



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

20-0113

Agenda Date: 3/4/2020

REPORT TO THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Forward a Recommendation to the City Council to Adopt a new City Council Policy 6.4.5 (Heritage Resources Plaque Program for Private Property) Establishing a Plaque Program for Heritage Resources to sponsor up to five plaques per year and Find that the Action is Exempt from CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). (Study Issue)

REPORT IN BRIEF

In 2015, the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) sponsored a Study Issue to explore options for a plaque program for heritage resources (Attachment 3). The program would increase awareness of the structures and trees that make up Sunnyvale's local Heritage Resources, and to educate the community on Sunnyvale's history.

Staff has conducted research on other plaque programs, considered what components of those programs would be the most successful in Sunnyvale, and is proposing the following options for the Council to consider if they choose to establish a plaque program:

- **Option A:** A city funded plaque program with funding for up to five plaques per year;
- **Option B:** A city funded plaque program with no limit on the number of plaque applications the City would process per year; or,
- **Option C:** An applicant-funded plaque program (no budgeted City money) guided by a City-designed plaque template and specifications for creating and installing a plaque.

If established, those properties listed on the City's Heritage Resources Inventory at the time of the plaque application may participate. Participation would be voluntary and applications would be submitted by the property owner of the resource if interested in displaying a plaque.

Staff recommends Option A. In this option, the City would budget annually for five plaques. Applications would be considered on a first come first served basis, with the establishment of a waiting list, if needed. This option would promote Sunnyvale's Heritage Resources and serve to increase awareness of the history, and architectural styles, that the City was founded on. This option would also create a low fiscal impact on the City, as five plaques would likely cost less than \$5,000 per year based on research staff has conducted.

If the Council decides to establish a plaque program, there will be a few implementation steps necessary to create the program before the application process is made available to the public.

This item is scheduled for the March 31, 2020 City Council hearing.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1980s, the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) was established in the City Charter

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to ensure that Sunnyvale maintains, preserves, and protects the heritage resources that represent the City's important architecture, history, and culture that have contributed to what Sunnyvale is today. The responsibility of the HPC is not only to maintain and protect heritage resources, but also to increase awareness within the community and to educate the public regarding Sunnyvale's rich history.

The Heritage Resources Inventory was first adopted in 1979 (previously called the Cultural Resources Inventory). Within the listing of Heritage Resources are Local Landmarks which have a significantly higher value to the community. Since 1979, several properties (and trees) have been added, and removed, from the inventory leading to the current inventory that contains 57 heritage structures, more than 21 heritage trees on 13 sites, one landmark district (Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District) and 11 local landmark properties. In addition to the resources listed in the Inventory, the City has also recognized a heritage neighborhood called "Taaffe-Frances Heritage Neighborhood." Of the 11 landmark properties listed in the Inventory, nine have plaques that were sponsored and paid for by the City and installed between 1980 and 1994. Photos and descriptions of the existing landmark plaques can be found in Attachment 4. The HPC sponsored this Study Issue in 2015 to further promote Sunnyvale's heritage resources.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 4: Community Character

Goal CC-5: Protection of Sunnyvale's Heritage. To enhance, preserve and protect Sunnyvale's heritage including natural features, the built environment and significant artifacts.

Policy CC-5.5: Enhance the visual character of the City by preserving diverse as well as harmonious architectural styles, reflecting various phases of the City's historical development and cultural tradition of past and present residents.

Goal CC-6: Knowledge of Sunnyvale's Heritage. To promote knowledge of, and appreciation for, Sunnyvale's heritage and to encourage broad community participation in Heritage programs and projects.

Sunnyvale Municipal Code, Chapter 19.96: Heritage Preservation

The Chapter contains the responsibilities of the HPC and development standards for heritage resources properties. One of the functions of the HPC is, "to encourage and facilitate public knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the City's historic past and unique sense of place and to encourage public participation in identifying heritage resources." Attachment 5 contains a link to the full text of Chapter 19.96.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) as it has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

DISCUSSION

Like many jurisdictions, Sunnyvale has designated structures, properties, and trees that have historic relevance as heritage resources or landmarks. These resources typically represent examples of

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architecture or engineering of an important period or have a connection to historic people or events. Landmarks and local historic resources aid in sustaining and solidifying the City's identity.

