

## **Appendix E      Historic Resources Technical Report**



## **Norwalk Entertainment District – Civic Center Specific Plan Historical Resources Technical Report**

***Prepared for:***

Primestor Development, Inc.  
One Culver  
10000 Washington Boulevard, Suite 300  
Culver City, CA 90232

***Prepared by:***



Architectural  
Resources Group

Architectural Resources Group  
360 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 225  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

June 20, 2022

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Executive Summary.....	1
<b>2. Assessment Methodology .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Field and Research Methods .....	3
2.2. Preparer Qualifications .....	3
<b>3. Physical Description.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1. General Setting .....	4
3.2. Building Descriptions .....	5
3.3. Site and Landscape Features .....	10
<b>4. Development Chronology and Alterations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1. Site History .....	14
4.2. Development Chronology.....	16
4.3. Alterations.....	18
<b>5. Historic Contexts .....</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1. Civic and Institutional Development in Norwalk .....	23
5.2. Mid-Century Modern Architecture.....	25
5.3. Architects and Builders .....	27
<b>6. Regulations and Criteria for Evaluation .....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1. National Register of Historic Places.....	31
6.2. California Register of Historical Resources.....	32
6.3. Local (Norwalk) Designation .....	33
6.4. CEQA and Historical Resources.....	33
<b>7. Evaluation of Significance.....</b>	<b>37</b>
7.1. Previous Evaluations .....	37
7.2. Evaluation of Eligibility .....	37
7.3. Evaluation of Integrity.....	42
7.4. Period of Significance.....	45
<b>8. Impacts Analysis .....</b>	<b>46</b>
8.1. Summary of Historical Resource Findings .....	46
8.2. Significance Threshold .....	49

8.3. Character-Defining Features..... 49

8.4. Project Description ..... 50

8.5. Analysis of Project Impacts ..... 51

8.6. Summary of Continued Eligibility..... 54

8.7. Analysis of Project Impacts to Adjacent Resources..... 55

**9. Conclusion ..... 57**

**10. Bibliography..... 58**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Executive Summary

Architectural Resources Group, Inc. (ARG) has prepared this Historical Resources Technical Report for the site of the proposed Norwalk Entertainment District-Civic Center Specific Plan Project (“the Project Site”). The Project Site comprises 13.2 acres at the southeast corner of Imperial Highway and Norwalk Boulevard in the City of Norwalk. The Project Site encompasses three parcels that are owned by the City of Norwalk, and a portion of a fourth parcel that is owned by the County of Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup> The Project Site is currently developed with three buildings: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), a parking structure (built 1996), and a portion of an accessory building associated with the County Superior Court facility (“County accessory building” – built 2010). Other improvements on the Project Site include a surface parking lot and perimeter landscaping, including a landscaped area to the north of Norwalk City Hall that is referred to as the City Hall Lawn.

A development project (“The Project”) has been proposed for the Project Site. The Project would entail the establishment of a Specific Plan for the Project Site to allow for the development of a mixed-use project with residential and commercial uses and landscaped areas on the site of the existing surface parking lot and City Hall Lawn. Up to 350 residential units and associated amenities would be developed as part of the Project. Up to 110,000-square-feet of commercial space, including food and beverage establishments, retail, commercial, health/wellness, and grocery uses, would also be developed. The existing parking structure could be expanded vertically to add two new parking levels. The Project would incorporate ground-floor plazas and open space that will be publicly accessible but privately operated and maintained, and will also include residential open space for residents. The publicly accessible plazas and open space areas would include various improvements, including among other things commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, landscaped and hardscaped areas.

No changes to the existing Norwalk City Hall or the existing County accessory building are proposed as part of the Project.

The purpose of this Historical Resources Technical Report is to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as they relate to historical resources. As described in the CEQA guidelines, “a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.”<sup>2</sup> An evaluation of potential impacts under CEQA includes (1) an evaluation of whether historical resources are present, and (2) if so, identification of potential impacts to historical resources resulting from the Project.

This report includes an evaluation of buildings/improvements on the Project Site against federal (National Register of Historic Places) and state (California Register of Historical Resources) designation criteria.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The following Assessor Identification Numbers (AINs) are associated with the Project Site: 8047.006.922, 8047.006.924, 8047.006.925, and 8047.006.927.

<sup>2</sup> California Public Resources Code, Section 21084.1.

<sup>3</sup> Norwalk does not have an ordinance or mechanisms by which historical resources can be locally designated.

Based on careful research and analysis, ARG concludes that one building on the Project Site – Norwalk City Hall – appears to be eligible for federal (National Register) and state (California Register) listing. This building thus satisfies the definition of a “historical resource” pursuant to CEQA. None of the other buildings or improvements on the Project Site – the parking structure, the County accessory building, the surface parking lot, and perimeter landscaping including the City Hall Lawn – appear eligible for federal and/or state listing and therefore do not satisfy the definition of “historical resources” pursuant to CEQA.

In addition, this report addresses potential impacts of the Project on historical resources located adjacent to (within direct view of) the Project Site. There is one potential historical resource located adjacent to the Project Site: a potential historic district that is primarily located to the south and east of the Project Site and comprises civic buildings. Preliminary research and analysis indicate that this potential historic district would likely consist of four contributing buildings: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), the Southeast Superior Courts building (built 1969), the Norwalk Library (built 1969), and the Norwalk Sheriff’s Station (built 1972). These four contributing buildings were all conceived under the auspices of a master plan that was developed for the Norwalk Civic Center in the early 1960s and are unified by use, plan, and physical development. The buildings are all designed in compatible iterations of Mid-Century Modern architecture which imbues them with a sense of visual cohesion. Since almost all of this potential historic district falls outside the identified boundaries of the Project Site, a detailed assessment of its eligibility is not addressed in this report, whose scope is limited to the Project Site itself. However, the potential district is referenced herein to assess the impacts of the Project on adjacent historical resources. Aside from the potential district, there are no other known potential historical resources adjacent to the Project Site.

This report also includes an evaluation of potential impacts of the Project on historical resources. ARG concludes that the Project will not impair the significance of Norwalk City Hall building – the sole historical resource on the Project Site. The Project will be constructed adjacent to Norwalk City Hall and will culminate in some changes to its setting, but will not result in any modifications to the building itself. The building will continue to be eligible for federal and state listing upon project completion. ARG also concludes that the Project will not impair the significance of adjacent historical resources – namely, the potential district that likely includes Norwalk City Hall but falls almost entirely outside of the Project Area.

The following sections provide a detailed discussion of how these determinations were made.

## 2. Assessment Methodology

### 2.1. Field and Research Methods

Preparation of this report included the following tasks related to research, documentation, and analysis:

- Review of reference materials related to the evaluation of historical resources;
- Review of background materials, including the State of California’s Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD) and historical building permit records;
- Archival research about the Project Site’s development history, design, and occupancy;
- Identification of applicable historic contexts and themes;
- Evaluation of the site and its requisite improvements against federal (National Register of Historic Places) and state (California Register of Historical Resources) designation criteria<sup>4</sup>;
- Evaluation of integrity;
- Identification of potential character-defining features; and
- Evaluation of the Project to determine whether it would result in any potential impacts to historical resources under CEQA.

Research materials were obtained from the following sources: the Los Angeles Public Library; the (Los Angeles County) Norwalk Library; the archives of the *Los Angeles Times* and other local periodicals; building permits obtained from the Norwalk Community Development Department; online repositories; and ARG’s in-house collection of architectural books, journals, and reference materials. A complete list of source materials is provided in *Section 10: Bibliography* of this report.

In addition to primary and secondary source research, ARG conducted site visits of the Project Site in January and May 2022. During the site visits, all buildings and improvements on the Project Site were documented with photographs, and notes were taken on their physical appearance and integrity.

### 2.2. Preparer Qualifications

This report was prepared by ARG staff Katie E. Horak, Principal; Andrew Goodrich, AICP, Senior Associate; and Rosa Lisa Fry, all Architectural Historians and Preservation Planners who meet the *Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards*, 36 CFR Part 61, in the discipline of Architectural History.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Norwalk does not have a historic preservation ordinance or local criteria against which resources can be evaluated, so local eligibility was not assessed as part of this report.

<sup>5</sup> Resumes for qualified staff are included as an appendix to this report.

### 3. Physical Description

#### 3.1. General Setting

The Project Site is located in the eastern section of Norwalk, a suburban community located approximately 16 miles southeast of Downtown Los Angeles. Norwalk is one of several communities in Southeast Los Angeles County that are collectively called the Gateway Cities, so named because they are equidistant between the urban centers of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Santa Ana. The area around the Project Site is primarily commercial and institutional in character, and major thoroughfares including Imperial Highway and Norwalk Boulevard are flanked by shopping centers, hotels, and civic buildings serving various City and County governmental agencies. Inward-facing blocks are generally residential and consist of modest tract houses. Like all of Norwalk, the area around the Project Site is flat and exhibits no variation in topography. Streets generally conform to a rectilinear grid, though some are skewed to approximate the course of the Santa Ana Freeway (Interstate 5) and an adjacent railroad right-of-way.



General location maps. The location of the Project Site within the region is pictured at left; its location within the local context is pictured at right (PlaceWorks)

The Project Site is 13.2 acres in size. It spans the entirety of three parcels that are owned by the City of Norwalk, and part of a fourth parcel that is owned by the County of Los Angeles. The Project Site is bounded by Imperial Highway on the north, Norwalk Boulevard on the west, and Avenida Manuel Salinas on the east. The south boundary encompasses a small portion of a City-owned parcel that contains a



portion of a County accessory building, and then jogs south to encompass the entire footprint of the adjacent parking structure.



Site map. The boundaries of the Project Area are outlined in blue (PlaceWorks)

### 3.2. Building Descriptions

There are currently three buildings located on the Project Site: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), a parking structure (built 1996), and the County accessory building (built 2010). Each is described herein.

#### **Building 1: Norwalk City Hall (1965)**

Located at the southwest corner of the Project Site is Norwalk City Hall, a Mid-Century Modern style civic building that was constructed in 1965 and is the hub of city government for Norwalk.<sup>6</sup> This building is one story tall with a full basement, is constructed of steel and concrete, and sits on a poured concrete foundation. It is square in plan and oriented inward around a central courtyard, which is open to the sky and framed by the building’s four interlocking wings. The building is capped by a flat roof with rolled asphalt sheathing and a parapet. Within the courtyard, the roof projects outward from the face of the

<sup>6</sup> Construction dates referenced in this report were gleaned from the Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor and corroborated by building permits and other source materials, when applicable.

building and is supported by steel columns, forming a breezeway that spans the perimeter of the inner courtyard. Exterior walls are clad in small mosaic tiles that are rendered in various hues of blue and green.

The building is oriented to the west, toward Norwalk Boulevard, and is symmetrically composed. Exposed steel structural beams spaced at regular intervals divide this façade into fourteen bays of equal width. The center four bays are recessed and form the primary entrance to the inner courtyard. The entrance, which is slightly elevated, is supported by slender steel columns and approached by terrazzo steps with steel rails. Bronze letters denoting the building's street address ("12700") are incised into the riser of one of the steps. Channel letters (spelling "NORWALK CITY HALL" and "12700") are affixed to a steel girder above the entrance. Ingress is provided by four pairs of glazed metal doors that are surrounded by fixed metal windows; together, these doors and windows form a continuous wall of floor-to-ceiling glazing. Elsewhere on this façade, fenestration consists of fixed aluminum windows.

The east façade is similar, but not identical to, the west façade. It, too, is divided into fourteen bays and has a central recessed entrance to the courtyard with slender steel column supports. This entrance is approached by non-original concrete steps with aggregate treads and chrome handrails, and an accessible ramp. Channel letters (spelling "NORWALK CITY HALL" and "12700") are affixed to a steel girder above the entrance. Ingress is provided by three pairs of glazed doors that are set within a continuous wall of floor-to-ceiling glazing; what was originally a fourth pair of doors has been replaced by a fixed aluminum window. Secondary entrances include glazed and solid metal doors. Fenestration consists of fixed aluminum windows. The north end of the east façade has a projecting volume that is an addition dating to 1985; however, original mosaic tiles and aluminum windows appear to have been salvaged and integrated onto the addition, rendering it compatible with the original part of the building.

The side (north, south) façades are also divided into equidistant bays and feature the same fixed aluminum windows that are found elsewhere on the building. There are no entrances on either of these side façades. The east end of the south façade features a projecting volume, which is also an addition dating to 1985. It, too, features original mosaic wall tiles and aluminum windows that appear to have been salvaged and incorporated into the addition to obfuscate the delineation between old and new.

Ingress to the building's interior spaces is provided via walls that face inward toward the central courtyard. These walls are also clad in small mosaic tiles. Entrances on these inward-facing walls generally consist of glazed, flush-mounted aluminum doors with aluminum sidelights and transoms.

Within the courtyard is an integral building volume that is circular in shape and houses the City Council chamber. This volume is built of thin-shell concrete and is capped by a ribbed parabolic roof that extends fully to the ground and gives this portion of the building an elastic-like appearance. The arched walls that are formed by this roof structure are fully glazed with fixed aluminum windows. Ingress is provided by glazed bifold doors. The primary (north) entrance is surmounted by an arched metal canopy.



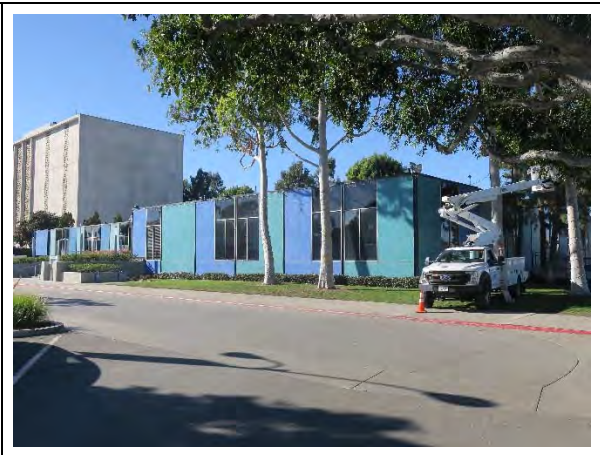
Primary (west) façade, view northeast (ARG, 2022)



Primary (west) façade, view southeast (ARG, 2022)



Rear (east) façade, view west (ARG, 2022)



Rear (east) façade, view southwest. Note addition in foreground (ARG, 2022)



South façade, view north (ARG, 2022)



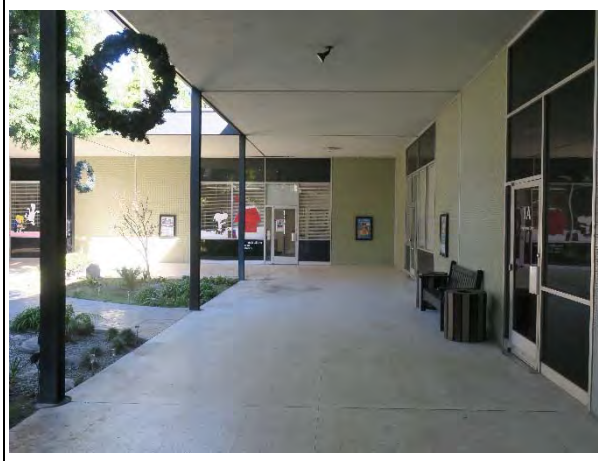
North façade, view southwest (ARG, 2022)



*North façade, detail of wall tiles and aluminum windows (ARG, 2022)*



*Building viewed from courtyard, view northwest (ARG, 2022)*



*Building viewed from courtyard, view north (ARG, 2022)*



*Circular volume at center of courtyard, view northeast. Note ribbed parabolic roof (ARG, 2022)*



*Circular volume at center of courtyard, view southwest (ARG, 2022)*



*Interior of circular volume, showing City Council chamber (ARG, 2022)*

## Building 2: Parking Structure (1996)

Located at the southeast corner of the Project Site is a parking structure that was constructed in 1996 and serves City Hall and other uses within the Norwalk Civic Center area. This parking structure is utilitarian and lacks the characteristics of a particular architectural style. Square in plan, the structure consists of three concrete parking decks and squared concrete column supports. Incised score lines and a diamond motif composed of ceramic tiles are integrated into its exterior walls. There are two vehicular entrances to the structure: one on the west façade, and the second on the east façade. Each entrance is controlled by automated arm barriers. Exterior metal stair shafts are affixed to the northeast and southeast corners of the structure, and a glazed elevator shaft is affixed to the southwest corner. A "skybridge" provides pedestrian access between the parking structure and an adjacent movie theater.



