



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 11, 2024 REPORT NO. HRB-24-016

HEARING DATE: April 25, 2024

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 –Arnold and Choate’s Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District National Register Nomination**

RESOURCE INFO: California Office of Historic Preservation Pending Nominations:  
[Arnold and Choate's Addition- North Florence Heights Historic District NR Draft \(ca.gov\)](#)

APPLICANT: Mission Hills Heritage represented by Architectural Resources Group

LOCATION: Various addresses within the proposed Arnold and Choate’s Addition- North Florence Heights Historic District, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Review the Arnold and Choate’s Addition- North Florence Heights Historic District National Register Nomination

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to the California State Office of Historic Preservation the listing of the Arnold and Choate’s Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District with a period of significance of 1907-1950 at a local level of significance under National Register Criteria A and C and consider amending the nomination to expand the district boundary by incorporating the 23 properties identified in Table 1 of this report and potentially change the contributing status of the 6 properties shown in Table 2 with a caveat that the proposed classifications of all contributing and non-contributing resources may not be adequately confirmed by staff due to the limited property-specific information and documentation requirements for National Register nominations.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to the California State Office of Historic Preservation’s (OHP) requirement that the local jurisdiction be provided 60 days to review and comment on a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared and submitted to the OHP by Architectural Resources Group. A recommendation by the Historical Resources Board to the OHP is not a designation action and the proposed historic district will not be listed in the City of San Diego Register of Historic Resources as a result of the Board’s recommendation or as a result of listing on the National Register by the State. However, if listed or determined eligible for listing on the

National Register by the State Historic Resources Commission and the State Historic Preservation Officer, the district would meet the definition of a designated historical resource under the City's Municipal Code and would be subject to compliance with the City's Historical Resources Regulations.

The proposed Arnold and Choate's Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District comprises approximately 69 acres and is located within the Mission Hills neighborhood of the Uptown community planning area. The west boundary follows the centerline of Stephens Street; the east boundary follows the contour of a canyon and extends east to Eagle Street; its north boundary also follows the contour of a canyon and extends north to Barr Avenue; and its south boundary is defined by sections of Washington Place, Fort Stockton Drive, and Lewis Street (Attachment 1). The boundary is irregular in shape partially due to its topographical context and exclusion of contemporary infill development.

The proposed historic district is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as a significant historical resource at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1907-1950, reflecting the period during which the district developed.

Under Criterion A, the historic district is proposed as significant in the area of Community Planning and Development for its association with significant patterns of residential development facilitated by the advent and expansion of intra-urban streetcar service in San Diego. The district is proposed as a strong expression of how early suburban expansion was directly facilitated by the use of electric streetcar as a primary mode of transportation.

Arnold and Choate's Addition and North Florence Heights are two contiguous residential subdivisions that were conceived amid successive speculative real estate booms in San Diego in the late nineteenth century and were improved and developed beginning in the early twentieth century upon the construction of an electric streetcar line to this area of San Diego.

Under Criterion C, Design/Construction, the historic district is proposed as eligible in the area of Architecture as an excellent, intact concentration of early twentieth century architectural styles, expressed primarily in the form of single-family residential buildings and a lesser number of multi-family, commercial and institutional buildings. The works of local known architects and builders are represented in the proposed district.

The historic district comprises mainly private property as well as one City-owned vacant parcel. The national register nomination surveyed 352 properties. A total 266 buildings (75 percent) were evaluated and determined as district contributing elements, and 85 buildings and 1 site as non-contributors (Attachment 2). The district also includes forty-one individual properties locally listed on the San Diego register as individually significant.

The Uptown Community has a long-standing development history and has been part of various community and citywide historic contexts and survey efforts. The most recent, consisted of a historic context statement and reconnaissance survey prepared for the 2016 Uptown Community Plan update. This survey is substantially more detailed than a typical reconnaissance-level survey because it incorporated previous surveys and conducted more extensive field work. However, it did not include the degree of documentation required for an intensive-level survey. The [Uptown Community Plan Area 2016 Historic Resources Survey Report](#) identified eighteen potential historic

districts, four additional districts that appear locally eligible but were not as thoroughly surveyed, three Multiple Property Listings, and 2,134 properties that may be eligible for individual listing under one or more of the City's local designation criteria. As standard practice with historic surveys scoped at the community plan level, the historic districts identified in the Uptown survey are subject to further research and intensive-level survey work to verify their eligibility.

Potential historical resources were identified in each of the community's development themes: Early History (1769-1885), The Railroad Boom and Early Residential Development (1885-1909), The Panama-California Exposition and Streetcar Suburbs (1909-1929), Great Depression and World War II (1929-1948), Postwar Development, Suburbanization, the Automobile & Modernism (1948-1970), Neighborhood Revitalization and the LGBTQ Community (1970-Present).

The boundaries for the twenty-two potential historic districts identified by the survey were determined using the National Register standards for determining district boundaries. The original historic subdivision maps were used as the origination of proposed boundaries which were then reviewed with respect to underlying zoning and surveyed for their visual development characteristics. Factors evaluated include an assessment of visual barriers, visual changes in character, boundaries at a specific time in history, and clearly differentiated patterns of historic development.

The survey identified portions of the Arnold & Choate's and North Florence Heights historic subdivisions as separate potential historic districts. The survey identified an Arnold & Choate's potential historic district within a portion of the historic subdivision as potentially eligible under local designation criteria A and C with a period of significance between 1890 to 1951. The National Register nomination proposes boundaries that differ from those in the Uptown survey as discussed in the Analysis section below.

