

June 9, 2005

Santa Monica, California

## INFORMATION ITEM

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: City Staff  
Subject: Status of Shotgun House

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to update the Council on the status of a privately-owned historic structure temporarily located at the Santa Monica Airport since the last Council update on February 9, 2005 (Attachment A).

### BACKGROUND

As previously described, in an effort to save it from immediate demolition, the Shotgun House (the House) was relocated to the Santa Monica Airport in July 2002 to enable the Ocean Park Community Organization's Shotgun House Relocation Committee (the Committee) sufficient time to identify a site for permanent relocation, explore reuse alternatives and raise funds for the relocation and rehabilitation efforts. At the request of the Committee, City staff has reviewed a range of relocation options on public property to assist in finding a permanent location for the House and has facilitated discussions with impacted community members and the Landmarks and Recreation and Parks Commissions

In reviewing fifteen public site options studied by the Committee, City staff considered a number of key issues including the need to: (1) site the structure at a location consistent

with sound historic preservation practices, (2) minimize security issues and maintenance requirements, (3) identify a use that was consistent with any adjacent public uses, and (4) minimize the need for additional City staff resources for programming on an ongoing basis. Of all the public sites and uses considered by the Committee, staff identified the parking lot adjacent to the Main Street Community Gardens as potentially viable with the understanding that the community gardeners would need to weigh in on the proposal.

On February 14, 2005 following release of the attached Council Information Item, the Landmarks Commission discussed the status of the House. The Committee indicated to the Commission that they were planning to seek a grant from the Getty Foundation to fund the preservation of the House and were hoping to relocate the house to Main Street at the community gardens. The Committee was interested in gaining the Commission's support in the funding application. The Commission took action to produce a resolution of support for the Shotgun House project, identifying it as a worthy preservation endeavor and deserving of funding. The Commission did not take action related to the proposed Main Street location.

Since February, the Committee has refined its proposal to relocate the House to the parking lot adjacent to the Main Street Community Gardens for use by the gardeners for storage, a small meeting space and restroom. The Committee's plan relocates the House to the Main Street frontage of the parking lot, continues to accommodate 15 parking spaces by converting five of the existing spaces to compact and provides one additional garden plot of approximately 10' X 21' along the Neilson Way frontage. The plan does not require

a reduction in the number or sizes of the existing garden plots.

The February 9<sup>th</sup> update to Council indicated that if the Committee identified a significant source of support for the project by April 15, 2005, City staff would revisit the Community Gardens option, including meeting with impacted gardeners and recommend a course of action to the City Council so that impacts to the schedule for the start of construction of Airport Park (the interim location of the House) would be minimized.

The Committee has maintained that it has been unable to obtain firm funding commitments without a permanent location and use identified for the House. In response to this issue and in the interest of limited time before the start of construction of Airport Park, staff convened two meetings with the community gardeners on March 21, 2005 and May 9, 2005 to facilitate a dialogue between the Committee and the gardeners regarding the disposition of the house. At both meetings, there was a lack of support from the majority of gardeners for any proposal that would relocate the House either in the gardens or to the adjacent parking lot. Most gardeners expressed that they did not want use of the building.

The Committee's proposal to move the House to the parking lot adjacent to the Community Gardens was also considered by the Recreation and Parks Commission at its meetings on April 21 and May 12, 2005. At the May 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Commission recommended that the House not be located on the parking lot adjacent to the Main Street Community Gardens and that a conscientious effort be made to preserve the House at an alternative public or private location in the City and that it be relocated to the Fisher Lumber site in the

interim. The Commission also recommended the Heritage Square site as the preferred location for the Shotgun House. As previously outlined in the February 9, 2005 Information Item, the Heritage Square site is problematic. Relocation of the Shotgun house to this site would require the approval of two lessees. The City's lease with Ocean Park Restaurant Corporation, the majority lessee on the block, expires in 2026, and provides for five five-year options. The City's lease with Santa Monica Heritage Square Museum Society expires in 2025, and provides for unlimited 50-year options. The Executive Director of the Santa Monica Heritage Museum has previously indicated that she would not like to see the Shotgun House relocated to this site.

Since February, a private property owner in Ocean Park has publicly indicated his offer to purchase the house and relocate it to his property on Hollister Avenue for use as a private residence. The Committee has indicated that they had some initial discussions with this owner as well as with other private parties in the past who expressed interest in purchasing the House. Despite these offers, they maintain that it is their responsibility to focus on securing a public site and use for the building, because over the last seven years they have indicated to supporters and potential donors that preservation of the House would be for a public-serving use.

During the recent public meetings regarding relocation of the Shotgun House, community members have raised questions regarding the current ownership of the House and the current non-profit status of the Ocean Park Community Organization. In response, staff requested that the Committee provide the City with documentation to identify the building

ownership and to demonstrate that OPCO is still a legally constituted non-profit organization with tax-exempt status. Documentation regarding these issues has not been received from the Committee despite repeated requests.

