

WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

April 13, 2016

Agenda Item #8

MOTION REGARDING THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

Whereas, the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist, located at 1018 Hilgard Avenue in Westwood Village and completed in 1955, was designed by Master Architect Maynard Lyndon, a noted Los Angeles modernist who also designed UCLA's landmark Bunche Hall among many other notable structures; and

Whereas, the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist is recognized by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning's "Survey L.A." as a highly significant architectural and cultural resource and has been deemed eligible for the highest level of landmark status, including designation as a City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, listing on the California Register of Historic Resources, and the National Register of Historic Places, the official listing of the nation's most important architectural treasures; and

Whereas, the elegant design of the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist is considered an outstanding example of expressive Mid-Century Modernism, one of the most significant examples of New Formalist institutional architecture in Westwood, a pristine example of modern ecclesiastical design, and a prominent local example of Christian Science architecture of the post war era; and

Whereas, the architecture of the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist features a gracefully curved exterior concrete wall punctured with tiny round openings similar to a monumental pegboard, while the remainder of the Church Building echoes the same curving motif, complemented by a gently curved colonnade along Hilgard Avenue that connects both the Church and Sunday School Buildings; and

Whereas, the magnificent and lush landscaping located throughout the grounds of the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist in Westwood beautifully and sensitively complements the Church and Sunday School Buildings, and was designed by Master Landscape Architect Garrett Eckbo of the renowned Southern California landscape architecture firm of Eckbo, Dean, Austin & Williams; and

Whereas, this verdant landscaping is considered an extraordinary example of the power of a fully integrated landscape design with its surrounding structures, including gracious courtyards, sunken gardens, a variety of specimen tree species, concrete planters, strips of green grass, and a gracefully curved Colonnade along Hilgard Avenue that connects the Church and Sunday school buildings; and

Whereas, this monumental church property fronts on three Westwood streets – Hilgard Avenue, Weyburn Avenue, and Lindbrook Drive – at the southeast edge of Westwood Village and creates a significant and elegant gateway into the multi-family residential area of Westwood Village and the Gracious single-family Holmby-Westwood neighborhood, which is currently in the process of establishing one of the largest Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs) in the City of Los Angeles; and

Whereas, the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist has quietly advertised its intention to sell off three lots at the southern end of its site as a speculative apartment development project, marketed by CBRE as a “32-Unit Residential Development Site 2 Blocks to UCLA,” which project would require the total demolition of the sacred Church Building and destruction of much of the landscaped gardens and Colonnade; and

Whereas, the church has applied to the City Zoning Administrator for a “lot untie” as a discretionary action to sever the three lots containing the Church Building from the rest of the site, which the church’s marketing brochure describes as “the lot untie is a condition of sale” in order to enable this proposed development project to move forward without conducting any environmental analysis or completing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) required by the California Environmental Quality Act, in order to analyze the impacts that would result from the destruction of this landmark Church Building and gardens, and the loss of this highly significant architectural and cultural resource; and

Whereas, an appeal has been filed to challenge the Zoning Administrator’s erroneous decision to grant this discretionary “lot untie” without properly considering the totality of the “project” and without requiring the prior completion of an EIR before any discretionary project approval by the City that contemplates the demolition of, or would result in significant adverse impacts to, this historic resource:

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Westwood Neighborhood Council urges the West Los Angeles Area Planning Commission to grant the appeal filed in Case No. ZA 2014-4422(PAD)(ZAA); CEQA No.: ENV 2014-4423-CE and to rescind the erroneous granting of the requested “lot untie” by the Zoning Administrator; and

Be it further resolved, that the Westwood Neighborhood Council insists that the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and its Office of Historic Preservation require the completion of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in full compliance with the requirements of CEQA prior to any discretionary action or approval by the City that could result in significant adverse impacts to this priceless architectural and cultural resource; and

Be it further resolved, that the Westwood Neighborhood Council calls upon Councilmember Paul Koretz and Mayor Eric Garcetti to support the appeal in this case, to protect this architectural and historic resource in Westwood, and to support the historic preservation of this highly significant site; and

Be it further resolved, that the Westwood Neighborhood Council strongly supports a Preservation Solution or adaptive reuse of this magnificent religious site in Westwood Village, similar to what was successfully achieved in 2002 with the preservation and conservation of the First Church of Christ, Scientist property located on Rexford Drive in Beverly Hills, following the sale of that property to Nessah Synagogue and Educational and Cultural Center, which transaction enabled the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Beverly Hills to construct a new and more appropriately sized church facility directly across the street from its former site; and

Be it finally resolved, that the Westwood Neighborhood Council calls upon the Council Office, Mayor’s Office, Planning Department, Office of Historic Preservation, Los Angeles Conservancy, and other interested parties to work together with the Westwood Neighborhood Council, Westwood Community Council, local Westwood Homeowner Associations, business community, members of Westwood’s faith communities, and other Westwood stakeholders, and with the leadership of the Twenty-Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist to achieve a Preservation Solution for this beautiful and sacred site that can be beneficial to all involved, and to further the goal of historic preservation in the Westwood community.