



Save Our Heritage Organisation

Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

Friday, May 17, 2020

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

Re: July 23, 2020 agenda - Items 7, 9, 10, 11 & 13

Chair McCullough, Board members & staff,

Item 7: 3951-3957 Goldfinch St. and 820 W. University Ave. – Save Our Heritage Organisation (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 contribute 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. 3951-3957 Goldfinch Street is a very intact and rare commercial example of a 20th 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.

Item 9: 2101 Commercial Street – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the c. 1929 Art Deco style Board of Education Warehouse Building is significant under Criteria A, C, and D, as a special element of the

Southeastern San Diego community, for exemplary architecture, and as the representative work of Master Architect Eugene Hoffman.

Both the 2020 and 2002 consultant and staff reports identify this very intact Art Deco warehouse has seen little change. A significant landmark for the area since its 1929 date of construction, it's quite visible from the freeway and SOHO agrees with the 2002 report that this resource is eligible for the federal, state, and local registers. A special element of the community under Criterion A, this resource is also architecturally significant under Criterion C, as this building embodies distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction. Maintaining its exterior design concepts, the resource has retained distinctive characteristics and meets the criteria for significance due to the high quality of the original design and lack of significant alterations. Also significant under Criterion D, for Master Architect Eugene Hoffman, this warehouse is "considered to possess high artistic values as an example of the 20th Century Commercial-Industrial style," (p.1 in 2002 report).

Item 10: 516– 522 Thorn Street – SOHO concurs with the staff report and finds the c. 1913 Mission Revival style apartment building significant under Criterion C. SOHO also asserts this resource is significant under Criterion A because this resource reflects unique high-quality architectural development constructed by a non-architect, contractor William Burney Johnson.

Significant features warranting designation under Criterion C include the unique round two-story bay windows, arched entry arcade, rounded parapet detail with clay tile shed roof and exposed rafters, bay and casement windows, and more. This apartment building is also significant under Criterion A, for architectural development, as a unique building with rare stylistic features, built (and possibly designed) by contractor William Burney (WB) Johnson, a "non-architect." Also credited with building 2928 Grape Street, a designated property, the high quality of Johnson's work as a non-architect is clearly present in Grape Street as well as 516-522 Thorn Street.

Information from the 2928 Grape Street report indicates Johnson was born in Sweden, self-employed, and worked in the contracting field for 25 years, retiring in 1944 (attached, p. 22, San Diego Union, Nov. 15, 1964).

Item 11: 659 Ninth Avenue – On Thursday, January 9th, 2020, the SOHO Board of Directors voted unanimously (9-0) to support this project as it was presented. Their approval includes a provision for SOHO to comment, at a later date, on the color design and sign placement. SOHO concurs with the findings in the staff report and encourages the Historical Resources Board to recommend to the Planning Commission adoption of the mitigation measures and findings associated with the SDP related to this historical resource.

Item 13: Kearny Mesa Community Plan Update - SOHO finds the general preservation planning strategy used for the Kearny Mesa Community Plan update to be appropriate. Further, we agree upon the three historic themes outlined within the Historic Context Statement, the identified "associated property types," and we support the policy goals and recommendations, 3.1 through 3.9, which build off the initial list in the historic context statement.

We appreciate the response to our comments pertaining to a specific date by which to re-evaluate the Pan-Asian presence in Kearny Mesa as well as the Multiple Property Listing related to the aerospace industry, and look forward to when this can enter into the City's workplan. SOHO encourages the HRB to recommend adoption of the Kearny Mesa Community Plan Area Historic Context Statement and associated project documents to the City Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,



Bruce Coons
Executive Director
Save Our Heritage Organisation