



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 14, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-004

HEARING DATE: January 28, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Michael Rush LLC represented by Scott Moomjian

LOCATION: 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 452-665-01-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building located at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building located at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1936 under HRB Criterion D. The designation excludes the 952-square-foot rear addition constructed in 1962. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Charles Salyers and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Salyer's work because it shows his incorporation of many features of the Streamline Moderne style, his preferred style in the latter half of his career, into the design of a small commercial building.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The property is located on the southeast corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Palm Street in the Horton's Addition subdivision.

The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resource Survey Report and given a Status Code of 5S3, "Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford, who constructed the building to use as Dr. Ledford's professional offices, and the name of Charles Salyers, a Master Architect.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds that the property is significant under HRB Criterion D. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

*CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.*

Research into the history of the property at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Uptown's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

*CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion B.

*CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.*

The subject property contains a one-story, L-shaped office building constructed in 1936 in the Streamline Moderne style. It features a stucco exterior, a flat roof, steel sash windows, and an asymmetrical facade. The primary façade faces west, onto 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is composed of several bays with different setbacks. Two of the corners formed by the setbacks are curved. One of these curved corners features vertical fins extending the full height of the elevation, with narrow windows in between them. A strip of horizontally striped stucco molding runs along the length of the building just above the windows. Another, simpler strip of molding runs along the building just below the windows. There are three shallow, curved, cantilevered awnings above openings on the façade. One is above the main entrance, another is above a pair of windows, and another is above an ADA-accessible door at the south end of the elevation, which is set back further than the rest of the elevation. The upper strip of molding connects with the three awnings, which feature the same horizontal striping as the molding. Along the north elevation, which faces Palm Street, there are three round porthole windows. They are flanked by steel sash corner windows.

The property has undergone several modifications since its 1936 date of construction. The exterior was restuccoed with a heavy lace stucco texture at an unknown date. A 952-square-foot addition was added to the rear of the building in 1962, turning the building from a rectangle into an L shape. The addition is differentiated from the original portion of the building because it does not have any horizontal molding. The front door was replaced with a decoratively paneled door at an unknown date. The porthole windows on the north elevation were infilled between 1970 and 2008, and slightly larger porthole windows were reinstalled in the same location c. 2016. Additionally, there are several discrepancies between the existing building and a drawing of the proposed building that was featured in *the San Diego Union* in 1936, prior to the building's completion. First, the drawing does not show the 22 feet of wall comprising the southernmost section of the west elevation. The drawing also shows two narrow strips of molding towards the top of the wall, vertical and horizontal molding around the main entrance, and a decorative cluster of quarter-circle slabs on top of the awning above the main entrance. However, because this image is a drawing from before the building was completed, rather than a photograph, it cannot be determined whether these discrepancies are a result of later modifications or if they date from the original construction.

The Streamline Moderne style, also known as the Art Moderne style, was popular during the period c. 1925-1940. Influenced by the Cubism and Modern movements in Europe, Moderne structures are characteristically smooth walled with little unnecessary ornamentation, flat roofs, and simple aerodynamic curves of concrete or stucco. Ornamentation is typically limited to features that emphasize the horizontal, such as "speedlines" in stucco finishes. Steel-sash windows, glass block windows, corner windows and round porthole windows are frequently used. The smooth curved walls, porthole windows, and emphasis on horizontality often created the impression of an ocean liner. The popularization of the style was reinforced by its use by the government during the Depression. Government-funded New Deal projects adopted the style as the embodiment of government efficiency, in contrast to the lavishly ornamented Art Deco and Period Revival buildings of the pre-Depression years. Examples of the Streamline Moderne style can be found on almost every building type including commercial, multi-family residential apartments, and some single-family residences. Streamline Moderne architecture is relatively rare in San Diego compared to other styles of the period. In San Diego, commercial and multi-family examples can be found in most neighborhood cores that were developed prior to 1940, including Hillcrest, Mission Hills, Bankers Hill, Point Loma, Downtown, Normal Heights, South Park, North Park, and Kensington, as well the El Cajon Boulevard, Park Boulevard, and University Avenue corridors.

Although the house retains many of the character defining features of the Streamline Moderne style, such as a flat roof, horizontal accents, steel sash windows, corner windows, porthole windows and curved corners, the modifications have resulted in a loss of integrity to the 1936 period of significance. Most significantly, the restuccoing obscured the character defining smooth stucco walls with a highly textured stucco finish significantly impair integrity of design, materials and feeling as it relates to Criterion C. According to the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, inappropriate restuccoing with coarse texture stucco may render the property ineligible for designation, unless the resource is otherwise an excellent, unique or rare expression of the style. Without a smooth stucco finish, this property no longer retains integrity as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its original Streamline Moderne design. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under Criterion C.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The subject property is a known work of Charles Salyers, a Master Architect. Charles H. Salyers was born in Tennessee in 1900 and was living in San Diego by 1910. As a young man, he worked in the building industry and developed skills in residential design and construction. His obituary states that he attended the "Cantell College of Architecture and Engineering in Los Angeles."

Salyers' earliest works were in the Spanish Eclectic style. He was granted an architect's license in 1933, and thereafter became a prolific residential designer. He began working in the Streamline Moderne style in the 1930s, including in his residential designs.

Salyers retired from practice in 1966. Although he never earned the renown of many of his contemporaries, Salyers was nonetheless a builder, architect and public administrator of note. Recognized in large part for his innovative approach to design, he helped shape the unique residential character of midcentury San Diego.

Five of Salyer's works have previously been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Paul E. Stake/George Schilling House (HRB #356), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB in 1998, and the Leslie R. and Isabel M. Smith/Charles H. Salyers Spec House #1 (HRB #1048). Both these buildings are single-family residences designed in the Streamline Moderne style. Unlike these two Streamline Moderne buildings, the subject property features porthole windows and horizontal molding with horizontal score lines. Additionally, the vertical fins on the subject property's front elevation reflect the Art Deco style. Therefore, the subject property is an example of a different way that he executed the Streamline Moderne style, compared to his known residential designs. Therefore, despite its historically inaccurate stucco, the subject property is comparable to his other designated works in terms of significance under Criterion D.

As discussed above, due to modifications to the stucco, the property does not retain integrity of design, materials and feeling as it relates to Criterion C. However, it does retain integrity as a notable example of Salyer's work in the Streamline Moderne style for a small commercial building in 1936.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains integrity and continues to reflect Salyer's original design, intent and aesthetic. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Salyer's work because it shows his incorporation of many features of the Streamline Moderne style, his preferred style in the latter half of his career, into the design of a small commercial building. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

*CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - *Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

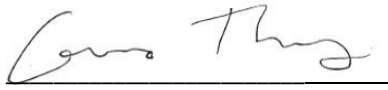
The property at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building located at 2851-2881 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1936 under HRB Criterion D as a notable example of the work of Master Architect Charles Salyers. The designation excludes the 952-square-foot rear addition constructed in 1962.



Gemma Tierney  
Associate Planner



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison  
Development Services Department

GT/ss

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER  
ADOPTED ON 1/28/2021

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/28/2021, to consider the historical designation of the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building (owned by Michael Rush LLC, PO Box 827, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067) located at **2851-2881 4th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **452-665-01-00**, further described as BLK 327 LOTS A & B in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. ,** and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Dr. Roy and Herma Ledford/Charles Salyers Building on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Charles Salyers and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Salyer's work because it shows his incorporation of many features of the Streamline Moderne style, his preferred style in the latter half of his career, into the design of a small commercial building. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. .**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 952-square-foot rear addition constructed in 1962.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote:

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney