

STAFF REPORT

Date: October 25, 2023

To: Mayor and City Council

Thru: Doug Thornley, City Manager

Subject: Staff Report (For Possible Action): Acceptance of a Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Subgrant to create a National Register Historic District nomination for the Lincoln/Victory/US 40 Highway (E. 4th Street) commercial corridor in the amount of \$30,000.

From: Megan Berner, Senior Management Analyst

Department: City Manager's Office – Arts and Culture

Summary:

On September 26, 2023, the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recommended funding of \$30,000 for a Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) subgrant to prepare a nomination to create a National Register Historic District for the Lincoln/Victory/US 40 highway (E. 4th Street) commercial corridor. The project includes community outreach and education. This grant requires \$10,000 of matching funding which will come from the RDA 2 fund.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Arts, Parks, and Historical Resources

Economic and Community Development

Previous Council Action:

There is no recent Council action relevant to this item.

Background:

Staff applied for a grant from the Nevada SHPO HPF subgrant program to hire a consultant to prepare a National Register Nomination for the Lincoln/Victory/US 40 Highway Commercial Historic District. The City received confirmation from Nevada SHPO that the City was awarded a grant in the amount of \$30,000. The proposed Historic District is located near the original town center of Reno, Nevada, approximately one half mile from Lake's Crossing at Virginia Street and the Truckee River. The final boundaries of the district should be determined during the project period by the consultant but may include approximately 2 miles of roadway beginning at

the intersection of Evans Avenue and East 4th Street and extending east to Galletti Way.

Staff applied for a grant from the Nevada SHPO HPF subgrant program to hire a consultant to survey and inventory, then prepare a National Register Nomination for the Lincoln/Victory/US 40 Highway Commercial Historic District. The City received confirmation from Nevada SHPO that the City was awarded a grant in the amount of \$30,000. The proposed Historic District is located near the original town center of Reno, Nevada, approximately one half mile from Lake's Crossing at Virginia Street and the Truckee River. The final boundaries of the district should be determined during the project period by the consultant but may include approximately 2 miles of roadway beginning at the intersection of Evans Avenue and East 4th Street and extending east to Galletti Way.

The buildings of the proposed historic district represent an array of intended uses and architectural styles. The district includes over 48 historic buildings with construction dates between 1902 and 1960 including at least 35 masonry buildings, over a dozen mid-century roadside motels, and at least one gas station. The district represents a typical commercial cluster along a major cross-country transportation corridor and includes examples of automobile related commercial buildings, restaurants, markets, bars, motels/auto courts, railroad and industrial buildings. This variety is a testament to the diverse commercial and industrial pursuits found in Reno and the district buildings are linked by their proximity to cross-country transportation routes by railroad and highway that converge in the road segment that is East 4th Street. Some buildings maintain a pedestrian orientation with no setbacks while others are oriented to accommodate automobiles and have parking areas in front of the buildings. There are three buildings already individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The portion of roadway that is East 4th Street in Reno, Nevada, played an important role during the transition in America between the dominance of transportation by railroad and the rise in influence of the automobile industry during the 20th century. In the late 19th century, East 4th Street was already an important transportation corridor linked to both the Central Pacific Railroad (later Southern Pacific) which runs one block south of 4th Street and the Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad (later Western Pacific) that runs roughly north-south and intersects East 4th Street between Evans Avenue and Valley Road. 4th Street originally formed a county road that connected Reno and Sparks and the road continued west beyond Reno city limits toward the Sierra Nevada. The road's proximity to the railroad, Reno's commercial core, and routes heading out of the city made it a prime location for a variety of commercial businesses and services. In 1913, the creation of the Lincoln Highway Association led to the designation of 4th Street as the route of the transcontinental highway. Later, the Victory Highway, which also ran through Reno, converged with the 4th Street route. In 1925, the American Association of State Highway Officials recommended a national numbering system for U.S. highways and the road segment became known as U.S. Highway 40 by 1926.