*Parking structure, west façade, view southeast (ARG, 2022)*



*Parking structure, east façade, view northwest (ARG, 2022)*



*Parking structure, south façade, view northwest (ARG, 2022)*



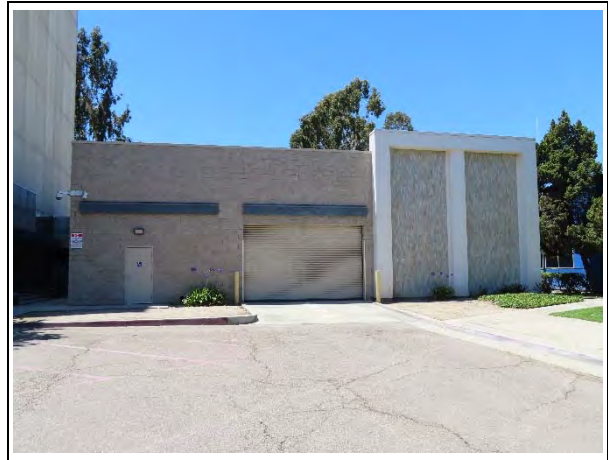
*Parking structure, north façade, view southwest (ARG, 2022)*

### **Building 3: County Accessory Building (2010)**

Located to the south of Norwalk City Hall is the County accessory building, a one-story building that was constructed in 2010. It is used as parking for judges affiliated with the adjacent courthouse. The building is constructed of concrete and concrete block, sits on a poured concrete foundation, and has a simple rectangular footprint. It is a vernacular building that includes some vague references to the New Formalist style that is applied to the courthouse with which it is associated. The building is capped by a flat roof with rolled asphalt sheathing and a parapet. Exterior walls are clad in cut stone and split-faced concrete blocks. Entrances consist of solid metal doors that are set flush with the face of the building, and a roll-up metal door that is located on the east façade. There are no windows. Other features include concrete pilasters that span the full height of the building. There are no other decorative details of note.



*County accessory building, west façade, view east  
(ARG, 2022)*



*County accessory building, east façade, view west  
(ARG, 2022)*

### **3.3. Site and Landscape Features**

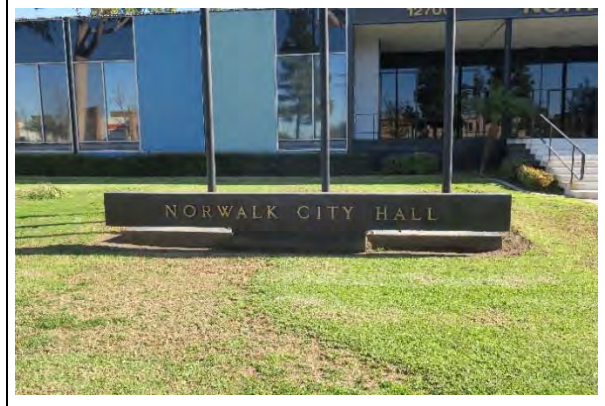
The Project Site contains various site and landscape features. These include (1) hardscape features located at the west entrance to Norwalk City Hall; (2) an interior courtyard that is framed by the four intersecting wings of Norwalk City Hall; (3) a surface parking lot that is located to the east of Norwalk City Hall and to the north of the parking structure, (4) a landscaped area that is located to the north of Norwalk City Hall and is known as City Hall Lawn, and (5) landscaping around the perimeter of Norwalk City Hall. Each of these features is described in more detail herein.

#### **West Entrance to Norwalk City Hall**

The west entrance to Norwalk City Hall is approached by a concrete walkway and a tile-clad hexagonal planter. The small mosaic tiles that are applied to the planter are the same as those that are applied to the exterior walls of the building. Adjacent to the walkway is a concrete plinth containing three metal flagpoles and a polished granite sign with bronze letters that spell “NORWALK CITY HALL.”



*Approach to Norwalk City Hall, view southeast. Note concrete walkway and tile planter (ARG, 2022)*



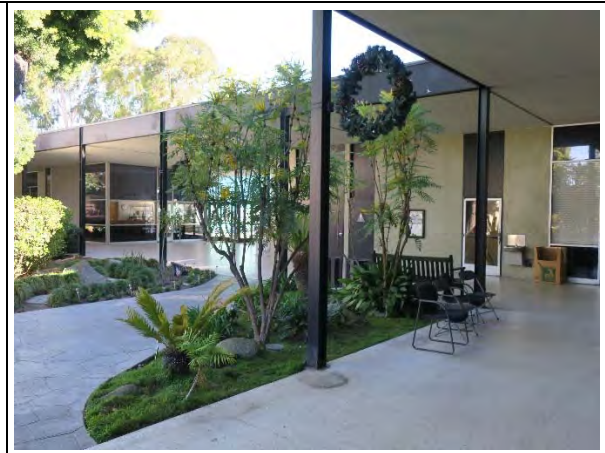
*Signage at main (west) entrance to Norwalk City Hall. Note plinth, granite sign, and flagpoles (ARG, 2022)*

### **Inner Courtyard (within Norwalk City Hall)**

The interior courtyard that is framed by the four intersecting wings of Norwalk City Hall is landscaped with a Japanese style garden, with mature podocarpus trees and various types of manicured shrubs and groundcover. The interior of the courtyard is finished in concrete with score lines that mimic the appearance of cut stone. The perimeter of the courtyard, beneath the breezeway, is finished in terrazzo.



*Inner courtyard, view southwest. Note podocarpus tree (left) and cut stone walkway (ARG, 2022)*



*Inner courtyard, view southeast. Note cut stone (left) and terrazzo (right) walkways (ARG, 2022)*

### **Surface Parking Lot**

To the east of Norwalk City Hall is a surface parking lot. The lot is accessed from the east, via Avenida Manuel Salinas. It is paved in asphalt and has islands composed of concrete curbs and mature ficus trees. The lot is illuminated by “cobra head” style streetlights that are affixed to granite poles. At the center of the parking lot is a public art installation called *Freedom Memorial*, which commemorates local women and men who have served in the military. Designed by artist Nan Butler-Beckstrom, the installation was

dedicated in 2017 and consists of five monolithic sculptures, each of which represents one of the five branches of military – Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The installation uses “historical images and information to create etchings telling the stories of soldiers who bravely fought to preserve freedom.”<sup>7</sup>



*Surface parking lot, view southwest (ARG, 2022)*



*Freedom Memorial, view west (ARG, 2022)*

### **City Hall Lawn**

To the north of Norwalk City Hall is an open landscaped space called City Hall Lawn. Per the original plan for the Norwalk Civic Center, this space was intended to be developed with a civic auditorium, but that building was not constructed as planned. Historic aerial photographs show that this void was planted with grass in the 1970s and was incrementally modified over time with trees, sidewalks, planters, and other improvements, with many of the present-day site improvements (including an undulated sidewalk and landscaping/signage at Norwalk Boulevard and Imperial Highway) dating to 2000 and after. Signage for an adjacent movie theater is also located within City Hall Lawn, at the southwest corner of Imperial Highway and Avenida Manuel Salinas. It is not known precisely when this signage was installed, but it likely corresponds with the construction of the movie theater (located to the south of the Project Site) in 1996.

What is now called City Hall Lawn consists of a broad lawn planted with grass and various species of mature trees, with a preponderance of lemon scented gums and Canary Island pines. The lawn is transected by an undulated concrete sidewalk that dates to circa 2015.<sup>8</sup> This sidewalk leads to a concrete slab with steel handrails and a metal flagpole, which is located adjacent to the north façade of Norwalk City Hall. Located on the slab is a time capsule with a polished granite cornerstone that reads “PLEASE OPEN JULY 4, 2076//GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES FROM THE CITIZENS OF NORWALK, 1979.” The time capsule is buried beneath the slab and is not publicly visible. At the far northwest corner of City Hall Lawn, at the southeast corner of Imperial Highway and Norwalk Boulevard, is a sign that reads “NORWALK CIVIC

---

<sup>7</sup> Raul Samaniego, “Norwalk Honors Fallen Troops with Freedom Memorial at Civic Center,” *The Norwalk Patriot*, Jun. 1, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Gleaned from historic aerial photographs, obtained Mar. 2022 via UC Santa Barbara Library.



CENTER,” which is surrounded by a fountain and vegetation. The signage and landscaping were both installed circa 2000.<sup>9</sup>



*City Hall Lawn as seen from Norwalk Bl, view northeast (ARG, 2022)*



*City Hall Lawn as seen from Ave Manuel Salinas, view west (ARG, 2022)*



*City Hall Lawn, view southwest. Note concrete slab and metal handrail at right (ARG, 2022)*



*Detail of signage and fountain at Imperial Hwy and Norwalk Bl, view southeast (ARG, 2022)*

### **Perimeter Landscaping**

The west, north, and south perimeters of Norwalk City Hall are landscaped with lawns containing mature lemon scented gum trees. A low manicured hedge spans the perimeter of the building, providing a modest buffer between the building footprint and the adjacent lawn. This planting scheme is also applied to a portion of the building’s east perimeter. The east entrance to Norwalk City Hall (facing the surface parking) is approached by non-original hardscape features including concrete steps, a concrete ramp, and concrete planter boxes. These hardscape features were installed in 2017.

---

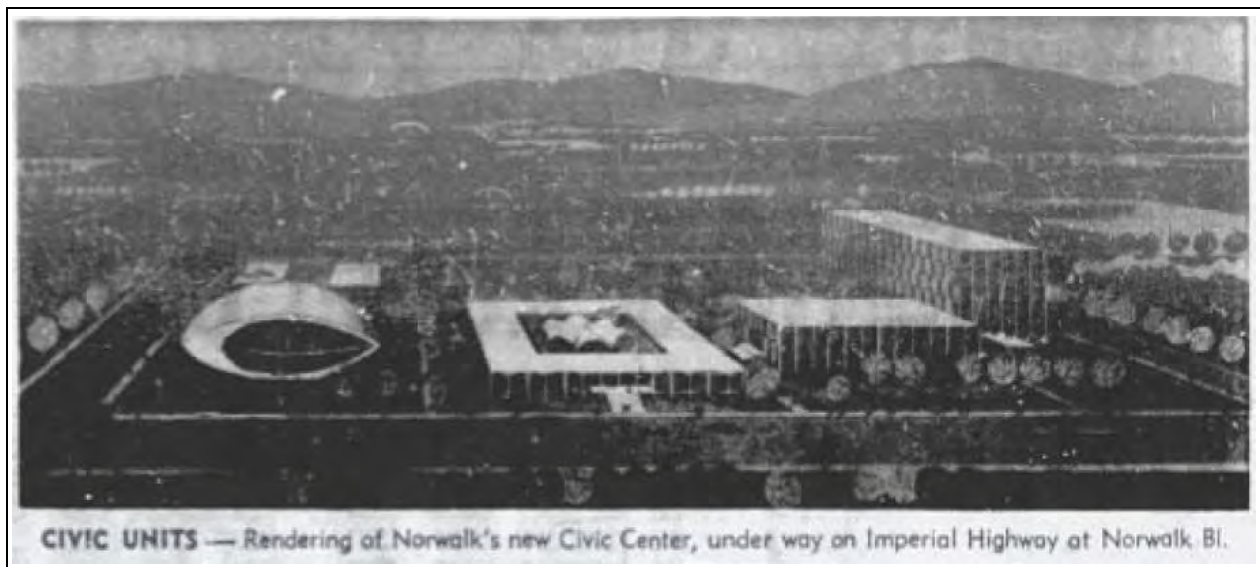
<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## 4. Development Chronology and Alterations

### 4.1. Site History

Norwalk incorporated in 1957, becoming California’s fifteenth largest city, but in the inaugural years of cityhood the community lacked a permanent City Hall or other centralized public facilities. Rather, at this time local government “operated out of a variety of leased spaces including an office on Firestone Boulevard, and subsequently out of the abandoned Nettie L. Waite School facility at 12110 E. Walnut Street.”<sup>10</sup> “Citizen requests for street maintenance, weed abatement and tree service, law enforcement and pound service were handled daily by a staff of five,” a testament to the city’s nascence.<sup>11</sup>

In 1963, plans were approved for a new Civic Center complex to better serve the community.<sup>12</sup> These conceptual plans called for the proposed Norwalk Civic Center to occupy a large, multi-acre site at the southeast corner of Imperial Highway and Norwalk Boulevard, in the eastern portion of the city. The site selected for the new Civic Center complex had previously been used as agricultural land.



Artist’s rendering of Norwalk Civic Center, 1963. Norwalk City Hall is the square building with a hollow core pictured at center. The never-built civic auditorium is pictured at left (*Los Angeles Times*).

Ground was broken on the Norwalk Civic Center in 1964. The first building to be constructed within the complex was Norwalk City Hall, a “modern” style municipal structure designed by the architectural firm of Kistner, Wright and Wright of Los Angeles and constructed by Coastate Builders, a general contracting firm based in Long Beach. “This building,” noted the *Los Angeles Times*, “will have a court area in the center containing a circular Council Chamber designed to seat 200 people,” and will be accommodating

<sup>10</sup> Richard L. Kahanek, *A History of Norwalk* (Norwalk, CA: Andrews Printing Co, Inc., 1968), 63; “Norwalk Renews City Hall Lease,” *Long Beach Independent*, May 11, 1960.

<sup>11</sup> Kahanek, *A History of Norwalk*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> “Drawings Approved for Civic Center at Norwalk,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 10, 1963.

of future growth “by the use of an integrated ceiling system and key movable partitions, or storage wall units.”<sup>13</sup> As noted in initial plans, the building had a fortified basement to serve as an emergency operations center for 22 Southern California cities, a reminder of the nuclear tensions that characterized the Cold War era.<sup>14</sup>

Construction of Norwalk City Hall was completed in 1965; the building was dedicated in April of that year. The building was the first permanent, purpose-built civic structure to be erected within the city following its incorporation.

In addition to Norwalk City Hall, the Civic Center plan called for the construction of several other municipal buildings. These included a civic auditorium, which was to be located to the north of City Hall; a courthouse for the Los Angeles County Superior Court, to be located to the south of City Hall; a branch library facility; and a branch police station.<sup>15</sup> Of these, a courthouse, public library, and police station came to fruition and were erected in proximity to Norwalk City Hall. (The courthouse was constructed in 1968; the library in 1969; and the police station in 1972). The civic auditorium, however, was not constructed, leaving an undeveloped area at the north end of the Civic Center complex. This area was later planted with a lawn that functions as a public amenity, though it was not planned as such.

