

## Sarah Godinez

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**From:** Brian Yamaguchi [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:36 AM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Cc:** Brian.Yamaguchi  
**Subject:** Public Comment - City Council meeting 1/20/2026  
**Attachments:** M Landmarking.pdf

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Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

I am writing to formally submit and strongly urge the adoption of the attached proposal to designate the Monrovia Hillside "M," commonly known as the "Big M," as a Historic Landmark under Monrovia Municipal Code §17.60.050.

For over seventy years, the "Big M" has served as an iconic and defining visual feature of our city's skyline. Constructed in the early 1950s by the Monrovia High School Class of 1952, this structure is far more than a physical mark on the hillside; it is a profound symbol of civic pride, school identity, and a continuous tradition of community engagement.

As detailed in the attached documentation, the "M" meets the City of Monrovia Historic Preservation Ordinance criteria for the following reasons:

- **Established Community Feature:** The resource represents an established and familiar visual feature that is prominently visible from major streets and civic areas throughout the city.
- **Historical and Educational Significance:** It is deeply associated with local educational history and the unique Southern California tradition of hillside letters representing community identity.
- **Integrity of Resource:** Despite decades of maintenance, the "M" retains its original location, design, scale, and the "feeling and association" it was intended to convey when first built.
- **Public Ownership:** The City of Monrovia is now the proud owner of the 5.19-acre parcel that includes this resource, making it an ideal candidate for formal protection.

Designating the "Big M" as a Historic Landmark provides significant public benefit by formally recognizing a symbol valued by generations of Monrovia residents. Furthermore, it expands the City's landmark program to acknowledge that historic significance can extend to non-traditional cultural resources that reflect our shared heritage.

I respectfully request that the City Council move forward with this designation to ensure the long-term preservation and thoughtful maintenance of this cherished landmark. Thank you for your time, stewardship, and consideration of this proposal.

Blessings,

Brian Yamaguchi

## **Proposed Historic Landmark: *The Monrovia Hillside “M” (Big M)***

### **1. Name of Resource**

The Monrovia Hillside “M” (commonly known as the *Big M*).

### **2. Location**

Hillside north of the City of Monrovia, visible from large portions of the city and associated historically with Monrovia High School. The City of Monrovia is the new owner of a 5.19-acre portion of Assessor’s Parcel No. 8503-004-021 which includes the “M”.

### **3. Resource Type**

Site / Structure / Community Symbol (Non-habitable cultural resource).

### **4. Date of Construction**

Circa early 1950s.

### **5. Statement of Significance**

The Monrovia Hillside “M” is a long-standing and highly visible community symbol that has served as an established visual feature of the City of Monrovia for more than seventy years. Constructed in the early 1950s by students of Monrovia High School Class of 1952, the “M” represents a continuous tradition of civic pride, school identity, and community engagement.

The resource is significant for its association with local educational history and community tradition, as well as for its unique location and visual prominence overlooking the city. For multiple generations of residents, the “M” has functioned as an instantly recognizable landmark, serving as a geographic and cultural reference point and as a symbol of Monrovia’s identity.

### **6. Applicable Historic Landmark Criteria**

The Monrovia Hillside “M” qualifies for designation under the City of Monrovia Historic Preservation Ordinance based on the following criteria:

Criterion:

The resource has a unique location or physical characteristics or represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or the City of Monrovia.

- The “M” is prominently located on the hillside above Monrovia and is visible from major streets, neighborhoods, and civic areas throughout the city.
- It has served for decades as a defining visual element of the Monrovia skyline and is widely recognized by residents as a symbol of the city and its high school.
- Few features in Monrovia possess the same level of long-term visual recognition and cultural association.

Additionally, the resource supports the intent of the ordinance by preserving a feature that reflects local heritage rather than architectural style, acknowledging that historic significance can extend beyond traditional buildings.

## **7. Historical Context**

The hillside “M” was constructed in the early 1950s by Monrovia High School students as part of a broader tradition common in Southern California communities, where hillside letters symbolized school pride and civic identity. Over time, the “M” became closely associated not only with the high school but with the City of Monrovia as a whole.

Throughout its history, the “M” has been maintained, restored, and periodically improved by community members and student groups, demonstrating sustained public interest and stewardship. Its continued presence reflects Monrovia’s strong connection to its educational institutions and its history as a close-knit community.

## **8. Integrity**

Despite routine maintenance and material updates over time, the Monrovia Hillside “M” retains integrity of:

- Location: It remains in its original hillside location.
- Design: The form, scale, and visual impact of the letter remain consistent with its historic appearance.
- Feeling and Association: The resource continues to convey its historic role as a symbol of school pride and community identity.

Any changes have been made to preserve legibility, safety, and durability rather than to alter its historic character.

## **9. Public Benefit**

Designation of the Monrovia Hillside “M” as a Historic Landmark would:

- Formally recognize an iconic and widely valued community symbol.
- Encourage long-term preservation and thoughtful maintenance.
- Acknowledge student and community contributions to Monrovia’s cultural history.
- Expand the City’s landmark program to include non-traditional but culturally significant resources.

## **10. Conclusion**

The Monrovia Hillside “M” meets the intent and criteria of the City of Monrovia Historic Preservation Ordinance under Monrovia Municipal Code §17.60.050 by virtue of its long-standing presence, cultural significance, and status as an established visual feature of the city. Landmark designation would appropriately recognize and protect a symbol that has meaning for generations of Monrovians.