Plaque programs help recognize local historic resources, increase awareness of local history, and showcase the importance of certain buildings and features in the community. Recognizing these resources fosters education for future generations. Plaques for local historic resources are typically made of metals such as bronze or copper, range in size, and contain a variety of important information about the historic resource. The information generally includes a local designation number, historic name, construction date, and designation date, accompanied by a city logo. Some plaques (including the existing Landmark plaques in Sunnyvale), include more detailed information about the resource. Most plaques are installed on a building's façade or as a monument on a historic property. Plaques provide information to the public, allowing community members to identify and take pride in Sunnyvale's history and culture.

Plaque Programs in Other Jurisdictions

As part of the analysis for this Study Issue, staff conducted research on plaque programs in other jurisdictions within California to understand how these jurisdictions administer their programs, what information is listed on the plaques, and other valuable information used to create the options staff has included for establishing a plaque program. One of the most relevant examples of a City-administered plaque program is the City of Santa Clara, where the cost of plaques is covered by the City and the City orders plaques using the established plaque template. The plaque includes the Santa Clara City logo, construction date or a significant year for the historic resources, and one or a few keyword terms that would be helpful for anyone who would like to further research the historic resource. The property owner or applicant is responsible for installing the plaque once it is received from the City, with provided instructions.

Although some other California cities fund plaque programs, staff found that many of the programs are privately funded by nonprofit organizations with minimal local government involvement. For example, the City of Campbell has a webpage showing the city's plaques, but all the plaques were funded by either private sponsors or organizations without much City involvement.

The research conducted by staff on plaque programs in other jurisdictions is summarized in Attachment 7, and is categorized into two types:

1. Plaque programs administered by a local jurisdiction; and
2. Plaque programs administered by a nonprofit organization (e.g., a local historical society).

The programs administered by a local jurisdiction typically pay for the plaque and have an application process in place, along with a plaque template and installation requirements. For the programs administered by a nonprofit organization, the applicant or property owner is generally required to pay for the plaque as part of the application fee.

Sunnyvale's Heritage Resources Plaque Program

Establishing a City Policy that contains the guidelines for Sunnyvale's plaque program would ensure consistent implementation of the program throughout the City while would assist the property owners and City staff in understanding the requirements and different responsibilities associated with the plaque program. The new policy (Attachment 2) provides the guidelines for the program and contains information on the application process, permit requirements, plaque design details, and installation

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and maintenance responsibilities.

Plaque Template Design and Materials

To create a known, consistent plaque program, the implementation contains specificity and uniformity. To attain that consistency, an important step in the process is to create a design template for the plaque. These templates include plaque size, content, material and location. Staff created a draft plaque template (Attachment 6) that suggests an oval plaque that is approximately 10 inches wide and 7 inches tall, similar to those found in other cities. Staff recommends that the plaque include “Sunnyvale Heritage Resource” along the top; the resource’s address and pertinent property characteristics (e.g. construction date) in the center; and the City logo on the bottom. Bronze is recommended as it is a material commonly used for plaques. If the City Council approves the design and materials, or provides additional or modified directions, staff will move forward with finalizing the design and work to hire a vendor to create the plaques upon the establishment of the plaque program.

Installation and Maintenance

Although the City will administer the plaque application and work with a vendor to create the plaque, it will be the property owner’s (or applicant) responsibility to install the plaque. As done in other jurisdictions, the City would work with the plaque vendor to create installation guidelines for the plaque. If the heritage resource is not a structure (e.g., a tree, property or district) or has no building façade to mount the plaque, an alternative would be to mount the plaque on a pedestal, which could be made of concrete or a slim pole. The design and suggested locations of the plaques will be administered through the plaque application process and coordination between the property owner and staff.