By the 1980s, Norwalk City Hall had become overcrowded as existing city departments grew and additional city departments were created to better serve the needs of the community. The building’s air conditioning systems had also become outmoded. Toward this end, City officials announced plans to add 5,000 square feet of additional space in 1984. The project entailed “new offices for City Council members, expanding a meeting room in the council chambers from 50 to 80 seats and installation of a new air-conditioning and heating system.”<sup>16</sup> The project was financed by “proceeds from the sale of certificates of participation, which are tax-free securities issued by a nonprofit corporation set up by the city.”<sup>17</sup>

Also at this time, City officials pursued the development of a large new retail and entertainment complex on a 22-acre site to the south of the Norwalk Civic Center.<sup>18</sup> Originally named the Norwalk Metro Center (and now known as the Norwalk Entertainment District), the complex was approved by the Norwalk City Council in 1987 and, according to initial plans, would include “an 8-story hotel and conference center, a 168-unit condominium and townhouse community, a 6-story office building with 104,000 square feet of leasable office space and 22,000 square feet of ground floor retail space, a 19,000-square-foot movie theater and a 9,000-square-foot restaurant.”<sup>19</sup> This redevelopment project culminated in the construction of the present-day Sycamore Village residential complex (built 1989), hotel (built 1990), and movie theater (built 1996).<sup>20</sup> These improvements fall outside the boundaries of the Project Site but are referenced here because they influenced development within the Project Site. Specifically, the parking structure within the Project Site was constructed in 1996 as a part of this redevelopment project, to serve

---

<sup>13</sup> “Work Begun on Norwalk Civic Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 19, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Cipriano, “Norwalk OKs Financing for City Building Expansions,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 23, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Tina Griego, “City Seeking to Pump New Life Into Oft-Delayed Metro Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 20, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn DeWolfe, “Norwalk Metro Center Construction to Start,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 13, 1988.

<sup>20</sup> Construction dates gleaned from the Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor.

the new commercial uses in addition to the buildings in the Civic Center area. The parking structure was constructed on what had previously been a surface parking lot.

Recent changes to the Project Site include construction of the County accessory building (2010) and installation of a public art installation called “Freedom Memorial” (2017), which commemorates the contributions of local women and men who served in the Armed Forces. In addition, the undeveloped space to the north of Norwalk City Hall has been incrementally changed over time with the planting of grass in the 1970s, the installation of a concrete slab and time capsule in 1979, and the addition of sidewalks, trees, and other landscape and hardscape features, many of which date to the early 2000s.<sup>21</sup>

## 4.2. Development Chronology

The following development chronology summarizes key events in the development history of the Project Site between its original construction and the present day. The chronology includes information for all improvements on the Project Site as a whole, but emphasis is placed on Norwalk City Hall since that building is identified in this report as a historical resource. (Other improvements on the Project Site are not identified in this report as historical resources).

The information herein was gleaned from reviewing historical building permits from the Norwalk Community Development Department and was augmented by other sources of information including historic photos and aerial images; parcel data from the Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor; the collections of the (Los Angeles County) Norwalk Library; the Los Angeles Public Library and other repositories; and various other archival source materials.

<b>Pre-1963</b>	The land on which the Norwalk Civic Center would eventually be built was undeveloped and consisted of open agricultural land (historic aerial images, UC Santa Barbara Library).
<b>1963</b>	Plans approved for a new Civic Center complex for Norwalk. The Civic Center plan called for the construction of a 224’x224’ City Hall “with a court area in the center containing a circular Council Chamber designed to seat 200 persons” ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Feb. 10, 1963).  Other components of the Civic Center plan included a courthouse (built 1969), library (built 1969), police station (built 1972), and civic auditorium (not constructed).
<b>1964</b>	Ground broken on Norwalk City Hall. For this building, “the [City Council] chamber is of a ribbed shell design, while the surrounding building is primarily framed with structural steel members with exterior walls of alternating panels of glare-reducing glass and mosaic tile.” ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Apr. 19, 1964).
<b>1965</b>	City Hall completed; a dedication ceremony was held in April. Kistner, Wright and Wright is listed as the architect; Coastate General & Engineering Contractor is listed as the contractor; City of Norwalk is listed as the owner ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Mar. 14, 1965).

<sup>21</sup> Gleaned from historic aerial photographs, accessed Mar. 2022 via the UC Santa Barbara Library and [Historicaerials.com](http://Historicaerials.com).

<b>1969</b>	Construction of the Southeast Superior Courts Building (south of Norwalk City Hall) and the Norwalk Public Library (east of City Hall). Both buildings fall outside of the Project Site but are associated with the Norwalk Civic Center ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Feb. 3, 1969).
<b>1972</b>	Construction of the Norwalk Sheriff's Station (southeast of Norwalk City Hall). The building falls outside the boundaries of the Project Area but, like the Courthouse and Library, complements the construction of Norwalk City Hall and is associated with the Norwalk Civic Center ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Jul, 16, 1972).
<b>ca. 1970s</b>	The area to the north of Norwalk City Hall is planted with a lawn (historic aerial images, UC Santa Barbara Library)
<b>1979</b>	Concrete slab added to the lawn north of Norwalk City Hall; a time capsule was buried beneath the slab.
<b>1984</b>	5,000-sf-expansion approved for Norwalk City Hall. The expansion included "new offices for City Council members, expanding a meeting room in the council chambers from 50 to 80 seats, and installation of a new air-conditioning and heating system." ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Dec. 23, 1984).
<b>1985</b>	Permit issued <sup>22</sup> to construct 1 <sup>st</sup> floor deck on south end of existing City Hall. This scope of work appears to be a part of the expansion of City Hall described above. M.S. Construction is listed as the contractor; City of Norwalk is listed as the owner (Permit No. 6166).
<b>1996</b>	Parking structure constructed to the southeast of Norwalk City Hall. The structure was built to serve the Norwalk Civic Center and the adjacent Norwalk Metro Center (now called the Norwalk Entertainment District) located to the south of the Project Site. International Parking Design, Inc. is listed as the architect and engineer (construction documents, obtained from City of Norwalk Community Development Department).
<b>2006</b>	Permit issued to construct monument pedestal, and install platform and flagpole inserts. This appears to be in the lawn to the north end of the City Hall building. Kenneth D. Arnold and Associates is listed as the contractor; City of Norwalk is listed as the owner (Permit No. 07080072).
<b>2006</b>	Permit issued for miscellaneous improvements to City Hall. The scope of work entailed the removal of drywall partitions, construction of a new demountable partition, and repair and extension of the T-bar ceiling. The scope of work entailed interior improvements only, and did not affect the building exterior. Bizal-Hoff Company is listed as the contractor; Norwalk City is listed as the owner (Permit No. 06050104).
<b>2007</b>	Permit issued to install 80' flagpole with 3'11" footing in City Hall Lawn. So Cal Flagpole is listed as the contractor; City of Norwalk is listed as the owner (Permit No. 07080245).

<sup>22</sup> All permitted improvements referenced herein were constructed, and the building permits finalized.

2008	Permit issued for modifications to Norwalk City Hall. The scope included a new partition wall with glass window, and to move existing door and create accessible counter and transaction window. The scope of work entailed interior improvements only, and did not affect the building exterior. First Call Concrete Services is listed as the contractor; City of Norwalk is listed as the owner (Permit No. not available).
2010	County accessory building constructed as parking for judges affiliated with the adjacent Southeast Superior Courts building (Permit No. not available).
2015	Additional improvements made to City Hall Lawn, notably the installation of an undulating sidewalk leading from Imperial Highway (historic aerial images, UC Santa Barbara Library).
2017	Freedom Memorial, a public art installation comprising five monolithic statues, is installed by artist Nan Butler-Beckstrom near the east entrance to City Hall ( <i>Norwalk Patriot</i> , Jun. 1, 2017).  The east entrance to City Hall was modified. Modifications included the removal of the original concrete steps and tiled planter and installation of new concrete steps, an accessible ramp, and concrete planter boxes in their place.

### 4.3. Alterations

The following alterations to the City Hall building and its environs were observed during a site visit conducted by ARG in January 2022. When possible, these alterations were corroborated by the above-listed building permits, historic photographs and aerial images, parcel data from the Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor, and other documented sources of information. The alterations identified herein pertain to building exteriors, site/landscape features, and other publicly visible elements of the Project Site; interior alterations were not documented for purposes of this report.

The following list of alterations is organized locationally, beginning with general site and setting and continuing with each of the three buildings that are located on the Project Site.

#### General Site and Setting

- Grass (now City Hall Lawn) planted on undeveloped space north of Norwalk City Hall (ca. 1970s)
- Parking structure constructed on what was previously a surface parking lot (1996)
- Trees, sidewalks, and other site and landscape features added to City Hall Lawn (ca. 2000s)
- Monument pedestal and flagpole added to City Hall Lawn (2006)
- County accessory building constructed on what was previously open landscaped space (2010)
- Public art installation (“Freedom Memorial”) added to the east approach to City Hall (2017)

#### Building 1: Norwalk City Hall

- Addition to south façade (1985)
- Addition to east façade (1985)

- One set of glazed doors replaced with fixed metal window on east façade
- Original steps and hexagonal concrete planter removed from east entrance and replaced with new concrete steps, planters, and an accessible ramp
- Some doors and windows replaced on inward-facing walls (within the inner courtyard)

