



April 10, 2016

The Honorable Paula Devine and Members of the City Council
City of Glendale
613 East Broadway, Suite 200
Glendale, CA 91206

Re: Agenda Item 8b – Consideration of Potentially Extending Mills Act Contracts to Properties Located in Designated Historic Districts

Dear Mayor Devine and Members of the City Council:

The Glendale Historical Society is grateful for the opportunity to address the proposal to extend Mills Act contracts to historic district contributors and eligible non-contributors as well as properties listed on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources. Our non-profit organization has more than six hundred members and works to preserve and celebrate Glendale's rich history and remaining architectural heritage.

We would like to thank the Council Members who have expressed support for the idea of creating an incentive to improve the condition of historic resources within Glendale's neighborhoods by providing the financial help to restore and maintain them. In addition, extending Mills Act contracts to historic district contributors would provide another incentive for residents to come together to preserve the history, aesthetics, and property values of their neighborhoods by forming historic districts.

We believe that such an incentive is needed. The staff report notes that "interest in historic districting remains high and further incentivization of districts is not needed." But the evidence does not support this statement. The proposed Niodrara Drive Historic District is moving toward the end of its three-year-long process, and in that time no new districts have been proposed. The effort to create historic districts is arduous for volunteers, which in effect makes them something of a luxury. By creating financial incentives to create them and maintain the properties within, this proposal increases the likelihood of participation from other identified neighborhoods, including possibilities in Adams Hill and Riverdale in South Glendale.

We are pleased to see in the staff report that the City would require a detailed plan for rehabilitation work/future maintenance to demonstrate need; a work program to include restoration of areas outside the public view; allow contracts to non-contributors that can be restored to their original historic character; and a valuation cap on historic

district contributors of \$1.5 million (with exceptions possible in extraordinary cases). We also think the proposal to streamline the application process is an excellent idea.

There is one part of the proposal that we respectfully request be changed. It proposes capping at four the number of Glendale Register properties that could receive a Mills Act contract each year; in addition, two contracts would be reserved for historic district contributors. The number of contributor contracts could rise as high as six per year, if a smaller number of contracts for Glendale Register properties were sought. We like the flexibility to expand to six the number of contracts offered to contributors; however, we strongly oppose capping the number of contracts eligible to Glendale Register properties, especially since the city proposes a rate that is slightly lower than the current small number—just about five per year on average—that typically are brought forward. As the staff report observes, Glendale Register properties “are, by definition, more important to the history of the city,” and the financial incentive of the Mills Act contract is crucial to maintaining the modest levels of interest we currently see. We note that there is no cap suggested on the number of Glendale Register nominations that can be submitted in a year, and that is where the real labor in the process is expended.

We don’t anticipate the number of Glendale Register requests for Mills Act contracts to increase dramatically, and we ask that the annual cap on the numbers awarded Mills Act contracts be eliminated. We do agree that at least two and no more than six contracts to historic district contributors, depending on the number of Glendale Register properties put forward (which is in the staff proposal), is an appropriate restriction for the program at its inception.

Thank you very much for your time. These changes would demonstrate a worthy commitment of the City Council to the goal of preserving the historic character and quality of Glendale’s neighborhoods for future generations.

Sincerely,

Greg Grammer

Greg Grammer, President
The Glendale Historical Society