The variety of buildings in the proposed district demonstrate how the commerce and transportation industries grew in tandem in Reno. The presence of both a transcontinental railroad and later the transcontinental highway allowed Reno to benefit economically from transportation and commerce rather than mining as was the case elsewhere in the state. These major transportation routes also fed the city's lucrative migratory divorce and legalized gambling industries by bringing people from all over the country to Reno. Commerce flourished as industry and supply lines developed along railroad and highway routes turning Reno into a major distribution center for Northern Nevada and other western states. Commercial activity in the proposed historic district prospered until the completion of Interstate 80 in 1974 which bypassed East 4th Street on a route several blocks to the north.

The commercial buildings facing this section of the road continued to be recognized for their important role in the development of Reno and the nation in the areas of transportation and commerce. Various extensive surveys and historic context statements have been developed for the Lincoln and Victory Highways and the railroad corridor along this section of Fourth Street, however, a National Register Historic District Nomination has never been completed.

Phase one of this project, which is funded by this grant award, will cover consultant fees to survey and inventory the district. In order to prepare a nomination for a National Historic District, in-depth and comprehensive surveying of the properties must be done. This will prepare the way for a phase two to complete the nomination of the district in the following year.

Discussion:

The Nevada SHPO administers a Historic Preservation Fund subgranting program that grants funds to Certified Local Governments (CLG) in Nevada. There is a match of 40 percent of total costs required in the form of cash and in-kind. The cash match needed is \$10,000. As part of the City of Reno's Master Plan, goal 7.5 is to protect and preserve Reno's heritage and historic assets. This grant activity will help accomplish this by progressing the following subgoals:

- 7.5B: Identification of Historic Properties
 - Identify, recognize, and increase historic resources by encouraging and incentivizing the addition of properties to the City, state, and national registers.
- 7.5E: Economic Development and Heritage Preservation
 - Emphasize the economic benefits of historic preservation and its role in economic development, sustainability, and heritage tourism.

This project will contribute to many of the goals outlined in the State Historic Preservation Plan:

- Goal 1: Identify and formally recognize significant cultural resources.
 - Objective A: Expand the team- educate and encourage Nevadans to participate in the identification of important cultural resources. The proposed project will “encourage citizen participation” by engaging in outreach during public

engagement sessions that will raise awareness around the National Register nomination process and benefits of listing. The project will also enlist the participation of Nevada residents including property and business owners in the identification of contributing resources in the district.

- Objective B: Build on the foundation - Expand and improve documentation in key areas of Nevada's past. The Nevada Department of Transportation, the University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Humanities, and the National Park Service are among the organizations that have documented elements of the significance of the Lincoln/Victory/US 40 Highway to the history of Nevada and the nation. The proposed project will further this prior research by producing a nomination to the National Register. This project will also assist with the preservation of Nevada's mid-century Modern resources by adding a number of Nevada's mid-century motels to the National Register as contributing resources in the Commercial Historic District.
- Goal 3: Balancing the goals of respecting, preserving, and promoting Nevada's significant cultural resources and strengthening the state's economy and infrastructure.
 - If successful, the proposed project will create the first Commercial National Historic District in Reno and will greatly expand the number of properties in the city that may be eligible for federal historic tax credits.
 - This project will help the City of Reno and business owners in the proposed district to benefit from the "role of heritage-based tourism in enhancing economic development" by leveraging a National Commercial Historic District for marketing and investment opportunities.

This grant will allow the City to engage the business and property owners along the East 4th Street corridor in learning about the history of the area and to create a National Historic Commercial District. This would allow income-producing contributing properties within the district to be eligible for tax credits from the federal government for eligible rehabilitation expenses. As part of maintaining CLG status, the City is required to build, maintain, and enhance an inventory of historic properties in the community and to encourage local historic preservation efforts. The period of performance for the grant will be from November 1, 2023 – July 31, 2024.

Financial Implications:

This grant requires \$10,000 in matching funding. This will come from the RDA 2 fund.

Legal Implications:

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends Council approve and accept the grant funding in the amount of \$30,000

Proposed Motion:

I move to approve staff recommendation.

Attachments:

2023 HPF Subgrant Award Letter

2023 HPF Subgrant Draft Agreement