### **Building 2: Parking Structure**

- Appears to be unaltered

### **Building 3: County Accessory Building**

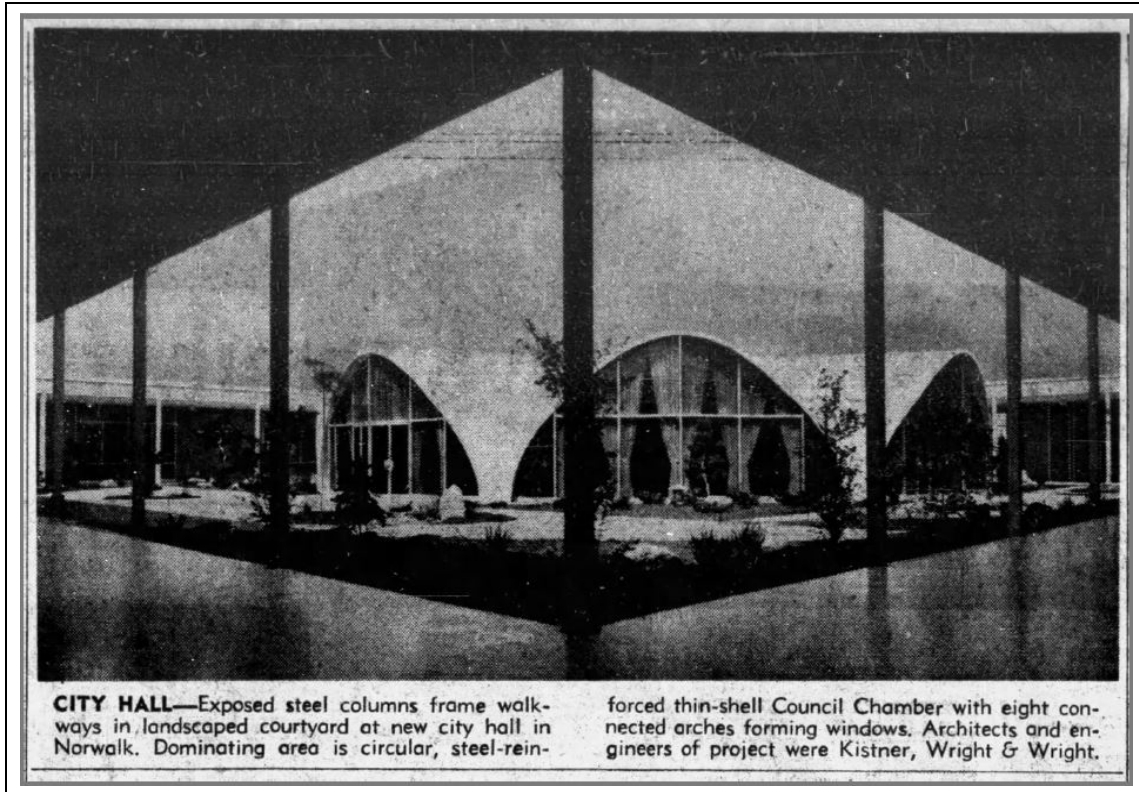
- Appears to be unaltered

## Historic Images

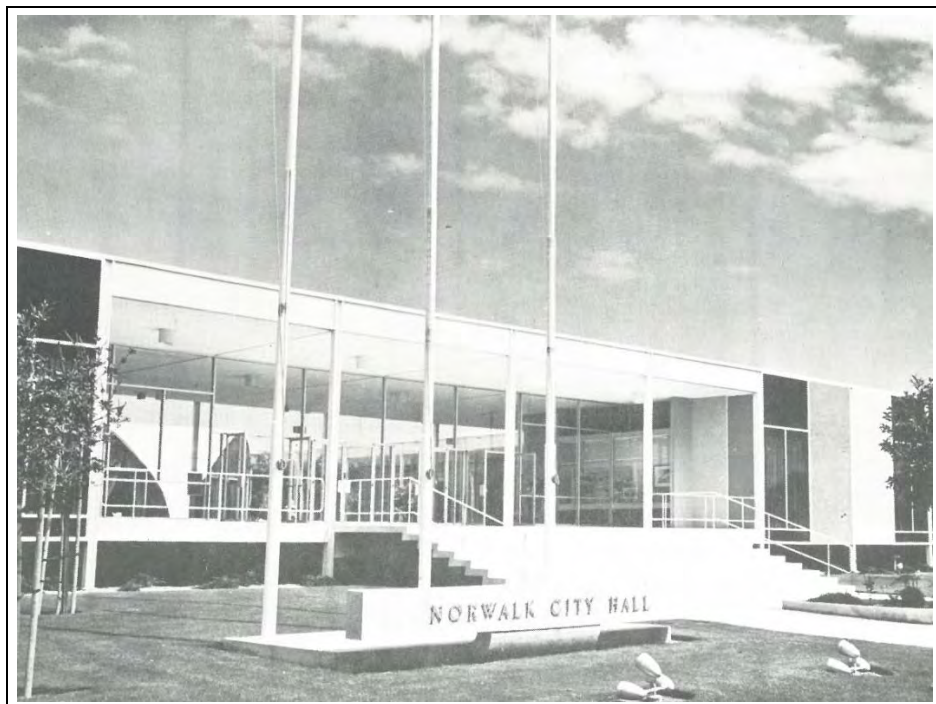


*Newspaper photo of Council Chamber, 1965 (Los Angeles Times)*

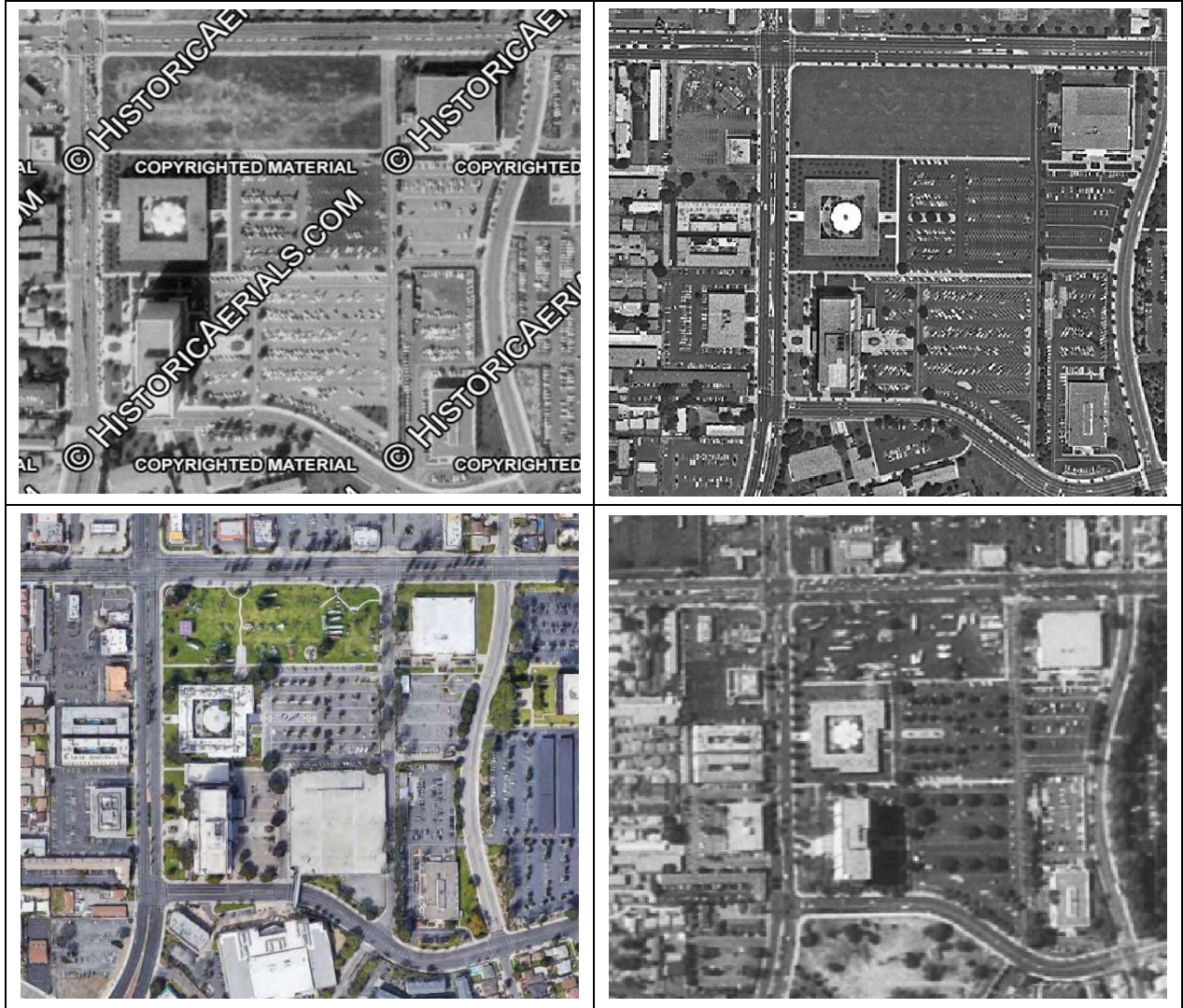




*Newspaper photo of Council Chamber, 1965 (Los Angeles Times)*



*Norwalk City Hall, ca. 1960s (Richard L. Kahanek)*



Aerial images of the Project Site dated (clockwise, from upper left): 1972, 1977, 1994, and 2022 (Historicaerials.com, UC Santa Barbara Library, Google)

## 5. Historic Contexts

### 5.1. Civic and Institutional Development in Norwalk

Like many suburban communities in Southern California, Norwalk witnessed the vast majority of its development after World War II. However, the origins of the present-day city date to the mid-nineteenth century. In 1869, brothers Atwood and Gilbert Sproul, investors from Oregon, acquired 463 acres of the former Rancho San Antonio, a Mexican-era land grant located several miles southeast of Los Angeles, for \$11 an acre.<sup>23</sup> In 1874, the Sproul brothers surveyed a town site on the land, attracted to the development potential that was spurred by the construction of the first transcontinental railroad line to Southern California. When filing the subdivision map, the Sprouls donated 23 acres to the Southern Pacific Railroad as the future site of a rail depot, which was erected in 1879 on what is now Front Street.<sup>24</sup>

Early in its history, Norwalk was a sparsely developed community that consisted of little more than the rail depot, a smattering of farmhouses, and small-scale agricultural endeavors. What is considered to be the community's first industry was the Norwalk Cheese Factory, which was founded in 1882. In its heyday, the factory produced "about 3,000 pounds of milk daily...[and] over 300 pounds of cheese therefrom."<sup>25</sup> Norwalk also became well-known as a major producer of sugar beets and other cash crops including alfalfa, corn, beans, and grapes.<sup>26</sup>

Civic and institutional development in Norwalk was slow to start – a reflection of the community's meager population. In 1916, the Norwalk State Hospital (later renamed the Metropolitan State Hospital) was completed and "declared to be the most modern institution of its kind in the West, and destined to be the greatest of its kind in America"<sup>27</sup> Other early civic institutions included schools, a local Chamber of Commerce, a woman's club, and a Sherriff's Station and firehouse.<sup>28</sup> Most of these civic buildings were located along Front Street, then Norwalk's primary thoroughfare.<sup>29</sup>

Norwalk witnessed a tremendous amount of new suburban development after World War II. The community became ripe for suburban development because of its proximity to Los Angeles and its abundance of flat agricultural land that could easily be subdivided into residential tracts. In 1925, the population of Norwalk of 900; by 1947, it was 8,400; by the 1950s, that number had risen to 70,000.<sup>30</sup>

With this exponential increase in population came a desire for autonomy and a push toward pursuing cityhood. In 1957, the citizens of Norwalk voted overwhelmingly to incorporate and elected to structure the city in accordance with the Lakewood Plan. Pioneered by (and named for) the nearby City of

---

<sup>23</sup> Richard L. Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 16; City of Norwalk, Local History Brochure, accessed Mar. 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 26; City of Norwalk, Local History Brochure, accessed Mar. 2022.

<sup>25</sup> "Norwalk Notes: The Cheese Factory – May-day – Fulton Wells – Want a Hotel," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1882.

<sup>26</sup> Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 43; Marion Bond, "A Good Place to Start Out, and to Stay Put: Norwalk," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 24, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 43; "Patients Find Pleasant Home," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1916.

<sup>28</sup> Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 50-51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1925), accessed Mar. 2022 via the Los Angeles Public Library; "New City Will Be Staffed by Aug. 26," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 4, 1957.

Lakewood, the Lakewood Plan was based upon a novel administrative structure in which some municipal services – typically police and fire services – were outsourced to the County of Los Angeles. The Norwalk election was considered to be “the largest pro-incorporation vote of nearly [20 years] when it was held in 1954.”<sup>31</sup> Following the election, “a City of ten and one-half square miles was certified by the [California] Secretary of State and, with a population of 83,010, Norwalk became California’s fifteenth largest City.”<sup>32</sup>

In the formative years of cityhood, Norwalk lacked much in the way of permanent civic facilities or institutions. Its first City Hall was a modest facility that consisted of a leased office on Firestone Boulevard, east of San Antonio Drive.<sup>33</sup> Local government quickly outgrew this space and moved to another leased facility, the former Nettie L. Waite School campus on Walnut Street, which served as the hub of local government for the next several years.<sup>34</sup>

By the early 1960s, it had become evident that these spaces were not adequate to serve the needs of the city. Residents also expressed the desire to build permanent civic facilities that were more befitting of Norwalk’s status as a thriving and populous community. In early 1963, plans for an expansive new Civic Center were developed, and preliminary drawings were approved. These initial plans for the Civic Center were developed by the architectural firm of Kistner, Wright and Wright. A large, 20-acre parcel at the southeast corner of Imperial Highway and Norwalk Boulevard was selected as the site of the new Civic Center complex. The site had previously been used as farmland but was completely cleared by 1963.<sup>35</sup>

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new Norwalk Civic Center was held in April 1964, and construction commenced on Norwalk City Hall – the first building within the complex – in subsequent months. Reflective of 1960s Cold War sentiments, during which time the threat of a nuclear conflict on American soil was of concern and seemed palpable to many, the basement level of Norwalk City Hall was designed as an Emergency Operations Center serving 22 area cities in the event of a nuclear crisis. Reporting on this subject in 1964, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that “federal funds have been applied for on a matching basis for this portion of the building, which is designed for a radiation protection factor of 100.”<sup>36</sup>

Dedication of Norwalk City Hall took place on April 25, 1965, and speaker Glenn M. Anderson, the Lieutenant Governor of California, stressed the issue of civil defense – and Norwalk City Hall’s role in protecting the public through its heavily fortified basement – during the proceedings.<sup>37</sup> The completion of a permanent hub of local government marked a momentous occasion in the city’s history and was cause for celebration among area residents and leaders. As described by local historian Richard Kahanek:

‘It’s a dream come true...’ remarked a resident when in April 1965, twenty-one hundred citizens and guests gathered at the Civic Center site on Norwalk Boulevard near Imperial Highway. The event marked the formal dedication of Norwalk’s first permanent City Hall, bringing to fruition hopes of Norwalk’s residents since 1923...Looking back, one cannot help but stand in awe as the

---

<sup>31</sup> “Voters Favor Norwalk City 5991 to 1364,” *The Whittier News*, Jul. 24, 1957.

<sup>32</sup> Kahanek, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 62-62.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>34</sup> City of Norwalk, Local History Brochure, accessed Mar. 2022; “Norwalk Renews City Hall Lease,” *Long Beach Independent*, May 11, 1960.

<sup>35</sup> Development patterns gleaned from historic aerial images.

<sup>36</sup> “Work Begun on Norwalk Civic Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 19, 1964.

<sup>37</sup> “Emergency Center to be Opened,” *Whittier Star Review*, April 25, 1965.

pioneers of yesterday met the challenge of the times, turning the formless into the formed. Their endeavors and hopes are ours.<sup>38</sup>

Plans for the Norwalk Civic Center also called for the construction of four other civic buildings and facilities on the sprawling 20-acre site, of which three came to fruition. In the 1960s, Norwalk was selected as the location of a new Superior Courts Building to serve the southeast area of Los Angeles County, and “construction of the seven million dollar facility was begun less than three years later” on a prominent site adjacent to City Hall.<sup>39</sup> The courthouse was completed in 1969. Also in 1969, a new branch of the Los Angeles County Public Library was built to the east of City Hall, and in 1972 a new Sheriff’s Station was dedicated.<sup>40</sup> The courthouse, library, and Sheriff’s Station were all designed by Beverly Hills architect William Allen in the New Formalist style, an offshoot of the Mid-Century Modern movement.

The fifth building that was proposed for the Civic Center complex was a civic auditorium, which was featured prominently in the 1963 conceptual plan but was never constructed. In contrast to the symmetrical and formal presence of the other buildings within the Civic Center, the civic auditorium was depicted in plans as a bold geometric structure with curvilinear forms and a reflecting pool “that looked like an eye when viewed head-on.”<sup>41</sup> Renderings show that the auditorium was intended to be built to the immediate north of Norwalk City Hall, with frontage on both Norwalk Boulevard and Imperial Highway.<sup>42</sup> However, for reasons that are not clear the auditorium was never constructed as planned, and that portion of the Civic Center complex remained undeveloped and is now the location of City Hall Lawn.

## 5.2. Mid-Century Modern Architecture

One building within the Project Site – Norwalk City Hall – is designed in the Mid-Century Modern style, an idiom that was often applied to civic and institutional buildings built during the post-World War II period.

“Mid-Century Modern” is a broad term that is used to describe the various derivatives of Modern architecture that flourished in the post-World War II period. These include post-war adaptations of the chaste and machined International Style, the rational aesthetic associated with post-and-beam construction, and more organic and expressive interpretations of the Modern architectural movement.

Various experiments in Modern architecture that were introduced in the early twentieth century eventually lent impetus to the Mid-Century Modern style. The International Style, which came out of Europe in the 1920s, introduced an unusually straightforward approach to design that was characterized by simple geometries, smooth wall surfaces, the honest expression of structure and materials, and the absence of superfluous ornament.<sup>43</sup> International Style buildings were characteristically lithe, airy,

---

<sup>38</sup> Kahane, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 67.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Rite Planned for Library,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 22, 1969; Peyton Canary, “Opening Ceremonies Planned for Station,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 16, 1972.

<sup>41</sup> Los Angeles Conservancy, “Norwalk Civic Center,” accessed Mar. 2022.

<sup>42</sup> “Work Begun on Norwalk Civic Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 19, 1964.

<sup>43</sup> Natalie W. Shivers, “Architecture: A New Creative Medium,” in *LA’s Early Moderns: Art/Architecture/ Photography* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2003), 132.

“gleaming and seemingly machine-made.”<sup>44</sup> At about the same time, a group of maverick American architects including Frank Lloyd Wright and Irving J. Gill were also dabbling in experimental new forms, methods, and materials in their quest to develop an indigenous style of American architecture.<sup>45</sup>

Mid-Century Modernism draws upon these earlier paradigms and is emblematic of how the Modern movement was adapted to the conditions of post-World War II life. Over time, architects took the basic tenets of the International Style and similar experiments in domestic Modernism and transposed them into new dialects of Modernism that were both rational and sensitive to their respective physical and cultural contexts. In Southern California, this gave rise to an architectural vocabulary defined by structural and material expression, wide expanses of glass, and open, free-flowing interior plans.<sup>46</sup> Some architects including Lloyd Wright and John Lautner, captivated by the movement’s emphasis on freedom of form and structural innovation, incorporated sweeping volumes and expressionistic elements into Mid-Century Modern design, devising a sub-set of the style that was organic and sculptural in appearance.

Mid-Century Modernism was popular between the mid-1940s and early 1970s.<sup>47</sup> It proved to be a remarkably versatile idiom that was expressed through a wide variety of property types ranging from single-family residences, to large-scale housing tracts, to commercial buildings and institutional campuses, to industrial complexes. Its aesthetic was deftly incorporated into both high-style buildings and the local vernacular, and was employed by architects, developer-builders, and lay contractors alike.

Common character-defining features of the Mid-Century Modern style include the following:

- Simple, geometric building forms
- Wood post-and-beam construction; concrete, glass, and steel are often used in non-residential buildings
- Direct expression of the structural system
- Flat roofs, with or without eaves
- Stucco and/or wood exterior cladding
- Flush-mounted metal frame windows, often incorporated into building façades
- Minimal surface ornament and decorative details
- Integrated landscapes, often in the form of courtyards or plazas
- Organic sub-type: bold, geometric building forms and motifs that abstractly reference nature

---

<sup>44</sup> Mark Rozzo, “Architect Dion Neutra, Who Fought to Save His Father’s Iconic Buildings, Dies,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Shivers, “Architecture: A New Creative Medium,” in *LA’s Early Moderns: Art/Architecture/ Photography* (2003), 124.

<sup>46</sup> SurveyLA, Citywide Historic Context Statement Summary Tables, “Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980.”

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

## 5.3. Architects and Builders

### Kistner, Wright and Wright, Architects

Norwalk City Hall was designed by the architectural firm of Kistner, Wright and Wright. Prolific designers of public and private institutional buildings across Southern California, Kistner, Wright and Wright never attained the widespread name recognition of some of their Modern contemporaries, but today the firm is best remembered for a body of distinguished, innovative designs for schools and educational facilities. Composed of architects Theodore Kistner and Henry Wright, and structural engineer William Wright, the Los Angeles-based firm was led by Kistner and served as a continuation of his early practice in San Diego.