With the lack of support from the gardening community for placement of the building on the parking lot site for gardener use and the lack of any other viable City-owned sites, combined with the fact that the Committee has been unable to identify any type of funding commitment for the relocation and preservation of the house in the three years since the House has been stored at the Airport, staff has concluded that absent Council direction regarding viable alternatives, a letter will be sent to the OPCO Shotgun House Relocation Subcommittee requesting that the house be removed from the Airport property by September 1, 2005. This will enable Airport Park construction to proceed as planned and allow the owners of the Shotgun House time to arrange for the building's removal.

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Attachment A: February 9, 2005 Information Item

February 9, 2005

ATTACHMENT A  
Santa Monica, California

## **INFORMATION ITEM**

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: City Staff  
Subject: Status of Shotgun House

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information concerning the status of a privately-owned historic structure temporarily located at the Santa Monica Airport.

### BACKGROUND

The subject structure, characterized as a Victorian vernacular pre-1900 shotgun house, was originally located on private property at 2712 Second Street, Santa Monica. In 1998 when the owner of the subject property filed an application to demolish the abandoned house, the building was designated a Santa Monica Landmark by the City's Landmarks Commission. This designation allowed for its demolition provided that within 60 days from the hearing date, the applicant submit photographs and floor plans documenting the structure and provide evidence to prove that attempts were made to relocate the house but that they were unsuccessful. An appeal of this determination was filed by both the Ocean Park Community Organization (OPCO) and the Church in Ocean Park. The appeals focused on the Landmark Commission's decision to allow demolition of the structure. The City Council heard the appeals on February 16, 1999 and upheld the Landmark Commission's action designating the building a city landmark. Further, Council directed staff to analyze the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act

(CEQA) to determine whether the demolition would create a significant adverse impact on a City historic resource. On September 26, 2000, the City Council certified the Final Environmental Impact Report and adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations allowing for the demolition of the structure.

Subsequently in July 2002, just prior to the building's demolition by the property owner, the Ocean Park Community Organization (OPCO) purchased the house for \$1.00 and the house was moved to the Santa Monica Municipal Airport on the future site of Airport Park. This step was to enable OPCO sufficient time to identify a site for permanent relocation, explore reuse alternatives and raise funds for the relocation and the rehabilitation efforts.

Since July 2002, OPCO and its Shotgun House Relocation Subcommittee focused efforts on identifying an appropriate City-owned site for the building and a possible building use. In January 2003, the Committee submitted a detailed report to the City identifying 14 relocation options. With input from the City's Recreation and Parks Commission, these options were narrowed down to two viable alternative sites: the Main Street community garden site (Hollister/Strand and Main Streets) and the Heritage Square Museum property at Ocean Park Boulevard and Main Street. Working with the OPCO Subcommittee, City staff determined that of the two sites, the Main Street community garden site would be more feasible given the existing leases on the Heritage Square site and related land use issues.

Under the community garden relocation option, the Shotgun House would be relocated to the Main Street frontage of the public parking lot adjacent to the gardens for use as a storage building for the community gardens and possible restroom for the gardeners. In order to maintain the 15 parking spaces, the lot would need to be re-striped and a sizeable portion of one garden plot adjacent to the parking lot would need to be converted to an accessible parking space. A Conditional Use Permit would be required and moving and rehabilitation costs for this alternative are estimated at \$400,000. This estimate includes design, site preparation including grading and parking lot modifications, moving costs, utilities, exterior and interior building rehabilitation, exterior lighting, landscaping and interpretive signage.

Staff met with the Main Street gardeners to discuss the relocation idea. Generally, the gardeners were not supportive of losing a gardening plot but indicated if this had to happen, they would like the building to be for gardeners' use only and that it include a restroom.

Given that the construction of Airport Park will commence in the near future, staff sent a letter to the OPCO Subcommittee in October requesting a status report on its fundraising efforts, the identification of proposed pro-bono services, contact information and identification of roles of project volunteers, and a report on the Santa Monica Conservancy's involvement in the project. The Committee responded in December 2004. They identified their committee members and a project volunteer who has offered to lead a community team of people to rehabilitate the house. They replied that the Santa Monica Conservancy has not made any formal commitment to take on this project and has not

been formally asked to do so by the Committee. They indicated that fundraising, including seeking grants, would occur once the house was moved to its new site and they gave no indication that any funds have been raised to date for this project.

City staff have concluded that:

- the cost of relocating and rehabilitating the structure exceeds the current fundraising capacity of the Committee in spite of the significant time and effort of Committee members during the last several years;
- even with a secured site, the cost of the project makes significant community fundraising an extremely difficult challenge given the limitations on general public access to the site and the structure.
- given the absence of outside funding commitments, the project's completion is uncertain. Dedication of public funding is difficult to justify given the limitations on use and the loss of garden space that is in extremely high demand in the community.

In the event that the Committee does identify a significant source of support for the project by April 15, 2005 when bids on Airport Park are due, the City staff will revisit the Community Gardens option, including meeting with impacted gardeners and recommending a course of action to the City Council so that impacts to the schedule for the start of construction of Airport Park are minimized.

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