MARY CLAY SCHOOL

3911 West Adams Boulevard
CHC-2026-1489-HCM
ENV-2026-1490-CE

FINDINGS

- The Mary Clay School "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the location of the Mary Clay School, the first Black-owned, non-sectarian private school in Los Angeles catering to middle-income families, which operated at the subject property from 1959 to 1998.
- The Mary Clay School "is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history" as the long-term residence of Mary Elizabeth Smith Clay, a trailblazing educator, civic-minded volunteer, and founder of the Mary Clay School.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Mary Clay School meets two of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria for designation under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. It "exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community" as the site of the Mary Clay School, the first Blackowned, non-sectarian private school in Los Angeles catering to middle income families. It is also "associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history" as the long-term residence of Mary Elizabeth Smith Clay, a trailblazing educator, civic-minded volunteer, and founder of the Mary Clay School.

The Mary Clay School began operating out of the subject property beginning in 1959, continuing to educate generations of children in the West Adams community until its closing in 1998. Following World War II, middle class women sought more opportunities for childcare to effectively manage both their careers and family lives. In Los Angeles, African American women faced additional challenges as White-owned pre-schools delayed or simply refused to admit Black children and children of color in general. As a non-sectarian, private school, the Mary Clay School was open to all applicants regardless of race or religion. The school sought to provide enriching, expert-informed childcare ranging from basic pre-school to a culturally-focused finishing school. The primary aim of the school was for students to become well-rounded successful adults.

The Mary Clay School was considered a model, private early educational institution for its teaching methods, cultural programs, and play equipment in the yard. It became a very popular school option with working parents with young children. Over the years, multiple generations of some families attended the school, and there are many prominent community members who either were students themselves, or enrolled their children in the school.

Mary Clay lived at the property with her husband, Wilbron "Bud" Clay, from 1959 until her passing in 1971. The Clays operated the school with the assistance of various faculty and staff while residing at the site for the remainder of their lives. Mary Clay hosted various events for prominent social groups throughout her life in Los Angeles, many of which fundraised for Black-focused and child-oriented causes. Among these were the Los Angeles Chapter of the Links Incorporated, the

Anchorettes, the Jack and Jill of America, the Pitt-Los Club, and the 12 Big Sisters, of which Clay was a prominent member.

Mary Clay and her namesake school won many awards and accolades for educational service. Foremost among these were a regional citation by the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., an International African American professional sorority for women in the field of education. She left a legacy of a strong educational foundation to all the children who attended the school and provided support to their working parents who could feel secure that their children would be safe and well cared for under the supervision of the Mary Clay School staff.

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 Mary Clay School 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 an Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property 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. 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.
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> 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.

Furthermore, none of the exceptions to the Categorical Exemption Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the proposed Project. The proposed Project will not result in significant cumulative impacts from successive projects of the same type in the same place. The Project does not involve unusual circumstances as it is in a similar location, topography, and streetscape as other Historic-Cultural Monuments in the West Adams – Baldwin Hills – Leimert Community Plan Area. The Project will not damage scenic resources in a state scenic highway. The Project site is not on a list compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 related to hazardous waste sites. The Project will also not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2026-1490-CE was prepared on June 17, 2026.