Theodore Charles Kistner (1874-1973) was born in Carlinville, Illinois. He graduated from the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana and worked as a draftsman in Chicago and Evanston before opening his own practice in Granite City, Illinois in 1901.<sup>48</sup> Even before coming to San Diego in 1911 Kistner had developed a reputation for thoughtful school designs and following his relocation to Southern California the architect began to incorporate inventive open air classrooms attuned to the local climate. Schools became Kistner's primary project type and his productivity allowed him to open a second office in Los Angeles in 1923. Early designs from Kistner's firm reflect a variety of popular styles ranging across Spanish Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Mission Revival, and Streamline Moderne. Though the firm's focus was educational facilities and Kistner was the official architect for the San Diego School Board, he also designed apartment houses and institutional buildings including two Carnegie Libraries – Chula Vista (1917, no longer extant) and East San Diego (1918, no longer extant) – and Anaheim City Hall (with M. Eugene Durfee, 1921, no longer extant).<sup>49</sup>

In 1936, Kistner entered into partnership with fellow architect Robert Rice Curtis, who had been working at the San Diego office since 1922. Around this time Kistner moved to San Marino to focus on Los Angeles-area projects, leaving Curtis in charge of the firm's San Diego office. Architect Henry Wright joined the firm in 1941 and worked out of the Los Angeles office, where his brother William Wright was also employed as a structural engineer.<sup>50</sup>

Henry Lyman Wright was born in San Diego, California in 1904 to parents who were both teachers. Wright attended San Diego State College and the University of Southern California (USC) and started his architectural career with Theodore Kistner while still attending school in Los Angeles. Wright became a member of the Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1943 and dedicated considerable time to the organization. He became president of the Southern California chapter in 1953 and served on the AIA Committee on School Buildings from 1951-1958, often representing the architectural organization on committees related to educational facilities. Promoted to the status of AIA Fellow in 1955, Wright was elected president of the national organization in 1962. An expert on school design, he was appointed as special consultant to the New Orleans Parish School District and the Tucson,

---

<sup>48</sup> Aviation Facilities Plan, Santa Barbara Airport, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County: Environmental Impact Statement, prepared 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Carnegie Libraries of California, "Architect: Kistner, Theodore," accessed Mar. 2022; Pacific Coast Architecture Database, "City of Anaheim, City Hall #3," accessed Mar. 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Aviation Facilities Plan, Santa Barbara Airport, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County: Environmental Impact Statement, prepared 2002.

Arizona School District. In 1960, Wright's dedication to educational architecture was honored when the Norwalk-La Mirada School District named a new school the Henry Lyman Wright Intermediate School.<sup>51</sup>

Wright's brother, William Theodore Wright was born in San Diego in 1905. He graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in civil engineering. A lieutenant in the Civil Engineer Corps Reserve, his structural engineering work at Theodore Kistner's Los Angeles office was interrupted by World War II, when he served in active duty in the Eleventh Naval District and later became an executive officer of Base Planning and Construction in the Southwest Pacific area. Eventually promoted to Captain, Wright's military connections proved valuable in securing Naval commissions for the firm of Kistner, Curtis and Wright. Much like his brother, William Wright was active in numerous civic and professional organizations and served as director and President of the Structural Engineers Association of Southern California, Vice President of the Structural Engineers Association of California, director of the Consulting Engineers Association of California, and he became a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers.<sup>52</sup>

Soon after Henry Wright became partner, the outbreak of World War II turned the firm's attention exclusively to wartime construction. Kistner, Curtis and Wright designed site plans for Marine Corps Air Stations at Goleta, El Centro, El Toro, and Mojave.<sup>53</sup> In the post-war period the firm returned to designing school and other institutional building types.

In 1952, Kistner, Curtis and Wright was formally reorganized into two separate firms. The Los Angeles office, with project offices in San Diego and Los Alamos, New Mexico became Kistner, Wright and Wright, while the San Diego office, operating primarily under Curtis, became Kistner, Curtis, and Foster. By this time the Los Angeles office had become one of the city's largest full-service architecture and engineering firms, employing approximately 300 architects and structural, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineers.<sup>54</sup>

The 1950s and '60s were a productive time for Kistner, Wright and Wright, and the firm's output from this period showcased a mastery of the Mid-Century Modern and Late Moderne styles that were often applied to schools, civic buildings, and other institutional buildings at this time. The firm designed dozens of new public school campuses in the rapidly developing suburbs of Los Angeles, drawing upon their extensive experience in this practice area. It also designed office headquarters for a number of professional organizations including the California Teachers Association and the California Osteopathic Association, branch police stations in the Los Angeles communities of South Los Angeles and Pacoima, and a large addition to the U.S. Postal Service's Terminal Annex building near Downtown Los Angeles.<sup>55</sup>

One of Kistner, Wright and Wright's more notable commissions was the design of Cerritos College in Norwalk, which was built in the late 1950s and located just blocks from what would soon develop into the Norwalk Civic Center. The college occupied a 95-acre site and included multiple buildings designed by the

---

<sup>51</sup> R. Randall Vosbeck, *A Legacy of Leadership: The Presidents of the American Institute of Architects* (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects, 2008), 101-102.

<sup>52</sup> Navy Civil Engineer. United States, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, 1963.

<sup>53</sup> Aviation Facilities Plan, Santa Barbara Airport, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County: Environmental Impact Statement, prepared 2002.

<sup>54</sup> "Reorganization of Architectural and Engineering Firm Announced," *Architect and Engineer*, May, 1952.

<sup>55</sup> "Contracts Awarded for Norwalk College Unit," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 30, 1958.



firm, among them including a lecture hall with brightly colored exterior walls and an unusual circular footprint. Reporting on the development of Cerritos College in 1959, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that:

Students at Cerritos College in Norwalk will have to pull out all stops if they are to equal the brightness of the buildings on their campus...There can be little doubt that design and colors break with tradition. The first building to be seen upon arrival at the campus is Lecture Hall, a circular edifice looking not unlike a drive-in restaurant, but which actually houses six lecture rooms.<sup>56</sup>

For this building, Kistner, Wright and Wright received a national design award from *School Executive* magazine, whose jury hailed the architecture as “a simple, gay and energizing environment for higher education.”<sup>57</sup> The firm was lauded for breaking with conventions of orthodox Modernism and imbuing a sense of vibrancy and whimsy into an institutional building type known for often being bland and banal.

This playful take on Modern architecture is also seen in the design of Norwalk City Hall, which was designed by the firm shortly thereafter, in 1963. The exterior walls of Norwalk City Hall were clad in small blue and green mosaic tiles that provided the building’s public façades with a sense of vibrancy that was not often seen in civic buildings from this era. Within the building’s open courtyard, the firm experimented with bold building forms and designed a circular Council Chamber with a ribbed shell concrete structural system.<sup>58</sup>

Kistner retired in 1965 and died in 1973 at the age of 99. Approximately 2,000 school buildings were estimated to have been designed by Kistner and associates since the firm’s founding in 1911.<sup>59</sup> Fellow partners Wright and Wright continued to work into the 1970s until the firm was eventually dissolved.

## Coastate Builders, Contractor

Historic newspaper articles relating to the construction of Norwalk City Hall indicate that the building was constructed by Coastate Builders, a general contracting firm. There is little information available about Coastate Builders or its body of work. From the information that was found, it is known that the company was based in Long Beach and appears to have been primarily involved in mid- and large-scale institutional building projects. Known examples of buildings that were constructed by the company include Montebello City Hall (1962), Norwalk City Hall (1965), and the original terminal building at the Orange County Airport (now John Wayne Airport) in Santa Ana (1967).<sup>60</sup> In 1982, the company was selected as the contractor for an extensive renovation and expansion project at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in

---

<sup>56</sup> Al Johns, “Architecture Design Is Given High Award,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 5, 1959.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> “Civic Center Dedication Set,” *Long Beach Independent*, Mar. 14, 1965; “City Hall,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 6, 1965.

<sup>59</sup> Vosbeck, *A Legacy of Leadership: The Presidents of the American Institute of Architects* (2008), 101-102.

<sup>60</sup> “Work to Start on City Hall in Montebello,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 14, 1962; “For Orange County,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 27, 1966.

Culver City.<sup>61</sup> The firm also built and remodeled buildings at a number of California State University (CSU) campuses including the campuses at Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Pomona.

---

<sup>61</sup> "Culver City Upgrades Veterans Auditorium," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 14, 1982.

## 6. Regulations and Criteria for Evaluation

### 6.1. National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation’s master inventory of known historic resources. Established under the auspices of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level. Eligibility for listing in the National Register is addressed in National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. NRB 15 states that in order to be eligible for the National Register, a resource must both: (1) be historically significant, and (2) retain sufficient integrity to adequately convey its significance.

Significance is assessed by evaluating a resource against established eligibility criteria. A resource is considered significant if it satisfies any one of the following four National Register criteria:<sup>62</sup>

- Criterion A (events): associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- Criterion B (persons): associated with the lives of significant persons in our past;
- Criterion C (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- Criterion D (information potential): has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Once significance has been established, it must then be demonstrated that a resource retains enough of its physical and associative qualities – or *integrity* – to convey the reason(s) for its significance. Integrity is best described as a resource’s “authenticity” as expressed through its physical features and extant characteristics. Generally, if a resource is recognizable as such in its present state, it is said to retain integrity, but if it has been extensively altered then it does not. Whether a resource retains sufficient integrity for listing is determined by evaluating the seven aspects of integrity defined by NPS:

- Location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred);
- Setting (the physical environment of a historic property);
- Design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property);

---

<sup>62</sup> Some resources may meet multiple criteria, though only one needs to be satisfied for National Register eligibility.

- Materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular manner or configuration to form a historic property);
- Workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory);
- Feeling (a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time);
- Association (the direct link between an important historic event/person and a historic property).

Integrity is evaluated by weighing all seven of these aspects together and is ultimately a “yes or no” determination – that is, a resource either retains sufficient integrity, or it does not.<sup>63</sup> Some aspects of integrity may be weighed more heavily than others depending on the type of resource being evaluated and the reason(s) for the resource’s significance. Since integrity depends on a resource’s placement within a historic context, integrity can be assessed only after it has been concluded that the resource is in fact significant.

## 6.2. California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an authoritative guide used to identify, inventory, and protect historical resources in California. Established by an act of the State Legislature in 1998, the California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of significant architectural, historical, archeological, and cultural resources; identifies these resources for state and local planning purposes; determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding; and affords certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The structure of the California Register program is similar to that of the National Register, though the former more heavily emphasizes resources that have contributed specifically to the development of California. To be eligible for the California Register, a resource must first be deemed significant under one of the following four criteria, which are modeled after the National Register criteria listed above:

- Criterion 1 (events): associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
- Criterion 2 (persons): associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
- Criterion 3 (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values;
- Criterion 4 (information potential): has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, state, or the nation.

---

<sup>63</sup> Derived from NRB 15, Section VIII: “How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property.”

Mirroring the National Register, the California Register also requires that resources retain sufficient integrity to be eligible for listing. A resource's integrity is assessed using the same seven aspects of integrity used for the National Register. However, since integrity thresholds associated with the California Register are generally less rigid than those associated with the National Register, it is possible that a resource may lack the integrity required for the National Register but still be eligible for listing in the California Register.

Certain properties are automatically listed in the California Register, as follows:<sup>64</sup>

- All California properties that are listed in the National Register;
- All California properties that have formally been determined eligible for listing in the National Register (by the State Office of Historic Preservation);
- All California Historical Landmarks numbered 770 and above; and
- California Points of Historical Interest which have been reviewed by the State Office of Historic Preservation and recommended for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission.

Resources may be nominated directly to the California Register. State Historic Landmarks #770 and forward are also automatically listed in the California Register. There is no prescribed age limit for listing in the California Register, although OHP technical assistance guidelines state that resources less than 50 years old may be considered for listing as long as sufficient time has have passed "to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource."<sup>65</sup>

### 6.3. Local (Norwalk) Designation

The City of Norwalk does not currently have a historic preservation ordinance or mechanisms by which buildings and other resources can be locally designated. Therefore, there are no local designation criteria.

### 6.4. CEQA and Historical Resources

#### CEQA Thresholds

Enacted in 1970, CEQA is the principal statute mandating environmental assessment of discretionary land use and development projects in California. The primary goal of CEQA is to (1) evaluate a project's potential to have an adverse impact on the environment, and (2) minimize these impacts to the greatest extent feasible through the analysis of project alternatives and, if needed, implementation of mitigation measures.

---

<sup>64</sup> California Public Resources Code, Division 5, Chapter 1, Article 2, § 5024.1.

<sup>65</sup> California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001), 3.

Historical resources are considered to be a part of the environment and are thereby subject to review under CEQA. Section 21084.1 of the California Public Resources Code (PRC) states that for purposes of CEQA, “[a] project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.”<sup>66</sup> This involves a two-part inquiry. First, it must be determined whether the project involves a historical resource. If it does, then the second part involves determining whether the project may result in a “substantial adverse change in the significance” of the historical resource.

To address these issues, guidelines relating to historical resources were formally codified in October 1998 as Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. The guidelines state that for purposes of CEQA compliance, a “historical resource” shall be defined as any one of the following:<sup>67</sup>

1. A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources.
2. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, or identified as significant in a qualified historical resource survey, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrate that it is not historically or culturally significant.
3. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be a historical resource, provided the lead agency’s determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be “historically significant” if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.

Once it has been determined that a historical resource is present, it must then be determined whether the project may result in a “substantial adverse change” to that resource. Section 5020.1. of the PRC defines a substantial adverse change as the “demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration such that the significance of an historical resource would be impaired.” Furthermore, according to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), the significance of a historical resource is materially impaired when a project:

- A. Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or
- B. Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency

---

<sup>66</sup> California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15064.5.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

- C. Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA.

Generally, a project that follows the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*<sup>68</sup> shall be considered as mitigated to a level of less than a significant impact on the historical resource.<sup>69</sup>

### **Secretary of the Interior's Standards**

As stated above, projects that conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* ("the Standards") are generally treated as projects that will not result in a substantial adverse change to historical resources. The Standards are widely used to guide federal, state, and local agencies as they carry out their historic preservation programs and responsibilities.

The Standards for Rehabilitation are:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

---

<sup>68</sup> Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (Revisions to Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, 1995), Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, 2017, 76, accessed June 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> 14 CCR 15064.5

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.



## 7. Evaluation of Significance

### 7.1. Previous Evaluations

None of the buildings or site features on the Project Site appear to have previously been evaluated for historical significance. They have not been identified in a historic resources survey, and do not appear in the State of California's Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD) database for Los Angeles County.<sup>70</sup>

### 7.2. Evaluation of Eligibility

#### Individual Eligibility

ARG concludes that one building on the Project Site – Norwalk City Hall – appears to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources. The resource consists of the rectangular outer building volume, the circular inner volume, the interior courtyard connecting these two volumes, and two hardscape features in the west building setback that are potentially character-defining (hexagonal planter, polished bronze plinth).<sup>71</sup>

None of the other buildings or improvements on the Project Site appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register and/or California Register. This includes the parking structure, the County accessory building, and other improvements including the surface parking lot and perimeter landscaping. Perimeter landscaping that does not contribute to the significance of Norwalk City Hall includes the City Hall Lawn; landscape and hardscape features adjacent to the north, south, and east façades of Norwalk City Hall; and landscape and hardscape features on the west façade of Norwalk City Hall that are not called out as potentially character-defining. (Only the hexagonal planter and polished bronze plinth, both located in the west building setback, are identified as potentially character-defining site features in this location).

