

**ST. ELMO VILLAGE**  
4820 - 4846 W. St. Elmo Drive  
**CHC-2024-3945-HCM**  
**ENV-2024-3946-CE**

## **FINDINGS**

- St. Elmo Village “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as an important site associated with the emerging African American Arts scene in Los Angeles during the late-20th century.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

St. Elmo Village meets one criterion for designation under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city, or community” as an important site associated with the emerging African American arts scene in Los Angeles during the late-20th century.

Founded in 1969, St. Elmo Village was formed in the aftermath of the 1965 Watts Uprising. Like many African American artists of this era, Roderick and Rozzell Sykes attempted to delve into the White mainstream gallery circuit, only to be faced with obstacles and exclusion due to racial discrimination. As a result, they sought out a permanent space where they could not only display their own art, but also welcome a community of local and national artists to freely create and be seen. St. Elmo Village, named after the street where the artists would take up residence and form their community, quickly became a central location for African American artists in Los Angeles.

Since the late 1960s, the Black arts community in Los Angeles has been growing and thriving and St. Elmo Village has acted as a hub for cultural events, community gatherings, and activism. In recognition of its impact to the Mid-City and greater Los Angeles arts community, St. Elmo Village has received numerous awards and honors including a Human Rights Award presented by the Baha'is of Los Angeles County, an L.A. Endowment for the Arts grant, and a Golden Globe Foundation grant, in addition to recognition from local and national leaders and organizations. St. Elmo Village has also been associated with various prominent performing artists and social movements. Artists such as musician Billy Preston, singer Diana Ross, the rap group Public Enemy, and the dancer Lula Washington among others were involved members of the St. Elmo Village community. In addition, the Black Lives Matter movement can trace its origins to St. Elmo Village as artist-in-residence Patrisse Cullors and two other activists – Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi – hosted a community listening event at the property after the Trayvon Martin verdict in July 2013. The movement has spread internationally and was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2021.

Throughout its history, St. Elmo Village has provided and sponsored recurring art workshops and classes, art and music festivals, artists book launches and signings, and visits by local school groups. The space has emphasized engaging local Black and Latino youth with the arts and providing a neighborhood space for local residents. St. Elmo Village has served and continues to serve as an essential space for Los Angeles's Black artists, as well as a welcoming place to create for all cultures and ethnicities.

The period of significance for the property is 1969 to 2021, covering the creation of St. Elmo Village to the death of Roderick Sykes, the last living co-founder of the property. While the subject property has experienced many alterations over the years, the buildings retain a high level of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey their 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 St. Elmo Village 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, 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-2024-3946-CE was prepared on July 12, 2024.