Permit and Fee

As shown in the draft Council Policy, staff recommends requiring a Sign Permit to process plaque requests. Plaques essentially function as a sign on a structure, and it is most appropriate to process a plaque request with a Sign Permit since the plaque application process operates administratively like the review of a sign permit. The current Sign Permit fee is \$187.60 and would cover staff’s time in processing plaque request, working with the vendor to create the plaque, managing the program, and updating the online location where these and installed plaques are displayed.

Sunnyvale Plaque Program Options

There are other options to consider in how the plaque program could be administrated.

Option A: Plaque Program Budgeting Five Plaques Per Year (Staff Recommendation)

In this option, the City would budget up to five plaques per fiscal year. Property owners would apply for a plaque and requests would be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Any additional requests received after the first five applications would be placed on a waiting list and prioritized for the following year. In this scenario, the applicant or property owner would be responsible for a nominal application fee, a building permit fee for the installation of the plaque (unlikely, but possible), and costs associated with the installation of the plaque. For installation, staff would provide guidelines or instructions to ensure that no damage to the heritage resource is caused by the installation of the plaque.

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Pros:

- Fosters pride for property owners of heritage resources while promoting Sunnyvale's appreciation for its heritage resources.
- Increases awareness of heritage resources in the community by commemorating these with a plaque.
- Results in minimal cost impact to the City.

Cons:

- The limit of five plaques may create a waiting list if several property owners apply for plaques once the program is established. However, Council could indicate if they would want staff to return to the Council for a budget modification if there is an unexpectedly high demand for the program.

Option B: Plaque Program with No Limitation on the Number of Plaques per Year

This option would require Council to budget for a larger number of plaques per year as it would allow for application by every heritage resource owner. In this scenario, there would be no waiting list for property owners who would like to receive and install plaques on their properties and applications would be processed as submitted. Similar to Option A, the applicant or property owner would be responsible for a nominal application fee, a potential building permit fee for the installation of the plaque, and costs associated with the installation of the plaque. For installation, staff would provide guidelines or instructions to ensure that no damage to the heritage resource is caused by the installation of the plaque.

Pros:

- Fosters pride for property owners of heritage resources while promoting Sunnyvale's appreciation for its heritage resources.
- Increases awareness of heritage resources in the community by commemorating resources with a plaque.
- Can accommodate a larger number of plaques to be installed in one year.
- May serve to promote Sunnyvale's heritage resources in a more expedited fashion than in Option A.

Cons:

- A larger budget is required up front to allow for funding of plaques for all the heritage resources on the inventory.
- The one-time fiscal impact is greater for the City compared to the other options presented, however if there is keen interest up front it guards against inflation related to plaque costs.
- The cost of a plaque depends on the market price of metal, and the initial funds budgeted at the time of establishment may not cover all the resources if the price of metal changes significantly.

Option C: Plaque Program with No Cost to the City (Applicant-Funded)

In this option, the City would offer a voluntary plaque program with the applicant responsible for all the costs associated with applying for, receiving, and installing the plaque. The City would mail letters to and/or have brochures available for the property owners of heritage resources describing the

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process of obtaining plaques, including installation guidelines and instructions. City staff would also be available to explain procedures in person, if needed. Since there is no City budget involved, there would be no limit on the number of plaques approved. The property owner would also be responsible for any application fees related to installation.

Pros:

- No City budget is needed for plaques since plaque manufacturing and installation would be paid by individual property owners.

Cons:

- The financial burden on property owners of heritage resources would be greater compared to other two options above and may result in a very low participation rate.
- The City would have a difficult time encouraging property owners of heritage resources to install plaques.
- It may take time, if at all, to have enough plaques displayed on heritage resources to adequately increase awareness of those heritage resources and projects within the city.

Implementation Plan

If the City Council decides to establish and fund a plaque program, there are several implementation steps that must take place, including:

Staff Implementation Items

- Selection of a vendor to supply the plaques.
- Finalization of a plaque template, including finalization of design and materials.
- Finalization of installation guidelines and instructions for applicants.
- Display of heritage resources and their plaques on City website.

