



# Save Our Heritage Organisation

Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

Monday, March 22, 2021

City of San Diego  
Chair McCullough, Historical Resources Board & staff  
202 C Street  
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: March 25, 2021 agenda -Items 1, 3 and 6

Chair McCullough, Board members & staff,

**Item 1: 805 West Cedar St** -Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) concurs with the staff report and finds the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna at 805 W. Cedar Street highly significant under Criteria A and B, as an important gathering place for LGBT persons, as an associated business that played a significant role in the social life of the LGBT community, and for Frank Stiriti, owner of the Vulcan and co-founder of the GSDBA. This is a unique and rare property for San Diego and should be designated by the Historical Resources Board.

Significant under Criterion A, 805 W Cedar Street is identified in the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement as the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna, from 1976 through 2013, which served an important social function to the community and an educational conduit by dispensing HIV/AIDS information. Serving as one of seven bathhouses in San Diego during the 1970s, it provided a safe haven for gay men, reflecting a unique aspect of the city's historical, cultural and social development. Specifically, from 1974 through 1988, the Vulcan Steam Room and Sauna provided a safe haven for gay men to socialize and engage in sexual activity at a time when homosexuality was illegal (until 1976) and condemned. The historical integrity of 805 W. Cedar remains intact and, today, the building is identifiable by the LGBTQ community, closely resembling the resource as it stood in 2013 (upon its closure).

Also significant under Criterion B, Frank Stiriti established this bathhouse to provide a safe space for gay men and to employ gay men. Importantly identified within the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement, Stiriti owned the Vulcan and played an important role in the local LGBTQ community. He was a co-founder of the Gay San Diego Business Association (GSDBA) and honored by the Center's Wall of Honor in 2008 in addition to other community roles.

**Item 3: 4415 Long Branch Ave** - SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds this Arts and Crafts era house with Tudor Revival style influences significant under Criteria C and D for exemplary architecture and as the notable work of Master Architect Charles Salyers.

Character-defining features include the exterior stucco and asymmetrical front façade, arched casement windows, octagonal tower, deep eaves and exposed rafter tails, gable venting, wood entry door and more. Also the important work of Master Salyers, this resource illustrates the only example of his fusion of these two architecture styles into a single design.

**Item 6: 3951-3957 Goldfinch St. and 820 W. University Ave.** – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the highly intact Spanish Eclectic style, Two-Part Commercial Block building at 3951-3957 Goldfinch Street significant under Criterion C for architecture. The high level of architectural and material integrity presented by this commercial building indicate eligibility for the state and National registers. Additionally, SOHO finds this resource and the Arts and Crafts era bungalow at 820 West University Street significant under Criterion A, as an important historical and economic aspect of Mission Hills development and contributes to the identified Arnold and Choate’s Historic District.

3951-57 Goldfinch Street is an excellent and intact example of a Spanish Eclectic style, Two-Part Commercial Block building, and highly eligible for designation under Criterion C. The level of intact material, especially for a commercial building with two storefronts is incredibly rare. Prominently located on a corner, character-defining features include the symmetrical primary façade, flat roof, simple parapet, “visor roof” covered in red Mission clay tile, clay roof vents, smooth stucco exterior, divided-light double hung wood windows, and central arched ground floor opening with divided light residential entry door. Additional stylistic features of this Spanish Eclectic style commercial building are the Moorish shaped transom (above commercial windows) with wooden spindle work, recessed and intact storefront windows, doors, cornice, and side transom windows. Features of the Two-Part Commercial Block type include the plain/stark facades, stucco exterior, and the division between upper residential and lower commercial zones. While there are a few replacement windows along the alley façade and some missing windows in small original openings along the other side façade, these are not character-defining and do not diminish the strong material and architectural integrity of this commercial resource, nor its ability to convey historical significance. Further, if the bulkhead tile has been added in recent years, an earlier photo should be submitted to confirm the report’s statement this is not original material especially since the tile that was replaced in 2019 matches the tile in the oldest 2009 Google Street view. 3951-3957 Goldfinch Street is a very intact and rare commercial example of a 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building that displays virtually all character-defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style.

Significant under Criterion A, 3951-3957 Goldfinch Street and 820 West University Avenue are a special element of historical, economic, and architectural development. Together, these two resources illustrate a once common solution to accommodate new growth and commercial development– relocating an already built residence to the back of the parcel. This 1927 change speaks to the unique historical and economic development evolution of this parcel, as well as how this further developed Mission Hills’ commercial center. Further, this once common solution to relocate initial buildings to the rear of the lot illustrates a unique and often difficult to prove aspect of economic development. Last, these two resources both contribute to the Arnold and Choate’s Historic District, identified within the Uptown Community Plan, which is significant under Criterion A with an 1890 through 1950 period of significance.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,



Bruce Coons  
Executive Director  
Save Our Heritage Organisation