

# CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION



**MEETING DATE:** August 13, 2024

**ITEM NUMBER:** 9.A

**SECOND READING:** September 10, 2024

{{customfields.ResoOrdNumber}}

**TYPE OF ITEM:** Consent

**PRESENTED BY:**

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**SUBJECT/AGENDA TITLE:**

A Bill For An Ordinance Designating The Tower Of Compassion As A Local Historic Landmark

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Tower of Compassion is historically significant relative to the theme of Ethnic Heritage / Asian. Erected in 1973, the tower was presented to the citizens of Longmont, as a gift from the Kanemoto family in appreciation for the community's empathy for the family, especially during the World War II era. The tower stands today as a visual reminder of the Longmont community's compassion for persons of Japanese descent during a period of extreme xenophobia, as well as a tribute to the Kanemoto family's many positive contributions to the City of Longmont. The tower is also historically significant relative to the theme of Community Planning and Development. It was built as, and remains, the most visually prominent feature in Kanemoto Park. This property exceeds the standards for designation as a Longmont Historic Landmark.

**COUNCIL OPTIONS:**

1. Approve designation of the Tower of Compassion as a Longmont Historic Landmark.
2. Decline to designate the Tower of Compassion as a Longmont Historic Landmark.
3. Another option to be determined by City Council.

**RECOMMENDED OPTIONS:**

Staff recommends that City Council approve designation of the Tower of Compassion as a Longmont Historic Landmark.

**FISCAL IMPACT & FUND SOURCE FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

N/A

**BACKGROUND AND ISSUE ANALYSIS:**

Properties are eligible for designation as a Longmont Historic Landmark if they are at least 50 years old and meet certain criteria established in Section 2.56.050. Benefits of landmark designation include eligibility for state grant funds that can be used for restoration of



landmarks. If a property receives National Register of Historic Places designation, additional financial incentives may also be available. Public recognition of a place as a historic landmark also provides public education about the history of our community. Landmark status pursued with the owner’s consent, as is the case for the Tower of Compassion, must meet one or more of eight (8) criteria established in this section. The Tower of Compassion meets six (6) of these criteria.

## **CRITERIA REVIEW FOR DESIGNATION OF LANDMARKS (LMC SECTION 2.56.050)**

**A. The council may designate a landmark with the consent of the owner if it is at least fifty years old, or is determined to have exceptional historic value, and meets one or more of the criteria listed below.**

**1. The Landmark or Historic District has character, interest, or value as part of the development, or the cultural, artistic, social, ethnic, economic, political, technological or institutional heritage, of Longmont, Boulder County, Weld County, the state of Colorado, or the United States.**

The Tower of Compassion is historically significant relative to the theme of Ethnic Heritage / Asian. Erected in 1973, the tower was presented to the citizens of Longmont, as a gift from the Kanemoto family in appreciation for the community’s empathy for the family, especially during the World War II era. The tower stands today as a visual reminder of the Longmont community’s compassion for persons of Japanese descent during a period of extreme xenophobia, as well as a tribute to the Kanemoto family’s many positive contributions to the City of Longmont. The tower is also historically significant relative to the theme of Community Planning and Development. It was built as, and remains, the most visually prominent feature in Kanemoto Park

**2. It includes the site of a significant historic event. N/A**

**3. It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development, or the cultural, artistic, social, ethnic, economic, political, technological or institutional heritage of Longmont, Boulder County, Weld County, the state of Colorado, or the United States.**

The Tower of Compassion is associated with the Kanemoto family, who have a long history in the Longmont community, beginning as farmers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and ultimately developing a residential subdivision and donating land for a neighborhood park and elementary school. Members of the Kanemoto family are still active in the City of Longmont today. A complete history of the Kanemoto family and

their contributions to Longmont is included with the Cultural Resource Survey included as an attachment.

In addition to the Kanemoto family's contributions to the City of Longmont, the Tower of Compassion was donated to the City of Longmont as a recognition and symbol of gratitude for the kindness of the Longmont community during World War II, when United States residents and citizens of Japanese descent were detained in internment camps. The governor of Colorado at the time was opposed to this detention and refused to allow Colorado residents of Japanese descent to be detained in internment camps.

**4. It portrays a historic era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.**

The Tower of Compassion is thought to be one of the first traditional Japanese pagodas built in the United States outside of San Francisco. Each of the five levels has a meaning, which taken together form the meaning of compassion. The pagoda is open from the bottom floor to the top, as is traditional for Japanese pagodas.

**5. It is identified as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Longmont, Boulder County, Weld County, the state of Colorado or the United States. N/A**

**6. It embodies elements of architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant architectural innovation.**

The tower is a five-level steel pagoda designed to withstand 100-mile-per-hour winds. It incorporates modern and traditional materials in a traditional Japanese building style.

**7. For an application with the owner's consent, its unique location or singular physical characteristics represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or the City of Longmont.**

The Tower of Compassion is located in the Southmoor Park neighborhood on what was once the Kanemoto family farm. The Longmont area had a number of Japanese-American farming families and had become something of a refuge during World War II for Japanese Americans seeking to avoid detention in Japanese internment camps. The Kanemoto family donated land to the City of Longmont for what became Kanemoto Park, and in 1973 commissioned the Tower of Compassion within the park as a gift to the City as a token of gratitude for their support over the years, and especially during World War II.



**8. The site is geographically or regionally important.**

The Tower of Compassion is located within Kanemoto Park in the Southmoor Park neighborhood. This neighborhood was developed by the Kanemoto family on land that had been their family farm, with land for the park and ultimately the Tower of Compassion itself donated to the City of Longmont. The Tower is a prominent feature in the seven-acre Kanemoto Park, and overlooks Left Hand Creek.

The Longmont Historic Preservation Commission voted 4-0 to recommend that the Longmont City Council designate the Tower of Compassion as a Longmont Historic Landmark at its July 10, 2024 meeting.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Ordinance

Att 1 Staff Report to the Historic Preservation Commission

Att 2 Draft Minutes from July 10, 2024 Historic Preservation Commission

Att 3 Application for Historic Landmark Designation

Att 4 Tower of Compassion Cultural Resources Survey

Att 5 "Life Made Sweet", Yellow Scene Magazine