City Council Action

- Budget modification request to the City Council once plaque vendor is selected and costs are known.

Staff would return to the City Council with the request for the budget modification. Once given, the City would begin accepting application requests for plaques.

FISCAL IMPACT

To implement the staff recommended plaque program it is estimated that the annual cost to the City would be approximately \$5,000 (for five plaques); however, additional research, including a Request for Proposals for a plaque vendor, would need to be completed before the actual cost is known. Staff would return to the City Council once these factors are known to request a budget modification to fund the program.

Other than the budget modification needed to support the plaque program, no additional City funding would be necessary to implement the plaque program as the staff time required to process the plaque applications would be included in the Planning Division's operating budget and costs would be offset by application fees.

PUBLIC CONTACT

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Public contact regarding this item was made through the following ways:

1. Posting the Agenda for Planning Commission on the City's official notice bulletin board outside City Hall and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library and on the City's website;
2. Publication in the *Sun* newspaper, at least 10 days prior to the hearing;
3. E-mail notification of the hearing dates sent to all interested parties and neighborhood associations;
4. Notices mailed to all the property owners of the heritage resources;
5. Study Session with the Heritage Preservation Commission on June 5, 2019; and
6. Two community outreach meetings held to discuss the study issue in the afternoon and evening of June 19, 2019.

Heritage Preservation Commission Study Session

A study session with the HPC was held on June 5, 2019.

Staff presented the parameters of the Study Issue, information on plaque programs from other jurisdictions, presented preliminary options for what Sunnyvale may consider as a plaque program. The HPC was generally supportive of the concept of a plaque program and asked questions about which heritage resources would be eligible for plaques. Staff clarified that the Plaque Program, if established, would allow any property owner of a heritage resource to be eligible for a plaque, but that it would be voluntary in the sense that the property owner would need to apply to receive a plaque.

Community Outreach Meetings

Staff mailed notices to all property owners of heritage resources for the community outreach meeting held on June 19, 2019 and conducted two meetings; one in the afternoon at City Hall and the other in the evening at the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum. A total of five members of the public attended the two outreach meetings and were generally supportive of a voluntary plaque program where property owners have the option of requesting the plaque.

ALTERNATIVES

Forward a recommendation to the City Council to:

1. Adopt a Council Policy (Attachment 2) Establishing a Plaque Program to sponsor up to five plaques per year and Find that the Action is Exempt from CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).
2. Adopt a Council Policy with modifications to the staff recommendation and Find that the Action is Exempt from CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).
3. Take no action and do not establish a plaque program at this time.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Forward a Recommendation to the City Council to Adopt a Council Policy (Attachment 2) Establishing a Plaque Program to sponsor up to five plaques per year and Find that the Action is Exempt from CEQA Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

Establishing a plaque program to fund five plaques per year would serve to increase awareness of the City's heritage resources over time with a minimal fiscal impact to the City. Heritage resources represent Sunnyvale's heritage, history, and culture that together has created the Sunnyvale that exists today. Creating this program would aid to further educate the community about its heritage and

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encourage community engagement in Heritage Preservation efforts.

With a City-sponsored plaque program, the financial burden on property owners would be nominal, other than payment of the sign permit fee (currently \$187.60). This may help to encourage property owners to showcase their resource by applying for a plaque. City funding for the plaque program would also highlight the City's desire to acknowledge and celebrate its heritage resources and the property owners who maintain them.

Additionally, showcasing these plaques, and the properties they represent, on a City website continues to promote and celebrate the City's heritage.

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Reviewed by: Trudi Ryan, Director, Community Development Department

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council
2. Draft Council Policy
3. Study Issue Paper
4. Information and Photos of Sunnyvale's Heritage Landmark Plaques
5. Sunnyvale Municipal Code Chapter 19.96: Heritage Preservation
6. Draft Plaque Template
7. Summary of Plaque Programs in Other Jurisdictions