



## AGENDA REPORT

**Meeting Date:** February 17, 2015

**Item Number:** E-1

**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council

**From:** William R. Crouch, AIA, NCARB, AICP, LEED (AP), Urban Designer

**Subject:** A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS DESIGNATING WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL PARK AT 9650 SUNSET BOULEVARD, BEVERLY HILLS AS A LOCAL LANDMARK AND PLACING THE PROPERTY ON THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES; AND DEDICATION OF THE FOUNTAIN IN WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL PARK TO MARGARET J. ANDERSON

**Attachments:**

1. Criteria for Designating Local Landmarks
2. Resolution Designating Will Rogers Memorial Park at 9650 Sunset Boulevard as a Local Landmark
3. Cultural Heritage Commission Report and Resolution of Recommendation of Landmark Designation
4. Plaque design and copy
5. Plaque installation renderings

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### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the City Council, on the recommendation of the Cultural Heritage Commission, designate Will Rogers Memorial Park at 9650 Sunset Blvd. as a Local Landmark and add it to the Local Register of Historic Places; and
2. That the City Council review and approve the final plaque design and placement to dedicate the fountain in Will Rogers Memorial Park to city pioneer and hotelier Margaret J. Anderson.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Will Rogers Memorial Park is nominated for landmark designation onto the Local Register of Historic Places. In conjunction with the landmark designation for the entire park, the fountain within the park is proposed to be dedicated to Margaret J. Anderson with a commemorative plaque placed on site.



### **Will Rogers Memorial Park (1912) – 9650 Sunset Blvd.**

Will Rogers Memorial Park is the oldest public garden in the city and marks the merging of North Beverly Drive, North Canon Drive, and Lomitas Avenue, just south of Sunset Boulevard and the Beverly Hills Hotel. The park was laid out by landscape architect Wilbur D. Cook, Jr. and constructed in 1912 as part of the grounds of the Beverly Hills Hotel, which was built in order to attract tourism and residential development to the early planned community of Beverly Hills. In 1915, hotelier and city pioneer Margaret J. Anderson and her son Stanley officially donated the land to the City, making it the first municipal park following the City's 1914 incorporation.

Lushly landscaped as part of the hotel, the park featured the city's characteristic palm trees as well as formal gardens, metal lampposts with globe luminaires, benches, trees and curvilinear walkways, a planted 120 foot

long allée, and a terraced lily pond defined by three oval shape pools with ornate fountain. The park was known as “Sunset Municipal Park” until 1952, when it was rededicated as a tribute to humorist, civic booster, and first honorary mayor Will Rogers. Minimal changes have occurred to the park over the years. A \$1-million historic renovation was completed in 1997 that removed additions from the 1950s and returned the park to its 1920’s appearance.

In the central area of the park sits a fountain that is proposed to be dedicated to Margaret J. Anderson in recognition of her contributions to the Beverly Hills community and direct donation of the land that would become Will Rogers Memorial Park.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance enables the City Council to designate Local Landmarks. This historic property has undergone a review process by the City’s historic consultant and has been deemed eligible under local landmark criteria. The resolution attached to this report (Attachment 2) would designate the property as Local Landmark No. 27 listed on the Local Register of Historic Properties.

### *City Council Review*

At its September 2, 2014 meeting, the City Council considered a request to dedicate the fountain in Will Rogers Memorial Park to the namesake of Margaret Jane Anderson, at the request of Cultural Heritage Commission Chair Maralee Beck. At the meeting, the Council expressed support of the project proposal and directed staff to work with the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) and Recreation and Parks Commission (RPC) on the details of the project, and to return to City Council for final action. No other historic name has been previously associated with the fountain. The project includes a commemorative plaque to be placed on site as a marker. Council provided direction that the plaque should focus solely on the life and legacy of Margaret J. Anderson, since no other official City tributes (e.g. street or park names) exist that honor her contributions to Beverly Hills.

