



Community & Economic Development Department

Planning Division

3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 | Phone: (951) 826-5371 | RiversideCA.gov

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD MEETING DATE: JUNE 15, 2016

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 3

DEDESIGNATION

I. CASE NUMBER: P16-0292

II. PROJECT SUMMARY:

- 1) **Proposal:** Historic Dedesignation request to remove Structure of Merit and Contributor to the Mission Inn Historic District status to 4049-4053 Main Street
- 2) **Location:** 4049-4053 Main Street
- 3) **Ward:** 1
- 4) **Applicant:** City of Riverside
- 5) **Case Planner:** Scott Watson, Assistant Planner
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III. RECOMMENDATION:

That the Cultural Heritage Board:

1. **DETERMINE** that Planning Case P16-0292 (Dedesignation) is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) and 21084.1 of the CEQA Guidelines as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment; and

That the Cultural Heritage Board recommend that the City Council:

2. **APPROVE** Planning Case P16-0292 based on the facts for findings outlined below thereby dedesignating 4049-4053 Main Street as a City Structure of Merit and as a Contributor to the Mission Inn Historic District.

FACTS FOR FINDINGS: (From Sections 20.20.030 and 20.50.010(G)(Z)(FF) of the Riverside Municipal Code)

FINDINGS: A Structure of Merit must contribute to the broader understanding of the historical, archaeological, cultural, architectural, community, aesthetic or artistic heritage of the City, retain sufficient integrity, and meet at least one of the criteria defined in Title 20.

FACTS: The building at 4049-4053 Main Street no longer meets the definition of a Structure of Merit or any level of individual designation because severe alterations have substantially compromised its integrity and diminished its ability to contribute to a broader understanding of the heritage of the City. Further, the property does not meet any of the designation criteria have a unique location or singular physical characteristics that cause it to represent a familiar visual feature, and it is a common property type that was associates with common uses. Its construction and alteration history makes it unlikely to be able to yield information important in history or prehistory.

FINDINGS: A Non-Contributor to a Historic District does not provide appropriate historic context, historic architecture, historic association, or historic value, or is capable of yielding important information about the period because that building structure no longer possesses integrity due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes and it does not independently meet the designation criteria defined in Title 20.

FACTS: The building at 4049-4053 Main Street has been severely altered by changes to the original fenestration and the application of stucco and art deco inspired decoration, which have completely obscured original materials, features, and the spatial relationships of the original design, although the original stepped parapet is visible from the rear parking lot. These alterations have compromised the integrity of the building such that it is no longer possesses, and is unable to convey, a sense of its time and place within early 20th century period of commercial development and architecture within the Mile Square. The Michelle'z building is clearly not currently eligible for individual designation, and as such, the property has been assigned California Historical Resources Status Code 6L – Determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in local planning.

IV. BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

This dedesignation request is associated with a potential project to develop Chow Alley, which would propose to demolish the Main Street building and construct an open air venue for food and open space.

As requested as part of the environmental review by the Community and Economic Development Department, a Cultural Resources Assessment was prepared by Casey Tibbet, M.A., LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) to consider potential impacts of demolition to this designated building in order to further inform the Chow Alley project. The study identified that these

designations were made more than 30 years ago and that more recent evaluations (2003 and 2007) were conflicting, prompting the re-evaluation of the 4049-4053 Main Street, known as Michelle'z.

V. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Located on the eastside of Main Street between Tenth and Eleventh Streets, this one-story, rectangular storefront retail building (1909) has a flat roof with parapet walls sheathed in stucco. The parapet is stepped on the rear, while the full-height façade is flanked by articulated pilasters. A half-height pilaster separates the façade into two bays, each filled with an aluminum-framed storefront assembly topped with awnings (missing over the north bay). The south side elevation is attached to an adjacent building while the north side elevation is now exposed following the 1980 demolition of the adjacent building and features no fenestration or decorative detail. A garage was added to the rear elevation in 1912, and the date of a rear office addition is unknown. The retail building has been extensively altered from its original design, which featured brick walls with faux stone veneer, wood-framed store-front windows, and a galvanized iron façade cornice. The date of the application of stucco, alteration of the step façade parapet, addition of pilasters, and removal of decorative detailing is unknown but may date from the early-1930s when the building was in use as a Safeway grocery store. Today, the building is utilitarian in appearance with only minor Art Deco influence that reflects little, if any, of its original decorative detailing.

