

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD ITEM

MUSEUM

Meeting Date: 12/17/80

RE: Nomination of the Eastside Social Services Center (the former University Heights Junior High School) to CHB Landmark Status.

Owner: City of Riverside

Sponsor: Staff

Inclusion on other Inventories: None

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This two-story concrete Spanish Renaissance structure features an irregular cross-shaped groundplan. The building rests on a high foundation with a beveled concrete water table and a continuous series of small rectangular screen vents.

The long nave wing main facade features, from the east, six bays of rectangular three-over-three-over-three double louver windows on the first and second stories. The seventh bay features three-over-three-over-three single louver windows on both stories. At the seventh bay the long nave wing intersects with the cross wing. The sides of the cross wing at the groundfloor are composed of three bays of recessed arched casement windows (with wooden mullions) on the east side, one similar bay on the north side, and two on the west side.

On the cross wing, first and second stories are divided by a simple molded stringcourse. Above each groundfloor casement window on the cross wing second story is a double eight-light casement window. On the pier between each second-story on the cross wing window is a lattice-work ornament set in a rectangular frame with scroll bottom.

The nave wing continues west of the cross wing and is joined at the intersection by a three-and-a-half story octagonal tower. This tower displays to the street a small rectangular six-light casement window at first floor; an arched eight-light double casement window with fanlight at one-and-a-half story; and a small rectangular window with scroll frame and scroll and shell pediment at the stringcourse between second and third floor. The octagonal cupola features an arched opening at each face, with arches springing from simple imposts. Dividing each face of the cupola is a pilaster on molded base with a simplified scroll capital. Each pilaster upholds a broken entablature with plain frieze. Resting on top of each pilaster is a solid scroll console upholding the cornice-line of the roof. Between each console is a panel of tile ornamentation. The tower features a hipped tile roof and is topped by a flat onion dome finial.

Adjacent to the tower, in the nave wing, is the main entrance bay which is approached by five concrete steps. The entrance ensemble, accented by a slightly projecting slab molding with scroll volute outline, features an arched portal flanked by unfluted Corinthian columns on high rectangle- and diamond-paneled pedestals. The columns have a simple molding on the lower half of the shaft and a tulip motif at the base of the capital. Each column upholds a broken

entablature which features a scroll-palmette motif in the frieze. The portal arch springs from simple impostes. The archivolt is decorated with consoles and a volute-ended molding. The keystone is an escutcheon with scroll motif, and the paneled spandrels feature S-scrolls. The recessed wooden double door features wooden mullions and a fanlight. Second floor of the entrance bay features an arched six-light window (with simple molded archivolt and impostes) flanked by Tuscan compound pilasters which support a broken entablature with plain frieze. There is an S-scroll motif above each pilaster. The broken curved pediment above the second-story entablature features a central cartouche framed by a shouldered rectangular panel. S-scroll motifs with swags decorate the area around the cartouche. Topping the parapet over the main entrance is a rectangular panel with cross-and-diamond motif, flanked by tulip urn balusters with drip pendils.

West of the entrance bay, the nave wing continues with nine window bays set in three sets of three three-over-three-over-three double louver windows at both first and second story. Terminating the nave wing main facade toward the west is a slightly projecting three-bay pavillion. The central bay of this pavillion features, at first and second story, a narrow three-over-three-over-three single louver window. Windows on the flanking bays are of the same type with two three-over-three-over-three louvers. The hipped roof of the pavillion meets the gable end of the nave wing. The pavillion features basement windows at dado level.

The western end of the pavillion features the western entrance to the main school building. This centrally placed entrance bay is set in a slightly projecting slab molding approached by a two-run flight of concrete stairs with solid end blocks. The portal arch springs from simple impostes with a drip pendil below each. The beveled corners of the portal feature console and shell ornamentation. The archivolt is enriched by an ovolo-rectangle molding with scroll ends. At the apex of the archivolt is a double volute with scroll. A volute and swag motif appears at each corner of the simple architrave. The double doors are glass with wooden mullions and surrounds and are capped by a large fanlight.