During the discussion of the fountain dedication project on September 2, 2014, Vice Mayor Julian Gold suggested to the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) that it explore the feasibility of landmarking Will Rogers Memorial Park. The CHC initiated the property for landmark proceedings on October 8, 2014, and nominated the property for inclusion onto the Local Register on January 14, 2015.

### *Cultural Heritage Commission Review*

The Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) reviewed and commented on the fountain dedication proposal at its meeting on September 30, 2014. The Commission was in support of the project and voted to forward the matter to the Recreation and Parks Commission.

### *Recreation and Parks Commission Review*

At its meeting on November 24, 2014, the Recreation and Parks Commission (RPC) reviewed and commented on the proposed Margaret J. Anderson plaque copy, design, and location. The RPC expressed its unanimous support of the fountain dedication and requested further

refinement of the type font and size for enhanced readability on the plaque (which has been incorporated into the design in Attachment 4).

**DISCUSSION**

On October 8, 2014, the Cultural Heritage Commission initiated landmark nomination proceedings for the property and requested a Landmark Assessment Report be prepared (See Exhibit A of Attachment 2) to determine if the property met the City’s criteria for designation as a Local Landmark. After considering the Landmark Assessment Report and other evidence, the Cultural Heritage Commission adopted a resolution nominating the property and recommending that the City Council designate the property as a Local Landmark to be included on the City’s Register of Historic Places (see Attachment 3 for CHC resolution).

The City’s Landmark criteria are provided as Attachment 1 and summarized in the following table. Designation of a Landmark requires that three criteria be met: A (Significance), B (Integrity), and C (Historic Value). Criterion A has six possible qualifiers and at least two of those qualifiers must be met for each property.

*Summary of Local Landmark Criteria Eligibility*

Criterion	Will Rogers Memorial Park
A.1 Is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> Will Rogers Memorial Park is closely identified with the founding of Beverly Hills and is a manifestation of the character that distinguishes Beverly Hills from surrounding communities. As a focal point at a prominent intersection, the Park is a significant community design feature. It plays a valuable role in the community because it serves as neighborhood open space, as well as the visual gateway to the Beverly Hills Hotel. The Park is also a visible reminder of the vision and contributions of the city’s first planner and landscape designer.
A.2 The property is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, or local history	<p style="text-align: center;">No</p>
A.3 Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> The Park was part of the initial city-wide planning of the community and played an important role in the overall design and character of Beverly Hills. The landscaping of Will Rogers Memorial Park in 1912, with its specialty plantings embodies the City Beautiful Movement of the time which was based on the principles of uniformity, the Classical style of public architecture, and a

Criterion	Will Rogers Memorial Park
	reverence for natural beauty.
<p>A.4 Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>The plan for Beverly Hills, which included the subject Park, is one of the most well-known works of Wilbur D. Cook Jr., who is listed in the City's list of master architects. Much of Cook's subsequent success and reputation was based on his efforts in Beverly Hills, and thus it was a highly notable project in his career. As one of the earliest landscape architects to practice in Southern California, Cook's importance is undisputed.</p> <p>Will Rogers Memorial Park also possesses high aesthetic value in its design since it physically and visually manifests City Beautiful principles of landscape architecture.</p>
<p>A.5 The property has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City or community</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>A.6 The property is listed or has been formally determined to be eligible by the National Parks Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>B Retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p> <p>Though some in-kind repair work has occurred to the site, it retains substantial historical integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, association, and feeling to satisfy this criterion. The layout and design of lily pond and fountain, paths, lawns, planting beds, and, to a large degree, specimen trees is largely unchanged since the park was photographed in 1914, throughout the 1920s, and in later years.</p>

Criterion	Will Rogers Memorial Park
C Is of significant architectural value to the community, beyond its simple market value, and its designation as a Landmark is reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purpose of the Ordinance	Yes  Will Rogers Memorial Park is of significant value to the City for its landscape design, aesthetic qualities, historical associations, and enhancement of the quality of life. The past and present preservation efforts of Will Rogers Memorial Park have been in accordance with the historic preservation policies adopted by the City of Beverly Hills.

