Valley Historical Society as part of the environmental review. As provided for in Attachments 12 and 13, the Historical Society has done quite a lot of research, as well as archived information on the Lakeman House, as well as Ray's Café. They were also part of the initial review of the Lakeman House before the property was cleaned of vegetation and debris in recent years. The Historical Society was able to attain documents and other valuable pieces of information from the house. As part of the Conditions of Approval, the Historical Society will be granted access during the demolition of the Lakeman House, as there may be some items that are still of interest that were not previously accessible, including access to the foundation. The owner is in support of hosting the Historical Society during demolition. Staff is very appreciative of the involvement and dedication by the Historical Society.

CEQA DETERMINATION

The proposed action was reviewed for consistency with the certified Downtown Murrieta Specific Plan Mitigated Negative Declaration No. 17-3697, as adopted by the City Council on February 21, 2017, in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21166 and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15162. Based on this evaluation (Environmental review EA-2021-2316), and the required conditions of approval and project design features listed in Attachment 3, staff determined the project would not result in new impacts or changed circumstances that would require a new environmental document and the previous environmental document adequately covers these modifications.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.



ATTACHMENTS

1. City Council Resolution
2. Lakeman House CEQA 15162 Consistency Analysis and Findings
3. Lakeman House Conditions of Approval and Project Design Features
4. Env. Document for Historic Murrieta Specific Plan, January 28, 1997
5. Mitigated Negative Declaration for Downtown Murrieta Specific Plan, February 2017
6. Draft Notice of Determination
7. Lakeman House Recommendation Letter from Brian F. Smith & Associates, Inc., April 9, 2021
8. Draft Application for Certificate of Appropriateness
9. Planning Commission Staff Report, June 14, 2021
10. Historic Murrieta booklet
11. Lakeman House record from the State of California Dept. of Parks and Recreation
12. Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter, November 2016
13. Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter, February 2018