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Preserving America's Heritage

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First Lady Designates Historic Filipinotown a Preserve America Community

LOS ANGELES – Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), today presented a certificate, signed by First Lady Michelle Obama, recognizing the Historic Filipinotown neighborhood of Los Angeles as a Preserve America Community.

Community leaders and officials received the designation certificate at “Preserving Historic Filipinotown: A Celebration,” held at Unidad Park. The park is home to a large mural depicting Filipino American history and culture.

“I am proud to welcome Historic Filipinotown as the newest addition to our 872 Preserve America Communities nationwide, and the 36th in California,” said Donaldson, who is also the California State Historic Preservation Officer. “Our state leads the country in having historic neighborhoods that represent the rich diversity and heritage of our nation become Preserve America Communities.”

Among the heritage assets that helped Historic Filipinotown gain Preserve America Community status are seven sites designated by the City of Los Angeles as Historic Cultural Monuments, the annual Historic Filipinotown Festival, tours in a restored jeepney (a traditional taxi made from a WWII jeep, which give visitors and residents a better understanding of the cultural history of the neighborhood), the nation’s only Filipino American World War II Veterans Memorial, and programs involving youth in preserving local history and culture.

Only 20 historic neighborhoods nationwide have been recognized to date by the Preserve America Communities program. California is home to seven of those historic neighborhoods. In addition to Filipinotown, the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Chinatown, Koreatown, Little Tokyo, and Thai Town are also designated. San Francisco’s Japantown and San Diego’s Little Italy round out the California contingent.

Civic and business groups continue to work closely with the city to preserve Historic Filipinotown’s ethnic heritage assets and to utilize its unique character to promote cultural heritage tourism, economic development, and community revitalization. Work on the neighborhood’s nomination was facilitated by the Pilipino American Network and Advocacy (PANA) in conjunction with Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA); My HiFi; the Pilipino Workers Center; the HiFi Neighborhood Council, Inc; and the HiFi Chamber of Commerce. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, City Councilman Eric Garcetti, and Congressman Xavier Becerra also supported the designation process.

“Achieving Preserve America Community status is a tremendous accomplishment and source of much pride for our community. It recognizes the contributions of Filipino Americans to not just Los Angeles, but the nation as a whole. It also represents a broad range of Historic Filipinotown residents, businesses, organizations, elected officials, and other stakeholders coming together to make the designation possible,” said Dennis G. Arguelles, director of Program Development for SIPA.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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The Preserve America Community program recognizes municipalities, Tribal communities, and historic neighborhoods within major metropolitan areas, which use their historic resources in sustainable ways and share their stories with residents and visitors. Applicants that meet program criteria are designated by the White House.

Links to other information on the event can be found at www.myhistoricfilipinotown.org.

More information on Historic Filipinotown and the Preserve America program is available at <http://www.preserveamerica.gov>.

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