

## **FINDINGS**

- The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an important early example of a housing cooperative in Los Angeles.
- The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” and “represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an excellent example of International Style multi-family residential architecture in Silver Lake, and as an exemplary and highly intact work by master architect Gregory Ain.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an important early example of a housing cooperative in Los Angeles. The post-World War II housing shortage in Southern California spurred architects and developers to respond with innovative, cost-effective solutions. Cooperative housing projects, such as the subject property, offered a unique response, providing a communal living experience balanced with private spaces, attributes not found in the typical suburban tract house or multi-family developments. Originally called Avenel Homes, the subject property was initiated by ten families, organized by attorney Matthew Richman, who approached architect Gregory Ain with a desire to pool their resources and build a cooperative in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Though they legally qualified as apartments, Ain and his clients considered the Avenel cooperative units as individual modern homes. To maximize the 1,000-square foot size of each unit, they were designed to have two sliding walls that could transform the space based on the family’s needs, enabling an advantage of a large house. Other distinctive features of the subject property include single-loaded open-air corridors, natural light and ventilation on both sides of each unit, and terraces with prime views of the surrounding hillsides. In addition, with the participation of the Federal Housing Authority program Title 608, the units were affordable. The subject property remained a cooperative for over 40 years.

The subject property also “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as an excellent example of International Style multi-family residential architecture in Silver Lake. Characteristics of International Style architecture, as exemplified by the subject property, include the projecting flat roof, floor-to-ceiling glass walls, metal-framed ribbon windows, and flexible floor plan with interior sliding walls. Although the interior spaces of the individual units have minor alterations, the Avenel Cooperative Housing Project retains its original design intent.

In addition, the subject property “represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an exemplary and highly intact work by master architect Gregory Ain. Ain is recognized for his designs – from single-family homes to entire neighborhoods – that weave visionary modern architecture with social activism. Ain’s political views directly influenced the types of projects that he designed. His belief that quality design should be low-cost and accessible to the masses led to his experimentation with social housing projects. The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project reflects his exploration of how modern architecture could alleviate housing shortages and achieve a more equitable society.

Despite the interior and minor exterior alterations that the Avenel Cooperative Housing Project has experienced, it continues to retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS**

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 *“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.”*

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 *“consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.”*

The designation of the Avenel Cooperative Housing Project as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Given that the subject property is already listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places, the pending designation will lead to a higher level of review and protection of the historic significance and integrity of the subject property that could otherwise be lost through incompatible alterations, new construction, or demolition, particularly to the interior. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2020-3768-CE was prepared on August 14, 2020.