



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Historical Resources Board**

DATE ISSUED: August 13, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-028

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of August 27, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street**

APPLICANT: City of San Diego represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>th</sup> Street, 92105, City Heights,  
Council District 9

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the properties located at 4102-4116  
University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>th</sup> Street as historical resources.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the properties located at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>th</sup> Street under any adopted HRB Criteria.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the buildings are historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The four properties are located on the north side of University Avenue, just west of 41<sup>st</sup> Street in the City Heights area of San Diego. The subject resources are a combination of one and two-story Vernacular style commercial buildings with Mission Revival elements, built in 1919-1924. The buildings are located on APN 454-763-15. The properties were identified in the 1996 Historical Greater Mid-City San Diego Preservation Strategy and given a Status Code 5S3, “Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation.”

ANALYSIS

A Technical Report was prepared by Wendy L. Tinsley Becker in 2009, which states that the resources are significant under HRB Criterion A, C and F. A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Marie Burke Lia in 2013, which concludes that the resources are not

significant under any HRB Criteria and staff concurs. 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 properties at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or City Heights' historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.

The Becker Report found that these commercial properties were historically significant under Criterion A because they were constructed during the time when this area of the City was incorporated as East San Diego, 1912-1924. However according to Lia report, there are at least forty examples of similar style and types of commercial buildings along the University Avenue commercial corridor within eight blocks of the of the subject properties still in place that represent the early development of this section of University Avenue's business district during this period. Furthermore, in order for a property to be found significant under Criterion A, the resource must be "distinct among others of its kind" or "surpass the usual in significance." The subject properties do not meet this test when compared to their many neighbors from the same time period. 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 properties at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street 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 properties. Therefore, the properties are 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.*

This ca. 1919 subject building located at 4102-4106 University Avenue is a wood framed, two story, rectangular shaped, Vernacular Commercial style structure. The building has a concrete foundation, stucco exterior, and a flat roof with bracketed cornice with Mission style tile detailing. All the historic wood windows on the second floor have been replaced with non-historic metal framed windows. The front (south) elevation has large, fixed pane plate glass windows flanking the single entry door. Multi-lite transoms are located above door and windows and extend to the west elevation. Non-historic awnings have been added over the front window sections. On the side (west) elevation, the large fixed pane plate glass windows extend from front elevation.

The ca. 1919 property addressed as 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street sits directly behind 4102-4106 University Avenue. The building is a small, two-story, asymmetrical, Vernacular style, commercial

building. The building has a concrete foundation, stucco over clay tile exterior and a flat roof. On the front (west) elevation, a large door and a single side door are present. The second floor wood window has been replaced by a metal framed, non-historic window. The window opening has been reduced.

The ca. 1919 property addressed as 4108 University Avenue is a one-story, rectangular shaped, Vernacular Commercial style building. The building has a concrete foundation, stucco exterior, and a flat roof with a plain frieze adorned by a bracketed, hipped roof cornice that extends across the front (south) elevation. A portion of the second story footprint of 4102-06 University Avenue sits above the rear of the building. The building has a centered single door entrance flanked by metal framed, plate glass windows. There are large awnings over the display windows. Multi-lite transoms extend above the full width of the elevation. The rear elevation includes a large garage door bay.

The ca. 1924 property addressed as 4112-4116 University Avenue is a one story, asymmetrical, rectangular shaped, Vernacular Commercial style structure. The building has a concrete foundation, stucco exterior, and a flat roof with a tripartite design parapet. Four full-height pilasters divided the south elevation into three vertical bays utilized as storefronts. Two of the three storefronts have single door, recessed entrances flanked by large, metal framed, plate glass display windows. The third storefront, addressed as 4116, has an entrance that is placed even with the front of the structure.

There have been a couple of alterations to the buildings which include the replacement of windows on second floor of 4102-4106 University Avenue and the infill between 4102-4106 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street. The 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows that 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street was separated from 4102-4106 University Avenue by staircase. This staircase provided access to both buildings. Sometime after 1956, the open space was in-filled and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> and 4102-06 University Avenue combined into one building.

The Becker Report states that 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street are in intact grouping of One-and-Two-Part Commercial Block buildings, each with a different revival style parapet or cornice design. The One-and Two Part Commercial block building type is characterized by a horizontal division of two distinct zones. The large street level windows indicate public spaces for commercial use, while the upper smaller openings indicate more private spaces. These buildings possess no essential physical features demonstrating specific purpose or function. They were constructed for common uses of any nature: retail, light manufacturing, office, residential, etc. and as indicated in by the City Directory research, they were used by a variety of uses, such as a police station, restaurants, nursery, grocery and bakery. The tile cornice line on 4102-4106 and 4108 University Avenue does not represent the essential features of the Mission Revival style. These buildings are missing a majority of the identifying features of the Mission Revival style, such as tile roof covering, shaped parapets, quatrefoil windows, and arched openings. The architectural style is Vernacular Commercial construction, which by definition acknowledges the absence of a recognized architectural style. These buildings are simple, unadorned, standard commercial buildings without the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

The subject buildings do not embody the distinctive characteristics of a recognized architectural style, type of construction, or method of construction from the period and are not examples of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

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

No architect or contractor was identified as responsible for the design and construction of these buildings. Therefore, the subject buildings are not representative of the work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist, or craftsman.

*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 properties at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street have not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the properties are 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 properties at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street are not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the properties are not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the properties are designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resources 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 not recommended that the properties located at 4102-4116 University Avenue and 4011 41<sup>st</sup> Street be designated under any HRB Criteria. Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the buildings 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.



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Associate Planner



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Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

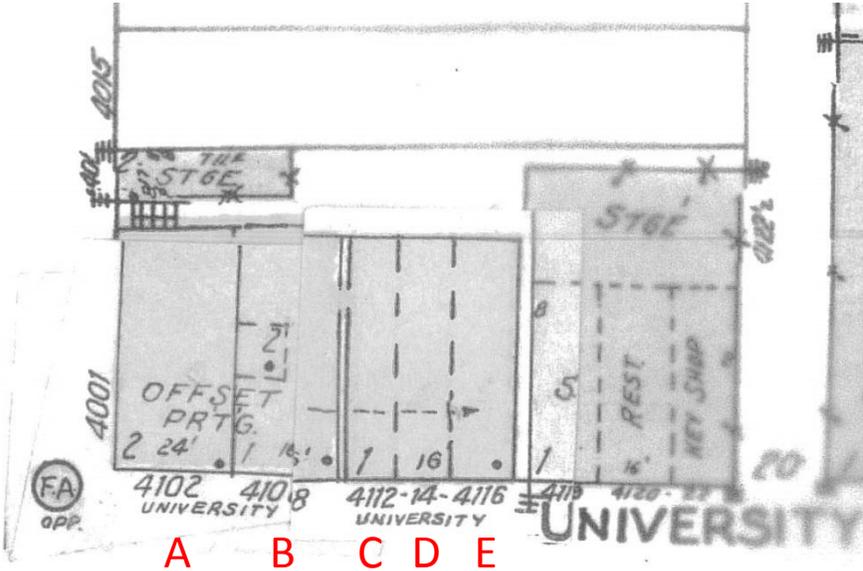
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Attachment:

1. Photo Exhibit showing Interior of Boarded Storefronts
2. Historical Report prepared by Marie Burke Lia dated 2013, under separate cover
3. Historical Report prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning dated 2009, under separate cover

Interior Photos of Storefronts

4102-4116 University Avenue



A. 4102-4106



B. 4108



**C. 4112**



**D. 4114**



**E. 4116**