Following is a discussion of how these determinations were made.

**National Register Criterion A:** *associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

**California Register Criterion 1:** *associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.*

Norwalk City Hall is significant for its association with broad patterns of civic and institutional development that shaped Norwalk and its collective identity during the formative years of its cityhood.

---

<sup>70</sup> The Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD) database provides information about non-archaeological resources in the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP)'s inventory. For more information, refer to [https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=30338](https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30338).

<sup>71</sup> Information about potential character-defining features of the historical resource is included in *Section 8.3: Character-Defining Features* of this report.

The building is a tangible expression of the ambitious civic improvement efforts that characterized the city during this time, when it was trying to cement its roots and solidify its civic identity.

Like many communities in Southern California, Norwalk witnessed an extraordinary amount of new development in the post-World War II period. It was during this time that Norwalk was transformed from a small town surrounded by dairy farms and sugar beet fields into a populous suburb of Los Angeles. The suburbanization of the Gateway Cities – and Norwalk in particular – was hastened by the construction of freeways through the area including the Santa Ana (Interstate 5) and San Gabriel River (Interstate 605) freeways, which made it fast and convenient to commute between Norwalk and commercial and employment centers in Los Angeles and beyond. The area’s abundance of flat, open agricultural land was seen by developers as exceptionally suited to the mass-produced tract housing that prevailed at this time.

The speed by which Norwalk suburbanized is reflected in its population numbers. In 1947, at the beginning of the postwar period, its population was 8,400; by the 1950s, that number had increased to 70,000; and by the time the City incorporated in 1957, it had a population of more than 83,000, making it California’s fifteenth-most-populous city at that time.

When officials from the newly-incorporated City of Norwalk announced plans to erect a permanent Civic Center complex at Norwalk Boulevard and Imperial Highway in the early 1960s, it represented much more than an investment in its civic infrastructure – it also signified, in physical form, that the community had transcended its agricultural roots and had unequivocally come of age as a populous suburb with an identity and character of its own. Prior to the construction of the Norwalk Civic Center, most local government functions lacked permanent facilities and operated out of a succession of leased spaces that not purpose-built for government functions and were lacking in space and appointment. These spaces did not reflect the growing community’s burgeoning identity, nor did they instill a sense of civic pride.

The construction of Norwalk City Hall was the first time in Norwalk’s history that it had a permanent, purpose-built hub for local government. When construction was complete and the building was dedicated in 1965, some 2,100 people attended the ceremony to celebrate the fruits of what had been a long and laborious journey to cityhood. The building’s sleek, modern design evinced a sense of modernity that was befitting of a community whose development was almost entirely a product of the modern era.

In his account of Norwalk, local historian Richard Kahanek captures the importance that the completion of City Hall had within the civic and institutional development of Norwalk. Referencing the completion of City Hall, Kahanek notes that “looking back, one cannot help but stand in awe as the pioneers of yesterday met the challenge of the times, turning the formless into the formed. Their endeavors and hopes are ours.”<sup>72</sup>

The construction of Norwalk City Hall appears to have signified an important moment in the civic and institutional history of the city. It is a physical reflection of the City’s coming-of-age in the postwar period, and is a reflection of the optimism that defined the community’s collective identity as it was witnessing tremendous growth and transformation.

---

<sup>72</sup> Kahanek, *A History of Norwalk* (1968), 67.

None of the other buildings or improvements on the Project Site appear to meet this criterion. The parking structure was built in 1996 and represents a utilitarian addition to the complex, as opposed to an improvement like City Hall that carried significant weight in the institutional history of the city. Neither the surface parking lot, City Hall Lawn nor the landscaping adjacent to City Hall on its north, east and south setbacks appear to express important patterns of civic and institutional development in a meaningful way. City Hall Lawn does not appear to have been deliberately planned as a designed landscape, but rather emerged in somewhat organic fashion on land that was originally intended to contain a large civic auditorium but remained undeveloped. Its history cannot be definitely linked to any sort of concerted plan or other framework that would render it significant in the context of Norwalk's civic and institutional history.

In summary, Norwalk City Hall appears to satisfy National Register Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1 for its association with significant patterns of local civic and institutional history. None of the other buildings or site/landscape features on the Project Site appear to meet this criterion.

**National Register Criterion B:** *associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.*

**California Register Criterion 2:** *associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.*

National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* provides guidance related to properties associated with historic personages. It identifies two benchmarks that should be met for a property to meet Criterion B: first, "the persons associated with the property must be individually significant within a historic context," and second, the property is "associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance."<sup>73</sup>

Norwalk City Hall has been continuously accessible to the public since its construction in 1965. As such, numerous individuals have visited the building to patronize the various offices and services located within its walls. Also, over the course of its history, the building has also been associated with generations of elected officials, city staff, and others who have worked or conducted business within the building.

It is extraordinarily common for civic buildings to be loosely associated with a variety of people, as they are intended to be accessible to the public at large. However, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that any one of the individuals associated with the subject building is historically significant in a manner that would merit consideration under this criterion. While the elected officials and city employees who have patronized the building and conducted official business here have certainly contributed to the development of Norwalk since 1965, there is insufficient evidence demonstrating that there is a direct and meaningful connection between the specific contributions of any of these individuals and the subject building in a manner consistent with the spirit of this criterion.

For these reasons, there is insufficient evidence indicating that any of the buildings or site/landscape features on the Project Site are meaningfully associated with the lives of historically significant

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

individuals. None of the improvements on the Project Site satisfy National Register Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2.

**National Register Criterion C:** *embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

**California Register Criterion 3:** *embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.*

Norwalk City Hall is significant for reasons relating to its architecture and physical design. Designed in the Mid-Century Modern style, the building embodies distinctive characteristics of its style and type and demonstrates how its aesthetic was adapted to the architecture of civic buildings in the post-World War II period. Compared against the broader pool of Mid-Century Modern style institutional buildings, both in Norwalk and throughout Southern California, the subject building stands out for its incorporation of innovative design features that render the building architecturally distinctive and are a reflection of these architects' creative prowess. Specifically, the blue and green chromatic tiles on the outward-facing walls as well as the circular, exuberantly roofed volume housing the Council Chamber are particularly expressive for a civic building. The Council Chamber in particular was lauded in newspaper articles and other media for its distinctive appearance. The building was intended to be – and continues to read as – a bold architectural statement. Its interior landscaped courtyard was an integral design feature that contributed to the building's architectural cohesion and is an important characteristic of the resource.

Other distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style that are expressed in the design of the subject building include simple geometric building forms, direct expression of the steel and concrete structural systems, flat roofs with no eaves, flush-mounted metal frame windows, minimal surface ornament, and the integration of a central landscape into the interior of the building. Together, these features – combined with the other design features listed above – render this building a notable example of Mid-Century Modern architecture as applied to the context of civic and government buildings.

The building is also significant on account of its method of construction – specifically, for the ribbed concrete shell method that was utilized for the Council Chamber volume in the central courtyard. Ribbed shell construction was sometimes used by Modern architects interested in pushing the confines of convention and introducing building forms that were equal parts strong and expressive. That this atypical construction method was adapted to the program of a government building is unusual in the realm of civic architecture and reflected something of a structural innovation when evaluated within that context.

The architectural firm of Kistner, Wright and Wright does not appear to meet the definition of a “master architect” in the spirit of this criterion, which is defined as “a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field.”<sup>74</sup> Kistner, Wright and Wright were among many practitioners of Modernism in Southern California at this time and like many of their peers were prolific, but there is insufficient evidence or scholarship suggesting that the firm influenced the field of architecture in a way that would render them master

---

<sup>74</sup> *National Register Bulletin No. 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (1990, rev. 1995), 20.

practitioners. There is also insufficient evidence indicating that the original contractor of Norwalk City Hall – Coastate Builders – contributed to that field in a way that would render it a master.

For these reasons, Norwalk City Hall is architecturally distinctive. It is thereby valuable to a study of Mid-Century Modern civic architecture in Southern California and appears to meet National Register Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3.

None of the other buildings or improvements on the Project Site appear to meet this criterion. The Parking Structure is a utilitarian structure that does not exhibit the characteristics of a particular architectural style and was designed and constructed in a very conventional way. The County accessory building was constructed in 2010, and its design was intended to be a vernacular dialect of the New Formalist style that is applied to the adjacent Southeast Superior Courts building. Similarly, there is insufficient evidence demonstrating that other site features, including the surface parking lot, City Hall Lawn and landscaping adjacent to City Hall on the north, east and south, are notable for reasons relating to their physical design. As noted, City Hall Lawn was not designed to be a deliberate landscape, but rather emerged to fill the open space that was formed by the absence of the planned civic auditorium building to the north of Norwalk City Hall.

In summary, Norwalk City Hall appears to satisfy National Register Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3 for embodying distinctive characteristics of a style, type, and method of construction. None of the other buildings or site/landscape features on the Project Site appear to meet this criterion.

***National Register Criterion D.*** *Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

***California Register Criterion 4.*** *Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, state, or the nation.*

An archaeological assessment of the Project Site was not conducted as part of this study. For further information relating to the presence of archaeological resources, refer to “Archaeological and Paleontological Resources Assessment Report of the Norwalk Entertainment District – Civic Center Specific Plan Project, City of Norwalk, Los Angeles County, California” (Cogstone, 2022).

## **District Eligibility**

ARG also assessed the Project Site for potential eligibility as a historic district. The National Park Service (NPS) defines a historic district as follows:

A district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. A district derives its importance from being a unified entity, even though it is often composed of a wide variety of resources. The identity of a district results from the interrelationship of its resources, which can convey a visual sense of the overall historic environment or be an arrangement of historically or functionally related properties...A district can comprise both

features that lack individual distinction and individually distinctive features that serve as focal points. It may even be considered eligible if all of the components lack individual distinction, provided that the grouping achieves significance as a whole within its historic context.<sup>75</sup>

The buildings and features within the boundaries of the Project Site do not appear to be associated with each other in such a way that would satisfy the above-stated definition. Norwalk City Hall, the Parking Structure, the surface parking lot with its contemporary improvements, and City Hall Lawn date to various periods in the site's development history and do not discernibly share any common visual or contextual qualities aside from the fact that they are all located next to one another.

Norwalk City Hall may contribute to a potential historic district of civic buildings primarily located outside the Project Site. Preliminary analysis indicates that the potential district could consist of four buildings including City Hall and the adjacent Southeast Superior Courts building, the Norwalk Sheriff's Station, and the Norwalk Library. Constructed between 1965 and 1972, these buildings were all conceived under the umbrella of the original plan for the Norwalk Civic Center and were all among the first major civic improvements to be completed in Norwalk's early years of cityhood. The Civic Center master plan was developed by architects Kistner, Wright and Wright, who also designed Norwalk City Hall; another architect, William Allen, designed the other three buildings within the complex. These contributing buildings all date to the same general period of civic development and are all designed in compatible dialects of Mid-Century Modern style architecture. However, since most of the buildings associated with the potential district fall outside of the Project Site, district eligibility was not evaluated in this report.

Other buildings and site features on the Project Site – including the Parking Structure and City Hall Lawn – do not appear to contribute to a larger district. The parking structure is a contemporary addition to the complex and does not bear an association with its formative period of development in the 1960s and early '70s. City Hall Lawn was not a part of any plan for the Civic Center complex, but rather occupies space in the complex that was intended to house a civic auditorium that never came to fruition.

### 7.3. Evaluation of Integrity

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance, and is defined by the National Park Service (NPS) as the “authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's prehistoric or historic period.”<sup>76</sup> The NPS identifies seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

---

<sup>75</sup> *National Register Bulletin No. 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (1990, rev. 1995), 5.

<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 1997), 4.

## Norwalk City Hall

The following integrity analysis applies to Norwalk City Hall. This includes the rectangular outer building volume, the circular inner building volume, and the interior courtyard connecting these two volumes, as well as potential character-defining features in the west building setback (including the hexagonal planter and polished granite plinth). It does not include the perimeter landscaping on the north, south, and east façades including the City Hall Lawn, or site and landscape features on the west façade that are not called out in Section 8.3: *Character-Defining Features*.

### **Location**

*Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.*

The subject building has not been moved from its original location. It retains integrity of location.

### **Design**

*Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.*

The subject building was modified with the construction of additions to its south (side) and east (rear) façades in 1985. Both of these additions were sensitively designed to mimic the bulk, scale, and general appearance of the original building volumes, and toward this end original wall tiles and windows were carefully removed and reinstalled on the additions to blur the lines between old and new. However, the construction of these additions nonetheless resulted in changes to the building's original design, as bump outs were appended to two of the building's outward wings and disrupted its sense of perfect symmetry. However, apart from those additions, the building retains almost all of its original features that create its form, plan, space, structure, and style. The original design intent remains intact and legible. The building therefore retains integrity of design, though this aspect of integrity has been compromised.

### **Setting**

*Setting is the physical environment of a historic property constituting topographical features, vegetation, manmade features, and relationships between buildings and open space.*

When the subject building was dedicated in 1965, it initially sat alone within the Civic Center complex, but in due time it was joined by other civic buildings – which came with the construction of the Southeast Superior Courts Building (1969), the Norwalk Public Library (1969), and the Norwalk Sheriff's Station (1972), as well as large County office buildings that are located on adjacent properties to the east of the Project Site. Areas around the civic center consisted primarily of low-scale commercial development on major thoroughfares and neighborhoods of modest tract houses on inward blocks. Some changes have been made to the vicinity of Norwalk City Hall over time; these include the construction of the Norwalk Entertainment District which includes a movie theater, hotel, and restaurants and other amenities to the south of the Civic Center in the 1990s, and the construction of a parking structure serving the Civic Center and the adjacent Entertainment District, also in the mid-1990s. However, overall, the essential patterns of development in the vicinity of the subject building have remained largely unchanged. Norwalk City Hall

continues to be sited amid a concentration of City and County government buildings, and its commercial and residential environs remain largely intact. For these reasons the building retains integrity of setting.

### **Materials**

*Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.*

Almost all of the original materials associated with the exterior of the subject building are intact. The building retains its original chromatic wall tiles, metal doors and windows, exposed steel and concrete structural systems (including the ribbed shell concrete system that was used for the circular council chamber volume), and terrazzo paving within the courtyard – all of which contribute to its unique appearance and architectural program. As noted, original materials including chromatic wall tiles and metal windows were salvaged and incorporated into additions that were appended to the south and east façades of the building in 1985. A few original doors and windows have been replaced at various points on the building, but this represents a relatively minor change that has not significantly modified the overall materiality of the building. For these reasons the building retains integrity of materials.

### **Workmanship**

*Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture, people or artisan during any given period in history or pre-history.*

Distinguishing characteristics – or those that convey workmanship – that are associated with the building and help to express its architectural significance remain intact. As noted, distinctive physical characteristics of the building, including its ribbed concrete shell volume and chromatic wall tiles, are intact and have not been modified. Other, more subtle examples of original workmanship – including original doors and windows– also remain intact. The skill belying the building’s design remain intact and legible. The building retains integrity of workmanship.

