

Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant
2504 – 2508 East 1st Street
CHC-2020-6022-HCM
ENV-2020-6023-CE

FINDINGS

- The Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with early Japanese American settlement patterns in Boyle Heights and for its association with commercial development along the E. 1st Street streetcar line in the 1920s.
- The Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a well-preserved example of a modest single-family residence designed in the Queen Anne architectural style.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with early Japanese American settlement patterns in Boyle Heights and for its association with commercial development along the E. 1st Street streetcar line in the 1920s; and it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as a well-preserved example of a modest single-family residence designed in the Queen Anne architectural style.

The subject property represents the story of Japanese American entrepreneurship before and after World War II in Boyle Heights. The pioneering *Issei* generation recognized early on that they had to rely on their own efforts to meet the social, cultural, and educational needs of their community. As an example, the Nishiyama family, who owned the property in 1925 and constructed the commercial building facing E. 1st Street, created economic mobility for Japanese and Japanese Americans in Boyle Heights during a time when their opportunities were restricted due to land ownership, housing, and job discrimination. The commercial building originally housed a Japanese-operated grocery store, and later included a Japanese-operated florist shop and barber shop before the Japanese restaurant opened in the mid-1950s. Dining establishments such as the Otomisan Japanese Restaurant is part of a larger history of Japanese American commercial development in Boyle Heights and Los Angeles. Restaurants were the main business of Japanese immigrants who first settled in Los Angeles before 1900 and locales such as the subject property have served as important anchors of the Japanese American community in Boyle Heights for decades.

The expansion of the streetcar network in Los Angeles led to a differentiation between neighborhood and Downtown commerce. The streetcar made access to the central city easier, and as a result, large-scale establishments in Downtown Los Angeles served the specialized needs of customers, while neighborhood stores, like those in Boyle Heights’ business district along 1st Street, provided everyday essentials within smaller, less impressive structures. The pedestrian orientation, single-story storefront with housing behind, and vernacular architectural design of the subject property are reflective of neighborhood commercial development built in response to the streetcar line that serviced the Boyle Heights community. Also, Japanese-operated grocery stores and restaurants in Los Angeles were largely located on streetcar routes and the building at 2504-2506 ½ E. 1st Street is a rare remaining example of 1920s streetcar commercial development in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the single-family residence represents a modest Queen Anne cottage constructed for working and middle-class families. The Queen Anne architectural style became the most dominant style in residential architecture in the United States from 1880- 1900, popularized by the distribution of pattern books and architectural magazines. Although Queen Anne architecture was often a style associated with the upper and middle- and wealthy-class, smaller more modest Queen Anne-style residences were also constructed for the middle- and working class. Modest single-family Queen Anne cottages once were a ubiquitous housing style constructed throughout the United States from the 1880s through the first decade of the 20th century and were often built by real estate speculators in early Los Angeles residential subdivisions. Queen Anne cottages were smaller and less decorative than the custom Queen Anne residences of the upper middle and wealthy classes. The subject property's asymmetrical massing, combination wood clapboard and shingle siding, prominent covered front porch, tall, narrow windows, and decorative millwork detailing are all characteristics of the Queen Anne architectural style.

Despite interior and exterior alterations, the subject property retains 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 Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant 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. Although the single-family residence is currently listed on the California Register of Historical Resources, without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation that includes the front commercial building, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property in its entirety could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. 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-2020-6023-CE was prepared on July 12, 2021.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

(PRC Section 21152; CEQA Guidelines Section 15062)

Filing of this form is optional. If filed, the form shall be filed with the County Clerk, 12400 E. Imperial Highway, Norwalk, CA 90650, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21152(b) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15062. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21167 (d), the posting of this notice starts a 35-day statute of limitations on court challenges to reliance on an exemption for the project. Failure to file this notice as provided above, results in the statute of limitations being extended to 180 days.

PARENT CASE NUMBER(S) / REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

CHC-2020-6022-HCM

LEAD CITY AGENCY

City of Los Angeles (Department of City Planning)

CASE NUMBER

ENV-2020-6023-CE

PROJECT TITLE

Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant

COUNCIL DISTRICT

14

PROJECT LOCATION (Street Address and Cross Streets and/or Attached Map)

2504-2508 East 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90033☐ Map attached.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Designation of the Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant as an Historic-Cultural Monument.

☐ Additional page(s) attached.

NAME OF APPLICANT / OWNER:

N/A

CONTACT PERSON (If different from Applicant/Owner above)

Melissa Jones

(AREA CODE) TELEPHONE NUMBER

213-847-3679

EXT.

EXEMPT STATUS: (Check all boxes, and include all exemptions, that apply and provide relevant citations.)

STATE CEQA STATUTE & GUIDELINES

☐ STATUTORY EXEMPTION(S)

Public Resources Code Section(s) _____

☒ CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION(S) (State CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15301-15333 / Class 1-Class 33)CEQA Guideline Section(s) / Class(es) **8 and 31**☐ OTHER BASIS FOR EXEMPTION (E.g., CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) or (b)(4) or Section 15378(b))

JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT EXEMPTION:

☐ Additional page(s) attached

Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 of the State's Guidelines applies to where project's 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." Class 31 applies "to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings." Designation of the **Nishiyama Residence/Otomisan Japanese Restaurant** as an Historic-Cultural Monument will assure the protection of the environment by the enactment of project review regulations based on the Secretary of Interior's Standards to maintain and preserve the historic site.

☒ None of the exceptions in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 to the categorical exemption(s) apply to the Project.☐ The project is identified in one or more of the list of activities in the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines as cited in the justification.

IF FILED BY APPLICANT, ATTACH CERTIFIED DOCUMENT ISSUED BY THE CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT STATING THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS FOUND THE PROJECT TO BE EXEMPT.

If different from the applicant, the identity of the person undertaking the project.

CITY STAFF USE ONLY:

CITY STAFF NAME AND SIGNATURE

Melissa Jones

[SIGNED COPY IN FILE]

STAFF TITLE

City Planning Associate

ENTITLEMENTS APPROVED

N/A

FEE:

N/A

RECEIPT NO.

N/A

REC'D. BY (DCP DSC STAFF NAME)

N/A

DISTRIBUTION: County Clerk, Agency Record

Rev. 3-27-2019