Construction History:

1909	1-story brick store building for Fred H. Freeman designed by architect Seeley Pillar and constructed by Cresmer Mfg Co.
1912	Add rear garage during use as funeral home
Unknown	Add rear office
By 1939	Secondary storefront (4049) alteration
Ca. 1930	Remodeled (cornice and stone veneer removed) during use as Safeway (1929-1938)
Ca. 1960s	Storefront windows/doors replaced during retail and office use
Ca. 1980	Attached (north) building demolished

VI. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The building was constructed in 1909 during a time of increasing commercial construction in the Mile Square for owner Fred H. Freeman, likely as a speculative venture as Freeman was engaged in real estate as well as agriculture and citrus development. According to the Cultural Resources Assessment prepared by LSA, the building at 4049-4053 derives its significance from its association with noteworthy local architect, Seeley Pillar and the locally significant Cresmer Manufacturing Company. Arriving in Riverside from Ontario Canada in 1887, Pillar made his way into design from work as a handyman, then a construction worker, and finally a foreman with John E. Porter, contractor for the Loring Building, the Rubidoux Block and the Presbyterian Church, which were all constructed 1900. Pillar started his own contracting business and was a licensed architect by 1901 with most of his buildings built before 1920. Pillar designed homes, many commercial buildings, including the Backstrand and Grout building at the southwest corner of Mission Inn Avenue and Main, the Arlington Branch of the Riverside Library, the Hemet Library, the old Bryant School, and Grace Methodist Church at University and Victoria Avenues, and at least two other buildings for Freeman. However, the property has been completely

altered from its original style and no longer reflects its original Pillar design or Cresmer craftsmanship.

Having supplanted an earlier orange grove and residence, the 1909 building supported a series of uses, including a funeral home, grocery, other retail, and office space, and it was remodeled circa 1930 in a modest and utilitarian interpretation of the Art Deco style, likely for Safeway grocery company, which occupied the building from 1929-1937 and operated two other modest Art Deco groceries in Riverside. The LSA report describes:

Art Deco architecture emerged out of the 1925 Paris Expo as a determined and purposeful rejection of earlier, more organic and traditional styles such as Craftsman, Beaux-Arts, and period revival styles. The forward-reaching embrace of the machine age celebrated by Art Deco architecture is exemplified by clean, geometric massing and ornamentation consisting of bold zigzags, streamlines, chevrons, sunbursts, and stylized floral designs. The extent of ornament on Art Deco-styled buildings varied from rich and ornate to the merest suggestion of efficient machine production. Many excellent examples of Art Deco architecture can be found in Los Angeles, including the Pellessier building (now the Wiltern Theatre), Los Angeles City Hall, and the Eastern Columbia Building (Kidney 1974; Whiffen and Koeper 1990). Art Deco style had a more modest presence in Riverside; the style was somewhat popular for commercial buildings from 1925-1940. In reviewing the City's Historic Resources Database and a windshield survey of the city, it appears that at least 11 buildings with Art Deco detailing remain in the city.

In order for a property to maintain its integrity, it must retain the majority of the physical structure that conveys design materials, craftsmanship, feeling and association. LSA's property evaluation determined that the integrity of the physical structure no longer exists as the commercial building has been "completely altered from its original (1909) design and the Art Deco remodel (circa 1930) is only a modest and utilitarian interpretation of the style." Accordingly, the study found that the building does not appear eligible for designation at any level and recommended dedesignation.

With these new findings it can be stated that the site is no longer eligible for local listing as a Structure of Merit or as a Contributor to the Mission Inn Historic District because it no longer contributes to the broader understanding of the historical, archaeological, cultural, architectural, community, aesthetic or artistic heritage of the City or retains sufficient integrity. Although dedesignated, as the property would remain within the current boundaries of the Mission Inn Historic District, the appropriate California Historical Resources Status Code to reflect non-contributing status is ***6L – Determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in local planning.***

VII. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS:

Public notices were published in one newspaper of general circulation within the City, and mailed to property owners and occupants adjacent to the site, at least ten (10) days prior to the scheduled hearing. No responses have been received to date.

VIII. EXHIBITS:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Zoning Map
3. Current Photos
4. Historic Sanborn Maps
5. Cultural Resources Report