### **Feeling**

*Feeling is a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historical sense of a particular period of time.*

Given its minimal exterior modifications, the subject building continues to clearly read as a 1960s civic building and a product of the post-World War II period. It retains its essential form, massing, spatial relationships, and confluence of original architectural features that defined the distinctive look and feel of civic architecture from this period. It exudes a sense of modernity that is a palpable expression of the extraordinary growth that reshaped Southern California, and Norwalk in particular, during the postwar period. The building, then, retains a strong sense of time and place from its original (1965) construction, and for this reason it retains integrity of feeling.

### **Association**

*Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.*



As noted, few substantive changes have been made to the exterior of the subject building and its environs, and as such it continues to exude the distinctive look, feel, and appearance of a government building from the post-World War II period. The association between the building and its historic period remains strong and legible. For these reasons the building retains integrity of association.

### **Summary of Integrity: Norwalk City Hall**

To be eligible for listing, a resource must retain enough of its historic character or appearance to be recognizable as a historic resource and convey the reason(s) for its significance. As described above, the subject building appears to retain integrity of Location, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. It also appears to retain integrity of Design, though that aspect of integrity has been compromised. When these aspects are weighed together, the building appears to retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance.

### **Parking Structure, County Accessory Building, and Other Site Improvements**

For a resource to be eligible for listing in the National and California Registers, it must first meet one or more eligibility criteria and also retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. As stated in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, “only after significance is fully established can you proceed to the issue of integrity.”<sup>77</sup> Since the other buildings and improvements on the Project Site – including the parking structure, the County accessory building, the surface parking lot, and perimeter landscaping including the City Hall Lawn – are not eligible for federal or state listing, an analysis of integrity was not completed for these buildings and improvements.

## **7.4. Period of Significance**

Historical resources are assigned one or more periods of significance. According to the NPS, “period of significance refers to the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most properties have a clearly identifiable period of significance.”<sup>78</sup>

The period of significance for Norwalk City Hall is 1965, which corresponds to its original construction and captures the period during which time it attained its historical and architectural significance. Periods of significance were not assigned for other buildings or improvements on the Project Site since they are not eligible for federal and/or state listing.

---

<sup>77</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1990, revised 1991, 1995, 1997), 45.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 42.

## 8. Impacts Analysis

### 8.1. Summary of Historical Resource Findings

#### Historical Resources on the Project Site

The Project Site consists of three parcels (owned by the City of Norwalk) and a portion of a fourth parcel (owned by the County of Los Angeles). These parcels contain three buildings:

- Norwalk City Hall (built 1965)
- Parking structure (built 1996)
- County accessory building (portion) (built 2010)

In addition, the Project Site is developed with a surface parking lot that is located to the east of Norwalk City Hall, and landscaping that is located along the outer perimeter of Norwalk City Hall. The broad landscaped area located to the immediate north of Norwalk City Hall is referred to as the City Hall Lawn.

None of the above-listed buildings or improvements on the Project Site are designated as historical resources, nor have they been previously identified as potential historical resources. All of the buildings and improvements were newly evaluated for potential historical significance herein. This evaluation arrived at the following conclusions:

- Norwalk City Hall appears to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register. The resource consists of the rectangular outer building volume, the circular inner building volume, the interior courtyard connecting these two volumes, and two hardscape features (hexagonal planter, granite plinth) that are located in the west building setback.
- None of the other buildings or improvements on the Project Site – including the parking structure, the County accessory building, the surface parking lot, and perimeter landscaping including the City Hall Lawn – appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register and/or the California Register.<sup>79</sup>

Pursuant to Section 15064.5(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines), the term "historical resource" includes resources that are deemed by a lead agency to be historically significant, "provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be 'historically significant' if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources" that are listed prior.<sup>80</sup>

As Norwalk City Hall appears to be eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register, it satisfies the definition of a "historical resource" per the CEQA Guidelines. The historical resource is confined to the rectangular outer building volume, the circular inner building volume, the inner courtyard connecting these volumes, and site features within the west building setback including a hexagonal planter and a granite plinth with bronze signage and three metal flagpoles. Landscaping around the outer

---

<sup>79</sup> As noted, Norwalk does not have a local historic preservation ordinance, so local eligibility was not assessed.

<sup>80</sup> CEQA Guidelines, 15064.5(a)(3).

perimeter of the Norwalk City Hall building is not considered to be a part of the historical resource because it is not associated with the historical and architectural significance of the building,

No other buildings or improvements on the Project Site satisfy the above definition of a “historical resource” for purposes of CEQA since there is insufficient evidence demonstrating that they meet eligibility criteria. This includes the parking structure, the County accessory building, the surface parking lot to the east of Norwalk City Hall, and perimeter landscaping, including the City Hall Lawn and landscape and hardscape features along the north, south, and east perimeters of the Norwalk City Hall building.

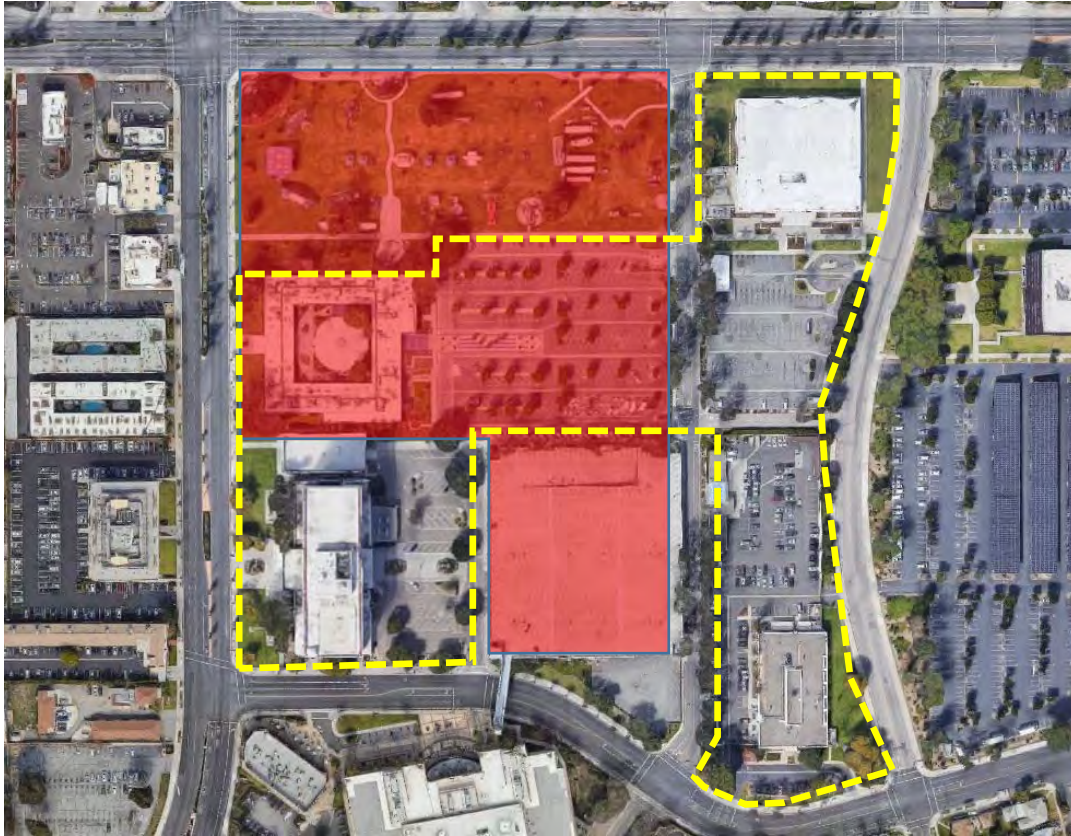
## **Historical Resources Adjacent to the Project Site**

There are no historical resources adjacent to<sup>81</sup> the Project Site listed in the State of California’s Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD).

However, field inspection and preliminary research indicates that there may be a potential historic district adjacent to (and including a small part of) the Project Site. Preliminary analysis indicates that the potential historic district may consist of four contributing buildings: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), the Southeast Superior Courts building (built 1969), the Norwalk Library (built 1969), and the Norwalk Sheriff’s Station (built 1972). These four buildings were all conceived under the auspices of the original plan for the Norwalk Civic Center that was developed by architects Kistner, Wright and Wright in the early 1960s, and their civic functions complement one another in a manner that may render them collectively significant in the context of local civic and institutional development. These buildings also share common architectural characteristics in that they were all designed in compatible iterations of post-World War II Modernism: Norwalk City Hall is designed in the Mid-Century Modern style and the Southeast Superior Courts building, the Norwalk Library, and the Norwalk Sheriff’s Station are designed in the New Formalist style.

---

<sup>81</sup> “Adjacent” resources are defined as those historical resources with direct adjacency to the Project Site, either within its viewshed or with a view of it.



*Potential historic district map. Preliminary district boundaries are marked in yellow; the Project Site is shaded red (Google Maps, annotations by ARG)*

Almost all of this potential district falls outside the boundaries of the Project Site, and for this reason its potential eligibility was not evaluated for purposes of this report, which is limited to the boundaries of the Project Site. (Note that only Norwalk City Hall falls within the boundaries of the Project Site; the Southeast Superior Courts building, the Norwalk Library, and the Norwalk Sheriff's Station are all outside the boundaries of the Project Site).

Such a potential historic district would not include any other buildings or improvements on the Project Site including the parking structure, the County accessory building, the surface parking lot, or landscaping adjacent to Norwalk City Hall (aside from that building's inner landscaped courtyard, the hexagonal planter in the west setback and the polished granite plinth with bronze letters and three metal flagpoles in the west setback). . Specifically, the City Hall Lawn; all landscape and hardscape features on the north, south, and east perimeters of Norwalk City Hall; and landscape and hardscape features on the west perimeter of City Hall aside from the two features described above, would not be included in any potential historic district.<sup>82</sup>

More research and analysis would be needed to confirm the eligibility of the potential historic district and, if eligible, assign a period of significance and identify contributing and non-contributing elements.

---

<sup>82</sup> A list of potential character-defining features of the Norwalk City Hall building is included in Section 8.3: Character-Defining Features of this report.

However, for purposes of this report the potential district is being treated as an “adjacent” historical resource.

## 8.2. Significance Threshold

According to the CEQA Guidelines, a project has the potential to impact a historical resource when the project results in a “substantial adverse change” to the resource’s significance. Substantial adverse change is defined as “physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource will be materially impaired.”<sup>83</sup>

The significance of a historical resource is materially impaired when a project:

- a) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resources that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, the California of Historical Resources; or
- b) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code (PRC) of its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the PRC, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project established by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or
- c) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for the purposes of CEQA.

A project that has been determined to conform with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (the Standards) shall generally be considered to be a project that will not cause a significant impact on a historical resource (Title 14 CCR, Section 15064.5(b)(3)).

## 8.3. Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features are those physical elements of a resource that define its historic character and help to convey its significance.

ARG developed the following list of features that may be considered character-defining features for Norwalk City Hall, which is included below. This inventory was developed based on visual inspection of the building, review of historical photographs, and evaluation of historical building permits and various

---

<sup>83</sup> Title 14 CCR, Section 15064.5

other archival materials. Note that no interior character-defining features are identified. Note also that character-defining features are confined to the building's rectangular outer volume, circular inner volume, and inner courtyard connecting these volumes, as well as two hardscape features in the west building setback identified below. Other landscape and hardscape features adjacent to the outer perimeter of the building, including trees, shrubs, walkways, steps, ramps, and planters, are not identified as character-defining features of the historical resource and are distinguished from the building.

### **Building Exterior**

- Simple massing and rectilinear building forms
- Square plan oriented around an open inner courtyard
- Flat roof
- Mosaic tile wall cladding
- Terrazzo steps with incised numbers and a steel handrail (west façade)
- Glazed metal doors
- Fixed, flush-mounted metal windows
- Circular, ribbed concrete shell volume with floor-to-ceiling glazing (within courtyard)
- Barrel-vaulted canopy at entrance to circular volume (within courtyard)]

### **Site and Landscape<sup>84</sup>**

- Hexagonal planter fronting Norwalk Boulevard clad in mosaic tiles (west setback)
- Polished granite plinth with bronze signage and three flagpoles (west setback)
- Landscaped courtyard (at center of building)

## **8.4. Project Description**

The Project seeks to implement the City of Norwalk's Economic Development Opportunities Plan, which identified the Project Site as an area for the promotion of local economic development. The Project would entail the establishment of a Specific Plan to allow for the development of a mixed-use project containing residential and commercial uses and landscaped areas on the site of the existing City Hall Lawn and surface parking lot. Up to 350 residential units and associated amenities would be developed as part of the Project. Up to 110,000-square-feet of commercial space, including food and beverage establishments, retail, commercial, health/wellness, and grocery uses, would also be developed.

The Project would incorporate ground-floor plazas and open space that will be publicly accessible but privately operated and maintained, and will also include residential open space for residents. The publicly accessible plazas and open space areas would include various improvements, including among other

---

<sup>84</sup> Building-adjacent landscaping to the north, east, and south of Norwalk City Hall (including City Hall Lawn) is not considered to be character-defining.

things commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, landscaped and hardscaped areas.

Parking would be provided on site, within the new building(s) and through use of the existing parking structure in the southern part of the Project Site. The existing parking structure could be expanded vertically to add two new parking levels if needed to serve future demand of the surrounding area. No changes to the existing Norwalk City Hall building or the existing County accessory building are proposed as part of the Project. However, there may be changes to the non-historic landscape and hardscape features adjacent to these buildings.

## 8.5. Analysis of Project Impacts

The Project will not result in direct impacts to historical resources. As discussed above, the Norwalk City Hall building appears to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register and is thereby considered to be a “historical resource.” No changes to the Norwalk City Hall building are proposed as part of the Project. The historical resource will be located at a distance from the proposed new buildings, which will be built on sites to the north and east of Norwalk City Hall that are currently improved with the non-historic City Hall Lawn and non-historic surface parking lot, respectively.

None of the character-defining features associated with Norwalk City Hall will be removed or altered as a result of the Project. Character-defining exterior features and finishes, and character-defining site and landscape features that are associated with the historical resource, will not be modified in any way by the construction of the new adjacent mixed-use development. None of the potential character-defining features of the building identified in *Section 8.3: Character Defining Features* of this report will be modified as a result of the Project. Specifically, all exterior features and finishes that are identified as potentially character-defining will not be modified, nor will the inner landscaped courtyard or the two potentially character-defining site features in the west setback (hexagonal planter, granite plinth).

The Project entails demolition of some existing conditions on the Project Site – specifically, the City Hall Lawn and the surface parking lot – to accommodate the new mixed-use development. It also entails modifications to existing landscaping adjacent to the outer perimeter of Norwalk City Hall. As discussed above, neither the City Hall Lawn, the surface parking lot, nor the landscaping adjacent to the outer perimeter of Norwalk City Hall satisfy the definition of a “historical resource.” The Project may also entail vertical expansion of the parking structure with two additional parking levels. However, the parking structure also does not satisfy the definition of a “historical resource.” Therefore, changes to the City Hall Lawn, the surface parking lot, and the parking structure will not result in direct impacts to historical resources.

No excavation will take place within approximately 50 feet of the north and east elevations of the historical resource. However, the Project does include ground disturbing work, including the potential driving of multiple reinforced concrete piles to support the foundation of the new building(s). Paving and landscaping could occur up to the City Hall building. The nearest pile would be driven at a distance of approximately 50 feet from the historical resource. There is not anticipated to be any material

impairment to the historical resource because of the distance between the piles and the historical resource. Moreover, there has been previous construction activity adjacent to the historical resource since its construction including the Southeast Superior Courts building (1969) and the parking structure (1996), neither of which is known to have impaired its material integrity.