For all of the reasons summarized above, the property meets the necessary requirements for local landmark designation. With City Council designation, the property would be placed on the Local Register of Historic Properties as follows:

Property Name, Year	Proposed Local Landmark Designation
Will Rogers Memorial Park, 1912	No. 27

*General Guidelines and Standards for Proposed Changes to Historic Properties Listed on the Local Register*

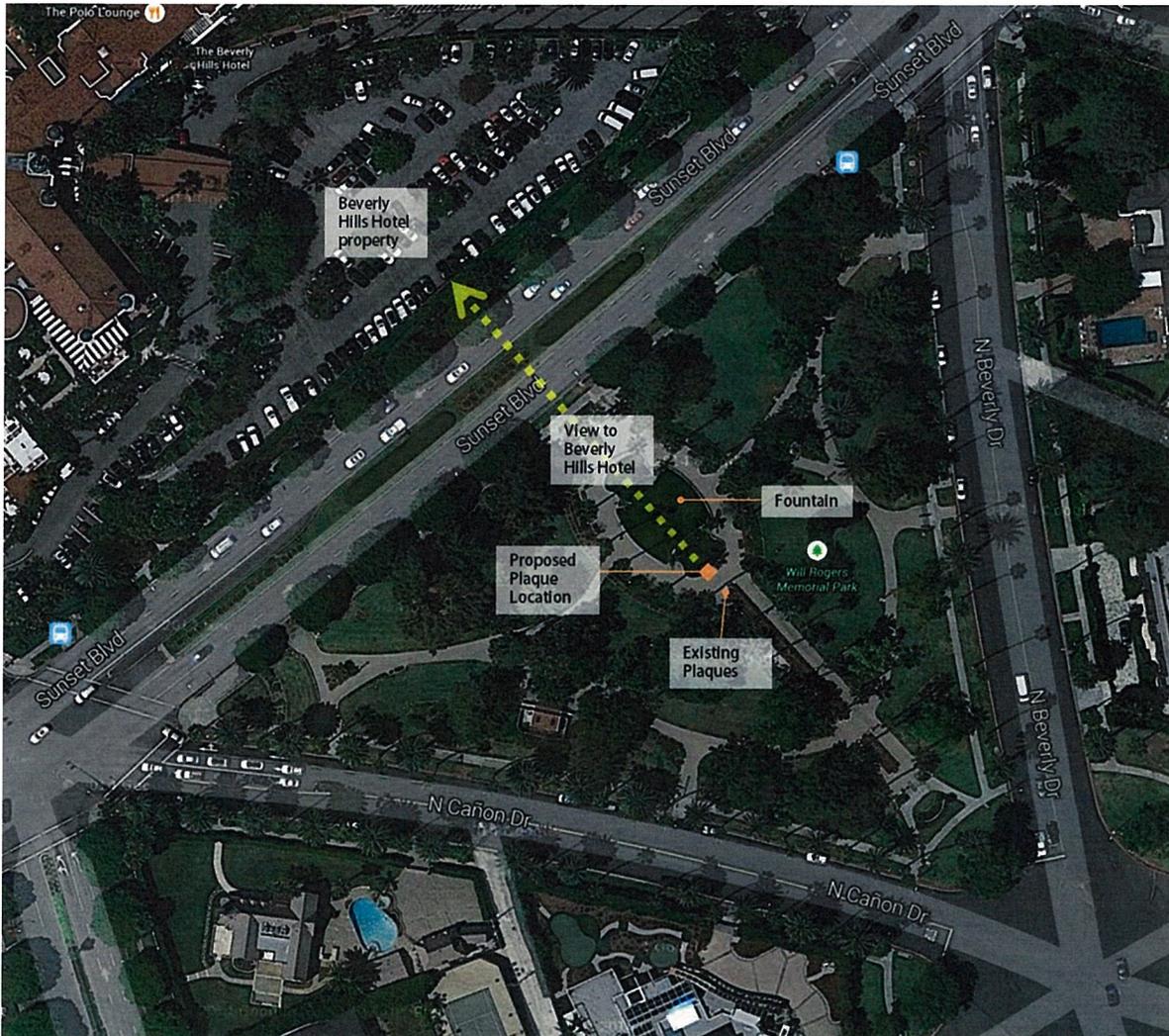
The effect of any listing onto the City's Historic Register of Historic Properties is not intended to freeze a property in time without any opportunity for future adaptations, but rather to provide reasonable guidelines to inform any future alterations, additions and/or adaptations in a way that allows for change without destroying historic integrity.

