

HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY
5970 – 6000 West Santa Monica Boulevard
900 North Gower Street
915 – 1001 North Van Ness Avenue
CHC-2021-7088-HCM
ENV-2021-7089-CE

FINDINGS

The Hollywood Forever Cemetery “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with the early development of Hollywood and the westward expansion of Los Angeles during the early 20th century, for its association with the development of the cemetery industry in Los Angeles, and for its association with the development of Jewish burial facilities in Los Angeles.

The Hollywood Forever Cemetery “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction” as one of the earliest and most stylized examples of lawn park cemetery design in Los Angeles. It also “represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as an example of the work of noted cemetery planner Joseph Earnshaw and the Cincinnati-based firm of Earnshaw & Punshon.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Hollywood Forever Cemetery meets two of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance criteria.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community” for its association with the early development of Hollywood and the westward expansion of Los Angeles during the early 20th century, for its association with the development of the cemetery industry in Los Angeles, and for its association with the development of Jewish burial facilities in Los Angeles. When Hollywood Forever Cemetery was first established as the Hollywood Cemetery in 1899, it was the first cemetery to be opened in Los Angeles in fifteen years. At the time, there were only six existing cemeteries serving the Los Angeles area; most were in the downtown area, and only two were accepting new burials. Its opening marked the first cemetery to be established west of Western Avenue and signaled the rapid westward expansion of Los Angeles that would come to define the City’s explosive growth in the following decades. The cemetery also served as a public park in the early years of the 20th century, an important amenity during a period when the area was becoming increasingly urbanized, and no similar facility existed in either Hollywood or Colegrove.

The development of Hollywood Forever Cemetery at the turn of the 20th century further reflected a transitional period in the development of cemeteries as the cemetery industry strove to standardize operations and adopt a new level of professionalism. New concepts adopted at the cemetery such as cremation, perpetual care (a promise to lot owners and their loved ones that the park-like condition of the cemetery would be maintained in perpetuity), and the community mausoleum are now commonplace.

Hollywood Forever Cemetery is additionally significant for its advancements in the development of Jewish burial facilities in Los Angeles. At the time of the cemetery's opening in 1899, the only site specifically for Jewish burials was a cemetery at Lilac Terrace and Lookout Drive in Chavez Ravine, just south of today's Dodger Stadium, and by the turn of the 20th century it had been surrounded by oil wells and fallen into serious disrepair. The dedication of a portion of Hollywood Forever Cemetery exclusively for Jewish burials, along with the development of Beth Olam Mausoleum, represent milestones which reflect important patterns and trends in the growth of the Jewish community in Los Angeles. The Beth Olam Mausoleum was the first exclusively Jewish mausoleum to be constructed west of Chicago, and its development reflected the needs of the rapidly growing Jewish population in the City.

Furthermore, it "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" as one of the earliest and most stylized examples of lawn park cemetery design in Los Angeles. Across the country, the period from 1855-1917 marked the rising commercialization of the cemetery. By the mid-1850s, lawn park cemeteries emerged as more formal, rational, and efficient in design. The lawn park plan prescribed the size and placement of roadways and increasingly standardized grave markers which were small and low. As exemplified by the subject property, characteristic features of the plan include a pastoral design and park-like aesthetic; emphasis on the lawn component of the site; low grave markers and three-dimensional markers of granite, stone, and bronze; inclusion of private and community mausoleums; use of sculpture, often Classical in style; and operation under entrepreneurial management and ownership. The Hollywood Forever Cemetery was the first cemetery to be built in Hollywood and is one of the earliest examples of the lawn park style cemetery in California. While the Evergreen and Rosedale Cemeteries implemented principles associated with the landscape lawn cemetery model, which was an earlier iteration of the lawn park model, Hollywood Forever Cemetery's comparatively later establishment in 1899 occurred at the peak of the lawn park cemetery movement.

It also "represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age" as an excellent example of the work of noted cemetery planner Joseph Earnshaw and the Cincinnati-based firm of Earnshaw & Punshon. Joseph Earnshaw's career in cemetery design originated at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he worked under pioneering landscape designer Adolph Strauch, who developed the lawn park cemetery model. The design model, later advanced by Earnshaw, became the prevailing model for cemetery operation and landscape design from the 1850s through the 1920s, a critical period of growth and artistic expression for cemeteries across the United States. Among the cemeteries known to have been designed by Joseph Earnshaw, Hollywood Forever Cemetery is the only known example of Earnshaw's work in cemetery planning in California, and indeed, the only known example of his cemetery work to be found on the West Coast.

The development of extant buildings and structures set within the Hollywood Forever Cemetery landscape dates from 1903 to the present day. Nearly all the buildings and landscape features have undergone some degree of alteration since their initial construction was completed.

However, the original cemetery design intent is intact, and the subject property retains most of its essential characteristic features and sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its 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 the Hollywood Forever Cemetery 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 a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Given that the subject property is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources, the pending designation will lead to a higher level of review and protection of the historic significance and integrity of the subject property that could otherwise be lost through incompatible alterations, new construction, or demolition, particularly to the interiors of the buildings. 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-2021-7089-CE was prepared on September 27, 2021.