

**AGENDA MEMO - PLANNING****PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE: March 12, 2024****DEPARTMENT: Community Development****ITEM DESCRIPTION: APPLICANT/OWNER: WARD 5 GARY CAVALIER/ LEROY AND CARRIE CHRISTENSEN HOUSE**

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**\*\* STAFF RECOMMENDATION \*\***

CASE NUMBER	RECOMMENDATION	REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL
24-0027-DIR1	Staff recommends APPROVAL	

**\*\* STAFF REPORT \*\*****PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a request to designate the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House as a Historic Building on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, as approved by the Historic Preservation Commission (24-0027-HPC1), located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue (APN 139-27-110-044) T4-N (T4 NEIGHBORHOOD), Ward 5 (Crear).

The city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted to approve the nomination for designation as a Historic Building on January 24, 2024 based on the property's ability to meet the criteria for historic designation as listed in Title 19.10.150 I. Designation of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects.

**ISSUES**

The designation of a Historic Landmark, District, Site, Building, Structure and Object shall be indicated by the "H" symbol on the zoning maps of the City. The use and development of property affected by a designation shall be governed by [19.10.150 H HISTORIC DESIGNATION OVERLAY DISTRICT] and applicable Design Guidelines adopted thereunder, as well as by the regulations pertaining to the underlying zoning classification(s) for the property, other provisions of the Unified Development Code and the General Plan.

Therefore, whenever it is proposed to alter, remodel, build, or otherwise develop a Historic Landmark, District, Site, Building, Structure or Object, or an Historic Landmark, Site, Building, Structure or Object located within a designated Historic District, and a building permit or other development or zoning permit is required for such work, the applicant must first obtain the approval of the HPC.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

<b><i>Related Relevant City Actions by P&amp;D, Fire, Bldg., etc</i></b>	
9/21/2023	Historic Preservation Commission received the Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation from the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House, property owner of the building located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue.
1/24/2024	Historic Preservation Commission recommended APPROVAL (24-0027-HPC1) of the application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation from the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House /Gary Cavalier, property owner of the building located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue.

## ANALYSIS

The Leroy and Carrie Christensen House, located at 1425 Francis Avenue, has been determined eligible for listing on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as a Historic Building by the City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission.

The building meets the following requirements for Historic Building designation, as stated in the City of Las Vegas **Title 19.10.150, Designation of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects, Section I, Subsection (a) and (b):**

To be eligible, the site must meet the criteria under Title 19.10.150(I)(1) “Designation of Historic Landmarks, Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures and Objects:”

1. An individual landmark, district, site, building, structure or object may be designated on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register if it demonstrates exceptional historical significance by qualifying under Subparagraphs (a) or (b) below:
  - a. It meets the criteria for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places; or
  - b. It is determined to be of exceptional local significance and expresses a distinctive character because:
    - i. A significant portion of it is at least 40 years old;
    - ii. It is reflective of the City’s cultural, social, political or economic past; and
2. It is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history; or
3. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of an area of the City because of its location or singular physical appearance.

The City of Las Vegas supports the preservation of historic resources with the following documents:

- 1) *The City of Las Vegas Historic Properties and Neighborhoods Preservation Plan Element*
  - a. Goal: Promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the public through the preservation, maintenance and protection of structures, sites and districts of significant historic, architectural, and archaeological interest within Las Vegas.
    - i. Objective 1: Promote the preservation, maintenance and protection of structures, sites and districts of historic interest within Las Vegas.
    - ii. Objective 3: Promote and encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historic resources.

- iii. Objective 4: Promote and encourage the stability of designated historic neighborhoods, sites and landmarks by preserving their historical and architectural integrity.

2) *The City of Las Vegas 2050 Master Plan*

a. Chapter 2: Land Use & Environment

- i. Promote and expand awareness of historic preservation and embed into development decision making
- ii. Continue to strengthen the City's Historic Preservation Office and Commission
- iii. Support continued investment to preserve Las Vegas's distinctive identity
- iv. Conduct proactive historic resource surveys
- v. Prioritize education about value of historic preservation resources available, celebrating cultural heritage
- vi. Balance redevelopment pressures with preservation efforts to preserve key resources while encouraging adaptive reuse and sensitive infill development
- vii. Continue to update the inventory of designated and eligible historic structures and sites in the community

**Summary of Significance (taken from the attached Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation):**

In 2023 the city's Historic Preservation Commission received a grant from the National Park Service's Underrepresented Community Grant Program to fund an intensive level architectural inventory and survey of resources associated with the African American community in West Las Vegas covering the years 1930 through 1979. A result of the survey was the recommendation to nominate the property located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue to both the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

The property located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue, known as the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House, was constructed in the French Eclectic architectural style in 1938. The building is a one-and-one-half-story, 2,990-square foot residence oriented with its front façade facing W. Van Buren Avenue to the south. The house has an L-shaped footprint, with a side-gabled main volume and a front-gabled volume at the west side that includes a projecting front ell. The house features masonry construction with rock-faced concrete block, rubble stone, and stucco and a concrete foundation. Its cross-gabled roof is clad in composition shingles and has little to no eave overhang. A large exterior stone chimney is located at the west elevation. Notable decorative elements include an engaged masonry tower near the center of the front façade, subtle faux half-timbering in several gable ends, roof dormers, and concrete lintels with keystones over several windows. The house represents the towered subtype of the French Eclectic style, which is easily identifiable by the presence of a prominent, round tower with a high, conical roof.

Leroy Christensen was born on June 6, 1904 in Fremont County, Idaho, and relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada in 1923 with his family. Leroy married Carrie L. Moody in 1933, and in June 1938, the Christensen's acquired titles to the land where they built their home now known as the Christensen House. The couple was actively engaged in the African American community, and their home frequently served as a gathering place for lawn parties and events for local residents. Of note, in 1948 a televised fashion show was produced at the Christensen House that featured local celebrity, and later Moulin Rouge casino owner, Sarann Knight-Preddey. Leroy passed away in 1953, however Carrie continued to live in the house with their sons until 1976. The house changed owners four times, with its current owner, Las Vegas Catholic Worker, having purchased it in 1989.

The construction of the Christensen House occurred during a transitional time in the Westside's history that was enhanced by the economic prosperity of the post-WWII period. Prior to the house's construction, residences occupied by African American families in the Westside generally consisted of a scattered collection of tents, shacks, and other temporary structures. The Christensen House was among the first permanent homes constructed in the neighborhood and is representative of the way in which the newly emerging and economically empowered African American middle class worked to develop their own version of suburban homeownership amid a period of widespread discrimination and residential segregation in other parts of the city. The Christensen House is part of the Pioneer Trail, a collaborative government initiative that identifies sixteen historically important properties that were developed during the city's formative years.

The house located at 500 West Van Buren meets Criterion 1.a. as having local significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage/Black and Community Planning and Development for its association with the development of the African American community in Las Vegas in the early-to mid-twentieth century. It also meets Criterion 1.b.i and 1.b.ii as it is 85 years of age having been built in 1938, as well as a reflection of the city's cultural and social past. Lastly it meets Criterion 3 as its unique French Eclectic architectural style is a familiar visual feature in the Westside neighborhood.

If designated on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, the HPC will be responsible for reviewing exterior work visible from the public right-of-way requiring a permit for the property located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue.

Staff recommends approval of the nomination of 500 West Van Buren Avenue to the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as a Historic Building.