It is possible that pile driving activity could result in limited damage to the mosaic tiles that clad the exterior walls of the historical resource. The tiles are a character-defining feature of the historical resource. Site inspection showed that the tiles periodically fall from the building, thereby indicating that they may be susceptible to vibration. However, any such damage is anticipated to be minimal and localized, can be easily repaired, and is not anticipated to result in “material impairment” of the resource.

The Project includes construction of a new mixed-use residential and commercial development to the north and east of Norwalk City Hall. The new development would extend up to seven stories above grade. The conceptual site plan, which could vary, includes 2 seven-story buildings, which will contain 2 levels of parking. The development will contain up to 350 residential units, up to 110,000-square-foot of commercial space, and landscaped areas. The Project would incorporate ground-floor plazas and open space that will be publicly accessible but privately operated and maintained, and will also include residential open space for residents. The publicly accessible plazas and open space areas would include various improvements, including among other things commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, landscaped and hardscaped areas.

The new development will be located adjacent to Norwalk City Hall and will be substantially larger than the historical resource; however, the new mixed-use buildings will be physically separated from the historical resource by a minimum distance of 50 feet on the north and minimum 50 feet on the east. This will ensure that there is an adequate physical buffer separating the footprint of the historical resource from that of the adjacent new mixed-use buildings, and will ensure that the historical resource’s overall configuration, primary (west-facing) façade, and exterior character-defining features and associated site and landscape features (including the inner landscaped courtyard, hexagonal planter in the west setback, and polished granite plinth in the west setback) remain visible to the public.

The west façade of the historical resource has the most public visibility, and the building’s primary vantage point comes from the west as viewed from Norwalk Boulevard. Construction of the new mixed-use development will not impair visibility of this façade or change how the building is experienced when it is viewed from Norwalk Boulevard. Because of its location on the Project Site, the new mixed-use buildings may compromise public views of the historical resource’s north and east façades and change how the building is seen from Imperial Highway and Avenida Manuel Salinas, respectively. However, these façades read as secondary and are visually subservient to the primary (west) façade, and so adjacent new construction will not significantly change how the historical resource is experienced from public view. The east and north façades will be visible from within publicly accessible areas of the Project.

The aforementioned separation of the new development from the historical resource (50 feet on the north and 50 feet on the east) will further ensure that character-defining features and spaces associated with the historical resource remain visible. There will be various improvements within this landscaped open space, including among other things commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and



similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, and landscaped and hardscaped areas. Features such as these are generally low in scale and would continue to allow views of the historical resource from publicly-accessible areas within the Project.

## Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* generally guide the treatment of a historic building's significant spaces, features, materials, and environment. Because the Project will not include changes to the historical resource itself, Standards 1-8 do not apply to the Project. However, Standards 9 and 10 relate specifically to adjacent/related new construction and are applicable to the Project.

The Project will comply with Standards 9 and 10 as follows:

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

The Project does not include any construction activity on the Norwalk City Hall building itself, and therefore it will not destroy historic materials that characterize the resource. The historical resource will retain all of its exterior character-defining features and character-defining site and landscape features (specifically, its landscaped inner courtyard, hexagonal planter in the west setback, and polished granite plinth in the west setback).

The Norwalk City Hall building does not have a historically significant spatial relationship with other existing improvements on the Project Site including the parking structure, the surface parking lot, and perimeter landscaping including the City Hall Lawn and landscaping adjacent to the outer perimeter of the Norwalk City Hall building. Removal and replacement of these non-historic elements of the Project Site will therefore not result in the destruction of important spatial relationships.

Rising to a maximum height of 7 stories, the new mixed-use buildings that will be constructed as part of the Project will be substantially taller than the Norwalk City Hall building, which is one story tall. However, the surrounding civic buildings are of similar height. Other existing six- and seven-story buildings include the Los Angeles Superior Courthouse adjacent to the Project site; the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/Clerk building, approximately 560 feet east of the project site; an office building approximately 880 feet east of the project site; an office building approximately 1,260 feet east of the project site; and the Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, approximately 920 feet south of the project site). Additionally as described above, the Project utilizes a minimum 50-foot setback on the north and east between the new mixed-use buildings and the historical resource to ease the visual transition in scale between existing and new. Though this setback will consist of publicly-accessible open space containing various improvements such as commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, and landscaped and hardscaped areas, these types of improvements are low in scale and will not compete with and would continue to allow key views of, the historical resource. Setting back the massing of the mixed use buildings in this way also has the effect of

preserving views of the Norwalk City Hall building as it is viewed from the west (Norwalk Boulevard), which is a key view.

The new buildings will be differentiated from the Norwalk City Hall building such that they do not replicate any of the historic elements or features of the historical resource, or attempt to appear as historic construction. Rather, the new buildings will have a contemporary aesthetic that is easily differentiated from the historical resource. Though larger in scale than the Norwalk City Hall building, the new development is designed and sited in such a way that it is compatible with the overall massing, size, scale, and features of the historical resource. From all vantage points, the new building would clearly read as separate, contemporary construction in relation to the Norwalk City Hall building.

For these reasons, the Project meets Standard no. 9.

*10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

The Project includes new construction adjacent to, but physically and visually separated from, the Norwalk City Hall building.. It does not include any additions or modifications to the historical resource itself, or any related new construction.

Within the 50-foot setback between Norwalk City Hall and the proposed new buildings will be a publicly-accessible open space improved with various features including commercial kiosks and pavilions, vendor carts, booths and similar structures, pergolas and shade structures, outdoor dining facilities, water features, and landscaped and hardscaped areas. As they are adjacent to (and thereby separate from) the historical resource, their removal in the future would not result in any material impairment of the historical resource or its environment.

If the buildings and comprising the proposed mixed-use development were to be removed in the future, Norwalk City Hall would remain unchanged. Similarly, if any vertical additions that are made to the parking structure were to be removed in the future, Norwalk City Hall would remain unchanged. The historical resource would retain its essential form and integrity, and all of its character-defining features would remain intact.

For these reasons, the Project meets Standard no. 10.

## **8.6. Summary of Continued Eligibility**

As described above, the Project meets the Standards as they apply to related and adjacent new construction to the Norwalk City Hall building, a historical resource.

Upon completion of the Project, Norwalk City Hall will continue to be eligible for designation in the National Register and California Register. Since the Project will not impose any changes to the historical resource itself, the historical resource will continue to appear as it did historically and retain its ability to materially convey its significant associations. It will retain all of its character-defining features.

Moreover, the Project will not diminish the integrity of Norwalk City Hall. As discussed in *Section 7.4: Evaluation of Integrity*, the historical resource retains all seven aspects of integrity, although its integrity of Design has been compromised because of modifications to the south and east façades.

As part of the Project, Norwalk City Hall will retain sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register and California Register, as it does currently.

The building will not be moved as part of the Project and will therefore retain its integrity of **Location**.

Because the Project does not involve any modifications to the Norwalk City Hall building itself, or to any of its character-defining site and landscape features (i.e., the landscaped inner courtyard, the hexagonal planter in the west setback, and the granite plinth in the west setback), the building will continue to retain its integrity of **Materials** and **Workmanship**. There will be no changes to its integrity of **Design**, which is currently intact but compromised due to prior modifications to the south and east façades. This will continue to be true upon completion of the Project.

As noted, the Norwalk City Hall building, its inner landscaped courtyard, and the two character-defining site features in the west setback (including the hexagonal planter and granite plinth) will not be modified as a result of the project. The Norwalk City Hall building will retain all of its character-defining features and will therefore retain its integrity of **Feeling** and **Association**.

The historical resource's integrity of **Setting** will be diminished by the Project. The removal of the unrelated, non-historic surface parking lot and perimeter landscaping (including the City Hall Lawn), and development of new mixed-use residential and commercial buildings in their place will change the immediate setting of the historical resource by introducing buildings and improvements where they do not currently exist. Construction of the mixed-use buildings will also change the setting of the historical resource by introducing residential and commercial uses to a site that is currently developed entirely with civic and institutional buildings and their associated site features. However, while the building's integrity of setting will be diminished, this, in and of itself, will not diminish the building's overall integrity to the extent to which it would no longer be eligible for listing in the National Register and/or California Register since all other aspects of integrity would remain unchanged as a result of the Project.

Therefore, Norwalk City Hall will remain eligible for federal and state listing upon Project completion.

## 8.7. Analysis of Project Impacts to Adjacent Resources

Per the above discussion, there is one potential historical resource located adjacent to the Project Site: a potential historic district that appears to be primarily located to the south and east of the Project Site but may also extend into a portion of the Project Site. Preliminary analysis indicates that the potential historic district would likely consist of four contributing buildings: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), the Southeast Superior Courts building (built 1969), the Norwalk Library (built 1969), and the Norwalk Sheriff's Station (built 1972). None of the other buildings or improvements located on the Project Site would be contributors to the potential district. More research and analysis would be needed to confirm the potential district's eligibility, determine an appropriate period of significance, and delineate specific

district boundaries, but for purposes of this assessment the district is treated as an adjacent historical resource.

The Project will not have a significant impact on the potential historic district. No construction activity is proposed for any of its four contributing buildings, all of which will remain intact and in situ upon project completion. The four contributing buildings will continue to be used as they currently are – for governmental and civic functions – and their related uses will continue to complement one another in such a manner that the potential district will continue to read as a hub of local government operations.

The setting of the potential historic district may be diminished as a result of the Project. Neither the surface parking lot nor the perimeter landscaping that will be removed as part of the Project contribute to the potential district, but they create lines of sight between some of the contributing buildings – specifically, Norwalk City Hall and the Norwalk Library. The construction of new buildings to the north and east of Norwalk City Hall will obfuscate these sightlines by introducing massing and bulk where they do not presently exist. However, this, in and of itself, would not diminish the setting of the potential district as to where is significance would be materially impaired. The potential district would continue to read as a complex comprising complementary civic and institutional buildings dating to the post-World War II period, and as noted above none of the buildings will be removed or modified as a part of the Project.

## 9. Conclusion

The Project will not have a significant impact on any historical resources on or adjacent to the Project Site. In summary, ARG arrives at the following conclusions:

There is one historical resource present on the Project Site: Norwalk City Hall. This building appears to be eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register for its association with civic and institutional development (Criterion A/1) and its architecture and physical design (Criterion C/3). None of the other buildings or improvements located on the Project Site are historical resources because they do not appear to satisfy eligibility criteria for federal or state listing.

There is one potential historical resource located adjacent to the Project Site: a potential historic district that is primarily located to the south and east of the Project Site and comprises civic buildings.

Preliminary research and analysis indicate that this potential historic district would likely consist of four contributing buildings: Norwalk City Hall (built 1965), the Southeast Superior Courts building (built 1969), the Norwalk Library (built 1969), and the Norwalk Sheriff's Station (built 1972).

The Project will not cause a substantial adverse change to significance of the Norwalk City Hall building. It meets the Standards as they apply to adjacent new construction, and the historical resource will continue to retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance following completion of the Project. The Project will also not have an indirect impact on the potential historic district located adjacent to the Project Site.

## 10. Bibliography

### Books, Reports, and Other Published Sources

- California Code of Regulations, California Register of Historical Resources (Title 14, Chapter 11.5), Section 4852 (c).
- California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistance Series #5: California Register of Historical Resources, The Listing Process*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d.
- California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001.
- Kahane, Richard L. *A History of Norwalk*. Norwalk, CA: Andrews Printing Co, Inc., 1968.
- McWilliams, Carey. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1973.
- National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1990 (rev. 1991, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002).
- Shivers, Natalie W. "Architecture: A New Creative Medium." Essay in *LA's Early Moderns: Art/Architecture/ Photography*. Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2003).
- "SurveyLA Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, Context: Architecture and Engineering, Sub-Context: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980." Prepared by Architectural Resources Group for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning. 2019.
- U.S. Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1990, revised 1997.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1997.
- Vosbeck, R. Randall. *A Legacy of Leadership: The Presidents of the American Institute of Architects*. Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects, 2008.

### Newspapers and Periodicals

- Bond, Marion. "A Good Place to Start Out, and to Stay Put: Norwalk." *Los Angeles Times*. Nov. 24, 1991.
- Canary, Peyton. "Opening Ceremonies Planned for Station." *Los Angeles Times*. Jul. 16, 1972.
- Cipriano, Ralph. "Norwalk OKs Financing for City Building Expansions." *Los Angeles Times*. Dec. 23, 1984.
- "City Hall." *Los Angeles Times*. Jun. 6, 1965.
- "Civic Center Dedication Set." *Long Beach Independent*. Mar. 14, 1965.

“Contracts Awarded for Norwalk College Unit.” *Los Angeles Times*. Mar. 30, 1958.

“Drawings Approved for Civic Center at Norwalk.” *Los Angeles Times*. Feb. 10, 1963.

“Emergency Center to be Opened.” *Whittier Star Review*. April 25, 1965.

Johns, Al. “Architecture Design Is Given High Award.” *Los Angeles Times*. Jul. 5, 1959.

“Name Change Proposed for Norwalk Hospital.” *Los Angeles Times*. Feb. 14, 1952.

“New City Will Be Staffed by Aug. 26.” *Los Angeles Times*. Aug. 4, 1957.

“Norwalk Notes: The Cheese Factory – May-day – Fulton Wells – Want a Hotel.” *Los Angeles Times*. May 4, 1882.

“Norwalk Renews City Hall Lease.” *Long Beach Independent*. May 11, 1960.

“Patients Find Pleasant Home.” *Los Angeles Times*. May 7, 1916.

“Reorganization of Architectural and Engineering Firm Announced.” *Architect and Engineer*. May, 1952.

“Rite Planned for Library.” *Los Angeles Times*. Jun. 22, 1969.

Samaniego, Raul. “Norwalk Honors Fallen Troops With Freedom Memorial at Civic Center.” *The Norwalk Patriot*. Jun. 1, 2017.

“Voters Favor Norwalk City 5991 to 1364.” *The Whittier News*. Jul. 24, 1957.

“Work Begun on Norwalk Civic Center.” *Los Angeles Times*. Apr. 19, 1964.

## Web Sites and Other Sources

Ancestry.com (various databases). Accessed Mar. 2022. <https://www.ancestry.com/>

California Office of Historic Preservation. Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD). Accessed Mar. 2022, [https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=30338](https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30338)

Carnegie Libraries of California. “Architect: Kistner, Theodore,” Online. Accessed Mar. 2022. <https://www.carnegie-libraries.org/california/architect/kistner.html>

City of Norwalk. Building permits (various dates).

City of Norwalk. Local History Brochure. Online. Accessed Mar. 2022. <https://www.norwalk.org/home/showpublisheddocument/670/635481534660000000>

Los Angeles Conservancy. “Norwalk Civic Center.” Online. Accessed Mar. 2022. <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/norwalk-civic-center>

Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. Tract Maps. Accessed Mar. 2022, <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/smpm/landrecords/>

Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor. Property assessment data and maps. Accessed Mar. 2022,  
<https://portal.assessor.lacounty.gov/>

Pacific Coast Architecture Database. "City of Anaheim, City Hall #3." Online. Accessed Mar. 2022.  
<https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/building/15776/>

Sanborn Map Company. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: Los Angeles, California (various dates). Accessed  
Mar. 2022 via the Los Angeles Public Library.



## Appendices

*This page intentionally left blank.*