Above the western entry slab molding is a six-light rectangular casement window with architrave. The window is topped by a flat scroll pediment form. South of the entrance bay is a set of three stepped twelve-light narrow arched windows with simple base, divided by unfluted Corinthian pilasters. These windows run along an interior stairwell.

The eastern end of the building features the same decorative elements as the western end. At the southern (rear) elevation, the entrance block for the western entry, there is a small rectangular window at the first floor and a three-over-three-over-three double louver window at the second.

West of the entry block are seven bays on the southern elevation: looking westward, the first three, at first and second story, are composed of three-over-three-over-three double louver windows; the next three feature three-over-three double louver windows at the first floor and three-over-three-over-three double louver windows at the second; the seventh bay features an entry approached by three concrete steps. The entry at this seventh bay features a double wooden door with paired six-light transoms. Second floor of the seventh bay features paired rectangular four-light louver windows. Above the second floor windows is a simple cornice molding and a solid parapet punctuated by louver vents. At the intersection of the seventh bay and the cross wing is an engaged pier topped by a scroll console.

The eastern side of the southern elevation's cross wing features five bays: looking south from the intersection with the nave wing, the first four bays feature large segmental arched windows with wooden mullions and are divided by giant order pilasters topped with scroll consoles; the fifth bay is a pavillion with a double-door entrance approached by low concrete steps with solid end blocks. The pavillion is approximately twelve feet taller than the rest of the cross wing. This southern cross wing is the home of the old school auditorium and in the pavillion is the stage area. A rectangular louver vent appears at attic level on the eastern side of the pavillion. A slab molding with scroll bottom accents the vent. The cross wing terminates with the pavillion.

The south side of the rear cross wing is of plain wall surface with two plain pilasters upholding nothing. The west side of the rear cross wing features the same decorative elements as the east side.

West of the cross wing, the southern elevation of the nave wing continues for nine more bays. Next to the intersection with the cross-wing is a double-door (glass with wooden surrounds, capped by paired six-light transoms) entrance bay approached by eight concrete steps. The recessed doorway is flanked on the west side by a narrow rectangular window. Above the doorway at the second story is a band of three four-light windows. West of the entrance bay are two bays with three-over-three double louver windows on the first floor and three-over-three-over-three double louver windows on the second. The next six bays feature three-over-three-over-three double louver windows at both first and second story.

The south side of the western entry pavillion features a recessed double-door (glass with wooden mullions and surrounds and filled-in fanlight). A narrow rectangular window flanks the portal at the west side. At the second story above the portal is a ten-light narrow arched window and a three-over-three-over-three single louver window.

HISTORY:

The idea of isolating the middle grades in junior high schools was evidently formally introduced into the Riverside educational system in 1912 by Superintendent of Schools Arthur N. Wheelock. Junior high school boys were apparently assigned to the old Grant Elementary School and girls to the old Girl's High School.

Separation of the sexes was the rule in Riverside schools at this time. Boys had been assigned to the new Polytechnic high school in 1911 while girls remained in the old Ninth Street high school. Within the decade, however, community rumblings in favor of coeducation began to be heard and in 1921 the Board of Education gave notice that coeducation would be on the ballot for the general election in November. By 1922, bonds totaling \$175,000 for coeducation to begin in 1924 were approved. Junior high school, however, were sexually segregated for four more years until University Heights Junior High and two other new facilities were built.

By the mid-1920's the need for more school buildings was perceived as a necessity in Riverside. Since World War I, city school attendance had jumped 55%. In 1924, junior high schools and their staffs were separated from the department of elementary education and were seeking facilities that were truly their own.

Three new junior high schools, several new elementary schools, and a rapidly growing junior college characterized post war growth in Riverside education. By 1926 the school district was searching for sites for three new junior high schools--Central, Chemawa, and University Heights.

