

August 13, 2020

VIA E-MAIL

LOS ANGELES CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION
Office of Historic Resources
City Planning Department
221 North Figueroa Street, Suite 1350
Los Angeles, CA 90012
E-Mail: melissa.jones@lacity.org

Re: **Opposition to Historic-Cultural Monument Application for 435 South Boyle Avenue
("Subject Property")**

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

Our law firm represents the nonprofit International Institute of Los Angeles ("International Institute"), owner of the Subject Property. Our client, strongly opposes granting the request of the above-mentioned Application. Despite the clear and convincing evidence provided highlighting that both the Application and the City Planning Department's original Recommendation Report contained numerous inaccuracies and false statements, City Staff appears to have disregarded every piece of documentation supplied and simply adopted the false statements made by the Applicant in its Final Recommendation Report.

The main false and/or inaccurate statements are the following:

- ❖ "Despite some *minor* interior and exterior alterations, the International Institute of Los Angeles is greatly intact". First of all, the International Institute is NOT presently located at this site and has not provided services and programs at the Subject Property for years. Second, it ceased operating at the Subject Property and vacated the facility because the building is NOT "greatly intact". In fact, the building is in extremely poor, unusable condition and is literally falling apart. Consequently, no public events have been hosted on this site for years.
- ❖ The Subject Property "was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and listed in the CA Register of Historic Resources." NO, it was not, as explained below.
- ❖ The list of alterations to the Subject Property is neither complete nor accurate. Nearly every window and door has been replaced. Multiple interior rooms have been re-configured and

changed. The kitchen has been completely gutted. The exterior staircase is broken and unusable, and cannot be re-attached without substantial re-construction of the exterior wall. As a result, the architectural integrity of the building has been severely compromised.

- ❖ The International Institute stopped all public events many years ago. They have only used the space for storage and minimum office activities until even that became impossible due to the age and condition of the structures.
- ❖ Several letters of Opposition have been sent to City Staff over the past few months, and yet NONE of these letters are included or addressed in Staff's package. The Commission must have all of the information to make its determination, not just what Staff considers relevant to support its recommendation.

I. Subject Property Is Not Listed in the National Register or California Register

The Applicant and the City Report attempt to portray the Subject Property as having obtained certain state or federally-approved historical status. The City Report plainly states, "The subject property was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and subsequently listed in the California Register of Historical Resources in 2000". (See, Final Recommendation Report, P. 4)

This statement is flatly wrong. In response to the City's and the Applicant's misrepresentations, we verified that the Property is NOT listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see, **Exhibit C**) nor on the California Register of Historical Resources (**Exhibit D**); the Property is also not cited in the National Archives database (**Exhibit E**). Moreover, neither the City nor the Applicant has offered any supporting documentation for this claim.

II. Subject Property Has Not Undergone the Proper Historic Review Process For Any State or Federal Designation

During its more than 90-year ownership of the Subject Property, the International Institute has never received any formal notification that its building was being considered for any kind of historic designation status until the instant Application. To be sure, there is no documented record of the Subject Property being formally considered for any historic designation by either the California State Historic Preservation Office or the United States National Park Service. Despite this fact, the City Report attempts to bolster a claim for special status by asserting that "the property was identified as a known historic resource in the SurveyLA Japanese-American, Latino, and Women's Rights historic context statements" (see, City Report, P. 4) without appropriate substantiation which is inaccurate and misleading. Two of these documents make no such finding, and only one—the Latino

historic context statement—inaccurately states the Subject Property is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources. The Applicant's and the City's attempts to magically designate the Subject Property as a "historic resource" without the necessary foundational facts are simply groundless.

The absence of any due process for a historic resource designation of the Subject Property is further amplified by the City's own archived documents. According to materials uncovered by our office, the City, along with the California State Historic Preservation Officer ("SHPO") and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation ("Advisory Council") prepared a Programmatic Agreement Compliance Report in 2000 that identified properties that were recipients of certain types of grants as being *potentially eligible* for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In the Ninth Reporting Period, (spanning from July 1, 1999 – December 31, 1999) the City and its Historic Preservation Consultant "evaluated two properties as eligible for individual listing in the National Register" – one of them being the Subject Property. The extent of this cursory process is detailed by the City in its report – "The determination of eligibility for the International Institute was documented and submitted to the SHPO during the Ninth Reporting Period. The SHPO did not respond within the allotted 15 days to the determination. Therefore, according to Stipulation VI, the City has assumed that the SHPO did not object to the determination, considered it to be a Historic Property under the PA, and proceeded in accordance with Stipulation VII." (See **Exhibit A**, pages 11-12.) There is no basis for a leap of faith on this ground.