In order to allow historic properties to be adapted to modern needs, the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards for Rehabilitation are used as criteria to review changes to historic properties. The SOI Standards have purposefully been crafted to allow flexibility for historic buildings to be adapted over time to meet changing needs in a way that allows ongoing functionality of historic buildings without unnecessarily destroying historic fabric. There are ten guiding Standards to be applied in the rehabilitation of historic properties.

The SOI Standards for Rehabilitation assume that at least some repair or alteration of a historic building will be needed over time in order to provide for efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy original materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the historic character of the resource. The Standards allow for modernization to landmarks and are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

### *Plaque Location, Design, Copy*

The location proposed for the plaque is on top of the existing retaining wall of the fountain, as shown on the site plan in Figure 1 and rendering in Attachment 5. The proposed location allows the reader to enjoy the view of the fountain in the foreground, while looking north towards a framed vista of Anderson's Beverly Hills Hotel in the background. The proposed plaque design and text is provided in Attachment 4 for the Council's approval. A mockup of the proposed design and renderings of the installation are provided in Attachment 5. The size and placement of the commemorative Margaret Anderson Plaque has been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the SOI Standards.



**Figure 1. Site Plan**

### *Construction*

Following City Council approval, the Community Services Department will coordinate plaque fabrication and installation in the Park.

## **GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**

Designation of the property as local historic landmark is consistent with the objectives, principles, and standards of the General Plan, including General Plan Policy “HP 1.3 – Promote National, State, and Local Designation of Historic Resources,” which encourages designation of local landmarks.

Designation of the fountain and erection of the plaque to honor the contributions of Margaret J. Anderson, a city pioneer, is consistent with the objectives, principles, and standards of the General Plan, including General Plan Goals “HP 1 – Value and Preserve Significant Cultural Resources,” and “HP 2 – Promotion of the City’s Historic Resources,” which encourage the promotion of the city’s historic resources to foster civic pride.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

Designation of Will Rogers Memorial Park as a local historic landmark was assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. It has been determined that the landmark designation and the inclusion of the property would not have a significant environmental impact and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) (General Rule Exemption), 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment), and 15331 (Historical Resource Rehabilitation) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that designation will have a significant effect on the environment, as no specific development is authorized by the resolution, and any future development would require separate environmental analysis when the details of such proposals are known. Further, the landmark designation of the property is an action of the City to protect and preserve historic resources.

The fountain dedication project was assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. It has been determined that the subject project would not have a significant environmental impact and are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) (General Rule Exemption) and 15311 (Minor Accessory Structures) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that erection of the plaque will have a significant effect on the environment.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

As required by the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, notice of the public hearing for consideration of landmark designation by City Council shall be provided to the property owner of the property. As a public property, the City Manager’s office was notified as the property owner’s representative. In addition, the City’s Community Services Department and Recreation and Parks Department have indicated their support of the landmark designation of the Park. As of the completion of this agenda report, no public comments have been received.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Generally, designating a property as a Local Landmark deems it eligible for historic preservation incentives at the local level. However, as a public property, Will Rogers Memorial Park would not be eligible for such incentives as the Mills Act. No further fiscal impact is anticipated to result from the landmark designation of the property.

Funding for the production and installation of the plaque will be provided from the Community Service Department's current budget. No further fiscal impacts are anticipated to result from the project.

Susan Healy Keene, AICP  
Director of Community Development

  
Approved By \_\_\_\_\_