

City of Las Vegas

AGENDA MEMO

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING OF: JANUARY 24, 2024

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR: SETH T. FLOYD, ESQ.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER: DR. DIANE SIEBRANDT

Action
 Report

SUBJECT:

24-0027-HPC1 - Discussion for possible action regarding the approval of an application to designate the property known as the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House, located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue, on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register - Ward 5 (Crear)

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

The applicant is requesting to designate the residence located on the property to the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

The Historic Preservation Officer has reviewed the attached nomination report for the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue (APN 139-27-110-044) Single Family Residential (R-1) and supports the determination of eligibility to the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

To be eligible for listing on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, the proposed addition must meet the criteria under Title 19.10.150(l) 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.

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

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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

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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.

If approved by the HPC, the nomination for designation will be heard at the March 12, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting and the April 17, 2024 City Council Meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends APPROVAL.

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

1. Application for City of Las Vegas Historic Designation





**LAS VEGAS
CITY COUNCIL**

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January 24, 2024

Gary Cavalier
500 West Van Buren Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada 89106

RE: 24-0027-HPC1

Dear Mr. Cavalier:

The Historic Preservation Commission at its regular meeting held on **January 24, 2024** voted to **APPROVE** an application to designate the property known as the Leroy and Carrie Christensen House, located at 500 West Van Buren Avenue, on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register - Ward 5 (Crear).

This action by the Historic Preservation Commission on **January 24, 2024** is final unless a written appeal is filed with the City Clerk within ten (10) days of the date of the Historic Preservation Commission's decision.

Sincerely,

Peter Lowenstein, AICP
Deputy Planning Director
Department of Community Development

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