The reason the Subject Property was included in the City's Compliance Report mentioned above, was due to the fact that in 1999 the International Institute applied for, and obtained, a "Community Development Block Grant" to provide funding for certain senior activities conducted at the Subject Property, including providing nutritional meals, transportation, recreation and English classes, as well as other social and community benefits to certain senior citizens. This grant was conditioned on the International Institute using the funds, to renovate the existing building – specifically to rehabilitate or construct "two (2) Public restrooms on first floor and repair kitchen restrooms; installation of fire alarm system, emergency lighting and electrical throughout the building as required and repair/install rain gutter, drinking fountains and walkways". (See **Exhibit B**, page 5.)

Nowhere in the 37 page agreement (**Exhibit B**) between the International Institute and the City is there any mention of the City's ability or inclination to use this agreement for the issuance of a Community Block Grant as a basis to designate the Subject Property as historic. However, unbeknownst to the Owner, within just two months of when the agreement was signed between the International Institute and the City for a grant to be used to upgrade the building in order to provide community services, the City uses its oversight of the Community Block Grant and identifies

the Subject Property as being potentially eligible for historic status with no public review process or notice to the Owner.

Although City Staff was presented all of this information in our previous letter, they have declined to acknowledge these facts in any of their reports and supplemental documentation.

In sum, the Subject Property never underwent a single formal (public) eligibility process for historic review or significance at either the State level or National level.

III. Application Does Not Support Necessary Findings for Historic-Cultural Monument Status

While the architects of the Subject Property may have been notable for other projects, the Subject Property is simply an average building for its time, certainly NOT a notable work. Neither the Applicant nor City Staff point to a single document or published article that highlights the architecture of the Subject Property. They merely claim that because a famous architectural firm has its name on the building permit for this site, that fact alone somehow automatically checks the box for the Subject Property as “represent[ing] a notable work of a master builder”. There is no documentation presented by either the City Staff or the Applicant to support a conclusion that this is a notable work, or that either Webber or Spaulding ever actually worked on this project.

Any published article about the Subject Property had to do with the work of the International Institute, not the structure itself. There is not one publication highlighting the architecture of the Subject Property.

IV. The People and the Works of the Institute Are the Subject of the Documentation, Not the Subject Property

As stated in our previous letter, the vast majority of the historical narrative and accompanying pictures included as part of the Application center, not surprisingly, on the work and the people of the International Institute. This building is long past its useful life, as is evidenced by the fact that the International Institute vacated the facility years ago and is not suitable for hosting public or private events. Unequivocally, it is in very poor physical condition, not compliant with ADA laws, and is far from being structurally sound. It currently sits vacant and is for sale. By deeming the Subject Property an “historic monument,” the City will create a long-lasting eyesore for the people of this Community. No significant portion of people who live in this community want this empty building to remain.

In fact, several property developers stopped pursuing a purchase of the Subject Property once the application was submitted, which was likely the ultimate goal of the Applicant who may be using

this process to drive down the price. Despite the fact the Subject Property could house 62 residential units under existing codes—and possibly more units if this were an affordable housing project—this site will sit empty and unused for decades with a historic/cultural monument designation.

V. Removal of the Rear Building from the Historic Designation

Nearly all of the narrative created by the Applicant, and regurgitated by City Staff, focuses on the work of the International Institute along with some commentary regarding the front façade of the street facing (front) building. Although the International Institute vehemently opposes any historic nomination for the reasons stated in this letter and all submitted correspondence from the International Institute, we urge the Commission to, at the very least, consider removing the rear auditorium building from the historic designation, including later additions to the complex that connected the auditorium to the main building. The rear building was relocated from its original location in 1931, is not associated with any historic significance related to the work of the International Institute, and is not reminiscent of the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture style. As noted in the proposed monument description, “[t]he auditorium section is clad in stucco and has undergone a number of exterior and interior alterations during the period of significance.” Furthermore, the auditorium building “was expanded in 1934 and likely connected to the rest of the complex by the 1950’s.”

Conclusion

The Subject Property fails to meet any of the criteria for the City’s designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Not only is the building itself architecturally unremarkable, but also in such a seriously dilapidated and altered condition that its functionality is significantly diminished. Contrary to the Applicant’s and the City’s assertions, the Subject Property is NOT listed in either the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources. The Applicant’s proposed nomination, which centers largely on the decades of good work performed by the International Institute, only jeopardizes the organization’s ability to continue its vital service to the community. We urge the Commission to independently evaluate all of the information provided to you and reach the only reasonable and just conclusion—that the Application must be denied.