The site for University Heights Junior High (UHJH) was placed at the corner of Eighth Street and Kansas Avenue on an orange grove that had been formerly owned by the widow of author Robert Louis Stevenson. Neither Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson nor her famous husband had ever been to Riverside, but she had purchased property here at the turn of the century as an investment. Mrs. Stevenson's brother, Jacob Van de Grift, was a Riverside real estate agent.

Mrs. Stevenson's Riverside holdings included a lot between Sixth and Seventh on Main Street (the future site of Mapes Cafeteria) and a pool hall on Eighth Street between Main and Market which she called her "dive". Together with her brother she purchased a building on Eighth between Orange and Lemon (now Frisco Q's, but also remembered as the location of Riverside's first movie screening in the late nineteenth century) and the future site of UHJH. At some point Mrs. Stevenson and her brother exchanged half-interests so that he became sole owner of the theater and she of the future UHJH property. In 1926, Mrs. Stevenson sold the UHJH property to a real estate agent who knew of plans for the new junior high.

Residents near the proposed junior high site felt that the school construction would be a boon for the area--not only because their children would go to school nearby but also because they felt it would spur the paving of East Eighth Street from Kansas to Chicago Avenues.

The UHJH site began to be cleared in February 1927 with the hope that the new facility would be ready for the 1927-28 school year. \$850,000 was allocated for construction of the three new junior high schools. UHJH, located on fifteen acres, cost \$175,000 to construct and was planned to accommodate 600 students. UHJH was designed by the Los Angeles firm of Austin, Ashley, and Austin. John C. Austin is remembered as one of the patriarchs of Southern California architecture for this period.

Construction on Central, Chemawa, and UHJH fell behind schedule and the schools did not open until Fall 1928. UHJH was dedicated on October 15, 1928 and had a first year enrollment of approximately 500.

The old University Heights Junior High was used consistently until 1972, when the old school's non-compliance with modern earthquake standards forced the building of a new UHJH on Massachusetts Avenue. From 1972-74, the school district located its adult education program at the old UHJH. In 1974, the school district sold the old building for \$300 to the City which now operates it as the Eastside Social Services Center and Bobby Bonds Park.

Schools, with their sports, plays, P.T.A.'s, etc., often act as the hearts of communities. UHJH, as a school, always served that function on the Eastside. UHJH was always racially integrated and by the 1950's and '60's was the source of traditions and legends that crossed time and ethnic backgrounds. In its new role as park and social services center, UHJH still plays an important part in the life of the community.

DOCUMENTATION:

Riverside Daily Enterprise; 2/3/26, 5/11/26, 8/6/26, 8/14/26, 11/18/26, 2/22/27, 3/8/27, 3/16/27, 4/5/27, 4/28/27, 4/29/27, 7/24/27, 9/10/27, 2/7/28, 4/21/28, 8/22/28, 10/15/28

Honaker, Robert P. An Historical Perspective of the Riverside Unified School District During a Period of Transition, 1871-1928 (Unpublished manuscript, Riverside Public Library) 1968

Interview with Jo Neilsen (Robert Louis Stevenson's niece), 10/80

Interview with Walter Parks (Riverside County Schools), 10/80

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Cultural Heritage Board designate the historic University Heights Junior High School building, for both its architecture and its place in the history of Riverside's Eastside, as a City Landmark.

SUGGESTED RESOLUTION

A Resolution of the City of Riverside, California, Designating
Landmark #

WHEREAS the Cultural Heritage Board has considered the evidence concerning a proposed landmark designation for 2060 University Avenue, the historical University Heights Junior High School; and

WHEREAS the Cultural Heritage Board considered the structure's historical and architectural contribution to the City of Riverside;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Riverside that the historic University Heights Junior High School, 2060 University Avenue, be declared a City Landmark.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this designation includes interior woodwork, doors/transoms, and bulletin boards, in addition to the exterior of the structure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this designation includes landscaping on the north and west sides of the designated building.

ADOPTED by the Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Riverside, California and signed by its Chairman and attested by its Secretary on this 17th day of December, 1980.