

Glendale Historical Society 2020 Questionnaire
Ardy Kassakhian

1) Several large projects have recently been recommended and approved on the same lot and very close to historic resources. These include the two-story townhouses that will envelop a single-story 1910 Craftsman at 512 W. Doran and a three-story multi-family building that would surround a 1913 two-story Craftsman at 534 N. Kenwood. What kind of development do you think is appropriate around historic resources? How would you ensure that the mass and scale of Glendale's historic buildings are respected? (See attachment 1 and 2 for information from past newsletters about these projects.)

Much more must be done to protect historic properties throughout Glendale. As City Clerk I have been a first-hand witness to the decision-making process by this and previous councils when projects such as these have come before them. Unfortunately, too often the decisions are made not on the merits of the specific historical resource or the project but on the basis of who is presenting or proposing the project. The arbitrary approach must be brought under control by clear guidelines.

The type of developments that are appropriate around historic resources are the ones that incorporate the resource into the overall use. Glendale Heritage Garden is a perfect example of an adaptive reuse of a historic home into a local neighborhood park. Another great example is the E.D. Goode House which is just down the street from where I grew up. As a child I remember the house looking like the home from the Munsters TV show. It was dilapidated and behind a chain link fence I was always worried the house would be torn down. It is so great and pleasing to see it restored today and used by residents of the property even if it is not directly open to the public.

The first step to ensuring the mass/scale of Glendale's historical structures is respected is having a definitive list of what is historic and still standing as well as what will be historic in the coming years.

2) A fully revised Historic Preservation Ordinance was introduced in Council in March 2019. However, several Council members declined to consider the revised ordinance in its entirety. Instead Council adopted only a portion of it, dealing primarily with illegal demolitions. If elected, will you vote to adopt the fully revised Ordinance? If not, what are your objections to the fully revised ordinance and what are your specific suggestions for improving it? (See attachment 3 for a redlines copy that compares the adopted demolition ordinance with the fully revised version.)

I support the ordinance as it was proposed. I believe staff put considerable amount of thought and effort into the preparation of the proposed changes to the City's code and it is my goal that in addition to the penalties for the unpermitted demolition of historic properties, there also be measures in place to protect historic district contributors and properties eligible for historic designation.

3) Historic Resource Surveys are important city planning tools. The recent South Glendale Historic Resources Survey identified numerous historic resources, which provides more accurate information for planning staff and owners and a more objective and comprehensive basis for environmental review of projects under CEQA. If elected, will you support preparation of a similarly comprehensive Historic Resources Survey as part of the East-West Glendale Community Plan? If not, why not?

Yes. As I stated before, such surveys will help to not only identify and preserve our history for present and future generations so that we may learn and appreciate our past, but it will also be a useful guide for anyone considering making an investment in our community. Having a clear idea of what can and cannot be done with a property is critical for anyone seeking to make an investment or the person who is looking for a specific type of historic property to purchase in our city based on their interest or preferences.

4) There have been several appeals to City Council of Design Review Board decisions involving what appellants criticize as “mansionization” in Glendale’s older neighborhoods, whether through demolition of existing houses and rebuilding at a much larger size, or through massive additions. What do the Design Guidelines mean to you? How do you propose they be used to protect the scale of older neighborhoods and ensure compatibility? Do you think changes to floor area ratio and lot coverage may be necessary to reverse the current trend?

More than the issue of FAR and lot ratio is the dangers posed by legislation which will virtually eliminate single family home neighborhoods such as those that make Glendale a unique and special place to live in. I support the preservation our current single-family home neighborhoods and doing whatever is necessary to maintain their character including suing the state as other cities have done. I support the creation of more historical districts where appropriate and where the residents residing in the area initiate and support the effort.

We have had some great homes come before City Council for Mills Act designation, and they are sometimes homes that would seem incompatible with what is in the surrounding area. I sometimes wonder what people must have thought when some of the mid-century modern homes were being built in Glendale’s neighborhoods which were comprised of predominantly ranch style houses. Nowadays, the mid-century modern style is one that is respected, revered and considered a quintessential piece of California’s history and our state’s post war development. Same can be said of the googie style of architecture which may seem a bit out of this world to some but has a significant place in our state and regional history. I would defer the idea of compatibility to experts and would hope that with qualified planning commissioners, design review board members and staffing, we can all come to an agreement as to what adds to or preserves the character of a particular neighborhood or district or area.

5) There is currently great pressure, including state mandates, to increase housing densities around major public transit lines and stations as a way of addressing the housing crisis and fostering smart growth and sustainability. Often this upzoning is proposed to the detriment of

historic resources within these areas and to the character of older neighborhoods. What would you recommend to ensure that community values of historic preservation are respected while allowing for development to be focused at transit-oriented zones?

Although stiff penalties must be adopted and enforced for anyone who destroys or negatively affects the historical integrity of a local resource, there should be other approaches to also encourage potential investors or developers to make the best use of our historic structures. To put it simply, the carrot is sometimes better than the stick when looking to build more dense housing around transit zones such as our local train station - a hub for regional transportation. Giving proposed projects incentives to keep or maintain historic structures can help preserve the character of neighborhoods. Density and change are going to be inevitable in the long run. If anyone has doubts about this, all they need to do is look at any early photos of Glendale throughout the decades and compare it to today. Just in the last 20 years Glendale has seen a tremendous increase in density. But how we develop our city makes a big difference. I envision development practices in Glendale similar to that in Old Town Pasadena - an example of a great historic district that has also seen more recent developments while preserving the character and unique history of the city.

I would simply add that the current state guidelines that allow for denser development next to transit lines should not be allowed if they encroach on single family neighborhoods.

6) For years the City had a full-time Historic Preservation Planner, but this position became part time about five years ago, even as the number of historic resources in Glendale has increased exponentially. This understaffing has led to significant delays and frustration: for example, property owners report difficulty getting responses to questions about their historic buildings; the current timeline for creation of a historic district, from application to approval, appears to be approaching the four-year mark; almost a year and a half after the South Glendale Historic Resources Survey was prepared, properties are still not flagged as historic in the property portal. Given the value of historic resources to our City, the importance of clarity for property owners, and the CEQA implications of failing to ensure that resources are properly identified, would you support hiring a full-time Preservation Planner, and/or more qualified preservation planners, if elected? If not, how do you propose to address the problems we have identified?

Yes. I support the hiring of full-time Preservation Planner and the supporting staff who can shepherd some of our long-term projects through and act as in-house experts for the public when they have questions about what can and should not be done on a certain project or property. I am uniquely aware of the current situation as I have personally referred scores of individuals who have contacted the City Clerk's office with inquiries about specific properties. It would be a great relief to have someone full time who is available to answer these questions and make presentations to groups about what are the city's historical resources.