Very truly yours,



Ellia M. Thompson

cc: Melissa Jones, City Planning Associate

III. RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES

3.1 Summary of Activities

This section summarizes the specific activities carried out under the PA between July 1, 1999 and December 31, 1999. An activity report for each of the following is included at the end of this Ninth Reporting Period PACR: Summary of Activities, including a list by property address of all undertakings; Identification and Evaluation of Historic Properties; Treatment of Historic Properties; Resolution of Adverse Effects; Consideration and Treatment of Archeological Resources; and Undertakings Not Requiring Review. Since no Standard Mitigation Measures Agreements were developed during this reporting period, none is included in this Ninth Reporting Period PACR.


The City and the HPC worked on the review of 142 undertakings under the PA during the Ninth reporting period which involved 150 properties. Of the 142 undertakings, 26 were Community Development Department (CDD) projects and 116 were Housing Department (LAHD) projects.

3.2 Identification and Evaluation

Identification and evaluation were carried out for 102 properties during the Ninth reporting period.

3.2.1 Listed and Eligible Properties


Of the 102 properties for which identification and evaluation were carried out during the Ninth reporting period, one had been previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register:

 3501 Valley Boulevard/3540 North Mission Road (Lincoln Park Boathouse)

One had been previously listed in the National Register:

1221 East 40th Place (Ralph Bunche House)

The City and HPC evaluated two properties as eligible for individual listing in the National Register and one property as a contributor to a district during this reporting period:

 435 South Boyle Avenue (International Institute)
5600 North Figueroa Street (Highland Theater)
1065 West 82nd Street (contributor to a district)

The determination of eligibility for the International Institute was documented and submitted to the SHPO during the Ninth Reporting Period. The SHPO did not respond within the allotted 15 days to the determination. Therefore, according to Stipulation VI, the City has assumed that the SHPO did not object to the determination, considered it to be a Historic Property under the PA,

II. DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE CONTRACTOR

\$201. Independent Contractor Status

The parties agree that the performance of the Contractor's services hereunder shall be in the capacity of an independent Contractor and that no employees of the Contractor have been, are, or shall be employees of the City by virtue of this Agreement, and the Contractor shall so inform each employee organization, each employee, and, if applicable, each collaborating subcontractor agency hired or retained under this Agreement.

\$202. Contractor Agreements

- A. The Contractor shall submit to the City a list of all grant or funding agreements entered into between the Contractor and other public or private organizations concerning the activities funded under this Agreement and of any termination, default, suspension or disallowed costs under said funding agreements. The Contractor shall inform the City in writing of all new sources of funding the Contractor may acquire during the term of this Agreement concerning the activities funded under this Agreement.
- B. A copy of any of the above agreements shall be furnished to the City upon its request.

\$203. Services to be Provided by the Contractor

International Institute of Los Angeles provides senior citizens a wide range of social services which consists of the following: nutritional meals, transportation, recreation, citizenship and English classes, Immigration services and legal representation services as required. Hours of operation are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

A. Identification of Project Eligibility/National Objectives

1. This project is eligible under 24 CFR 570 as follows (indicate all appropriate letters and sub-numbers, project may be eligible under several criteria):

201 (a-1) _____
202 (a-e) A
203 (a-b) _____

204 (a-c) _____
205 (a-b) _____
206 (a-g) _____

2. All projects funded with HCDBG funds must meet one of three national objectives. This project meets the following national objective (check only one):

- 1) Activities benefiting very low and low income persons under 24CFR 570.208(a)

B. General Requirements

1. The Contractor shall, in furtherance of this Agreement:
- a. Renovate an existing building
 - b. All specific activities contained in Subsection C, Specific Requirements of the Contractor.
2. The Contractor shall use the funds provided in this Agreement as defined herein. It is further understood that there is neither an expressed nor implied assurance that the City will provide further funding to the Contractor beyond the completion of this Agreement.

EXHIBIT B

National Register of Historic Places

Public, non-restricted data depicting National Register spatial data processed by the Cultural Resources GIS Facility. Data last updated in April, 2014.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Ref#	Property Name	Status	Request Type	Status Date	Restricted Address	City	County
1570 45000517	Archaeological Site FS 05 06 58 25	Eligible	Federal DOE	4/7/1978	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1580 45000542	Archaeological Site HU 1	Eligible	Federal DOE	7/10/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1581 45007309	Archaeological Site HU 5	Eligible	Federal DOE	7/10/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1582 45000432	Archaeological Site CA LAN 1010	Eligible	Federal DOE	11/10/1982	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1583 45000433	Archaeological Site CA LAN 1051	Eligible	Federal DOE	11/10/1982	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1584 45007375	Archaeological Site CA LAN 1065	Eligible	Federal DOE	11/10/1982	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1585 45000560	Arroyo Seco Parkway	Eligible	Federal DOE	3/31/1983	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1586 45000427	Baldwin Park City Hall	Eligible	Federal DOE	3/16/1978	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1587 45000577	Beverly Gardens Park	Eligible	Federal DOE	4/15/1985	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1588 45007498	Big Tupajns Prehistoric Archaeological Site (04 LAN-167)	Eligible	Federal DOE	10/28/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1589 45000787	Grass House	Eligible	Federal DOE	3/31/1983	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1590 45000787	Hollywood Bowl	Eligible	Federal DOE	5/31/1983	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1591 45000877	Marlham Place District	Eligible	Federal DOE	3/31/1983	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1592 45000911	National Bank of Pico	Eligible	Federal DOE	11/9/1977	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1593 45001051	South of Mission District	Eligible	Federal DOE	3/31/1983	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1594 45001082	United Artists/Teraco Company Building	Eligible	Federal DOE	9/15/1982	FALSE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1595 45001076	Van Norman (or Los Angeles) Reservoir Archaeological District	Eligible	Federal DOE	5/18/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Los Angeles
1596 45000456	Archaeological Site CA-Mari-176	Eligible	Federal DOE	6/19/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Madera
1597 45000453	Archaeological Site CA-Mari-177	Eligible	Federal DOE	6/19/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Madera
1598 45000781	Archaeological Site CA-Mari-178	Eligible	Federal DOE	6/19/1975	TRUE	City unavailable	Madera

Ref#	Property Name	Status	United Date	NHL Designated Date	Restricted Address	Name of Multiple Property Listing	State	County	City
6683 00000704	Hollywood Boulevard Commercial	Unlisted	4/4/1985		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6684 00000550	Hollywood Cemetery	Unlisted	5/4/1990		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6685 00000969	Hollywood High School Historic District	Unlisted	5/4/1992		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6686 00000814	Hollywood-Melrose Historic District	Unlisted	7/9/1983		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6687 00000662	Hollywood-Paladium	Unlisted	9/10/1985		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6688 00000378	Hollywood Western Building, The	Unlisted	7/7/1935		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6689 00000212	Holmes-Staircase House	Unlisted	3/26/2008		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6690 00001470	Hotel Chancellery	Unlisted	1/2/2005		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6691 00000580	Hotel Rossmore Annex	Unlisted	8/13/2011		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6692 00001010	Irving, Washington, Branch	Unlisted	3/23/1987		FALSE	Los Angeles Branch Library System TR	CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6693 00001011	Jackson, Helen Marie, Branch	Unlisted	5/10/1987		FALSE	Los Angeles Branch Library System TR	CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6694 00001012	Jefferson Apartments	Unlisted	1/2/1980		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6695 00001012	Jefferson Branch	Unlisted	5/10/1987		FALSE	Los Angeles Branch Library System TR	CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6696 00001013	Julian Studios	Unlisted	3/25/1999		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6697 00000774	Kerckhoff Building and Annex	Unlisted	8/2/2005		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6698 00001116	Knox, George B., House	Unlisted	9/15/1988		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6699 00000359	La Casa Del Rey	Unlisted	12/13/2016		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6700 00000914	Lady-Belle-Barn	Unlisted	9/14/1914		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6701 00001114	Lautner, John and Mary, House	Unlisted	9/14/1914		FALSE	REASSEMBLY ARCHITECTURE OF JOHN LAUTNER II SON LAUTNER	CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6702 00001013	Lincoln Heights Branch	Unlisted	6/10/1987		FALSE	Los Angeles Branch Library System TR	CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6703 00000911	Lincoln Place Apartments	Unlisted	12/12/2015		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6704 00000549	Lincoln Theater	Unlisted	3/5/2009		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6705 00001470	Little Tokyo Historic District	Unlisted	8/17/1986	6/17/1986	FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6706 00000765	Los Aliso Apartments	Unlisted	7/1/1959		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6707 00000336	Los Angeles Central Library	Unlisted	11/18/1970		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
6708 00000810	Los Angeles Harbor Light Station	Unlisted	10/14/1980		FALSE		CALIFORNIA	Los Angeles	Los Angeles

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- If you would like to request copies of military service records, use our separate online system called [eVetRecs](#) to make your request.
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