The original Arnold & Choate's Addition historic subdivision (recorded 1872) was generally bounded by what is now called Barr Avenue in the north, Curlew Street in the east, the blocks south of and fronting University Avenue, and Randolph Street in the west. The subdivision's street and block layout form a grid pattern and extends beyond the mesa into the canyons which was typical for early subdivisions. The survey's boundary for the Arnold & Choate's potential historic district generally follows the original subdivision boundary except several residential blocks north of Montecito Drive and east of Goldfinch Street and multiple blocks within the mixed residential and commercial core between West Lewis street and University Avenue are excluded (Attachment 3). Portions of the undeveloped canyons were also included in the district's boundary.

The survey identified a North Florence Heights Historic District as potentially eligible for designation under City of San Diego Historical Resources Board (HRB) Criteria A, B and C with a period of significance of 1890-1940. The boundary encompasses the original North Florence Heights subdivision (recorded 1890) excluding the portion within City-owned Pioneer Park (Attachment 4). Under criterion B, the district is potentially significant for its association with horticulturalist Kate Sessions who began purchasing large tracts of the subdivision to accommodate the relocation of her nursery from Balboa Park. Sessions aided the eventual development of North Florence Heights by convincing John Spreckels to extend his San Diego Electric Railway streetcar line into the central Mission Hills area. The extension of transportation to the area brought a renewed interest in developing the area. The National Register nomination proposes a similar boundary except a

property at the northern terminus of Palmetto Way is added and the lots fronting the south side of Fort Stockton Drive between Palmetto Way and Stephens Street are excluded. The nomination includes a discussion of the role of Kate Sessions in the area's historical development and identifies several associated resources as district contributors but does not propose designation under National Register Criterion B.

## ANALYSIS

The district nomination concludes that the historic district is significant under National Register Criteria A and C at the local level of significance. The OHP received the report in August 2023 and has reviewed and docketed the nomination for the May 3, 2024, State Historical Resources Commission quarterly meeting.

City staff has reviewed the nomination and conducted a high-level review of the entire historic district via field survey, Sanborn maps, and Google maps street view feature. Staff concurs that the proposed district has the attributes of a historic district at the local level by containing a concentration of buildings and structures that are united historically and aesthetically by their physical development and have historical interest representative of several development periods and architectural styles within the City's historical development.

Staff was not able to review assessor's building records and research historic archives for any documents related to the properties due to the State's 60-day notice time constraint. Instead, priority is being given to allow for HRB review and comment prior the meeting of the State Historical Resources Commission. While the proposed district can be supported under National Register Criteria A and C (see discussion below), staff has identified concerns with the proposed boundaries and evaluation of district contributors which should be considered (also discussed below). Staff was able to meet with members of the applicant's team to discuss the results of our review, including possible expansion of the district boundary, and obtain their input on the re-classification of the 6 individual resources.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The historic district's proposed boundary generally corresponds to the boundaries of the Arnold & Choate's and North Florence Heights potential historic districts identified in the 2016 Uptown Survey Report except for several omissions. The nomination provides a discussion of shared history between each subdivision to justify combining the Uptown Survey's two potential districts into one historic district. These subdivisions are coterminous and share nearly identical development histories, contexts, and physical attributes.

The proposed district boundary is irregular in shape compared to the original subdivision boundaries due to exclusion of canyons and contemporary infill development that does not relate aesthetically to development within the proposed period of significance between 1890 and 1950. However, the nomination excludes various parcels captured by the Uptown Survey that can be grouped into three categories for this analysis:

- Thirty residential properties within the southern portion of the original subdivision tract - generally the blocks centered around University Avenue between Goldfinch and Eagle Streets;

- Parcels within undeveloped canyon open space;
- Residential properties clustered in several locations at the edge of the district's proposed boundary.

Although the 2016 Uptown survey identified a southern cluster of homes south of Washington Street along Goldfinch, Eagle, and Falcon Streets as within the potential Arnold & Choate's Historic District, staff concurs that the thirty properties within this area as well as undeveloped parcels within the canyons can be excluded from the proposed boundary. While the thirty properties form a cohesive grouping of homes with the same Craftsman architectural style found elsewhere within the proposed district, this small area is separated by the much larger portion of the district by multiple blocks characterized by a preponderance of contemporary infill development with a mix of commercial and residential uses. Many original properties fronting the Washington Street corridor have been substantially altered or redeveloped and multiple blocks bounded by West Lewis Street and Fort Stockton Drive contain contemporary multi-family residential or commercial infill development. The OHP staff has also confirmed that disconnected district boundaries are not supportable.

The Uptown Survey included urban canyons within the Arnold & Choate's district boundary for their contribution to a distinctive community character due to their dramatic natural landscape, native vegetation and distant view opportunities. Most of the undeveloped parcels within the adjacent canyons are also publicly owned for the purpose of open space conservation and within the Multiple Habitat Planning Area. Public conservation of open space for natural resource protection is a relatively more recent planning endeavor. Also, while these natural features are part of the area's historical context, they are not integral to evaluating the historic built environment and staff would not recommend inclusion in the nomination's district boundary.

However, staff does not concur that the 23 properties listed in the table below should be excluded from the district's boundary. These properties are clustered in multiple locations at the periphery of the district's proposed boundary and have a shared relationship with the other properties constituting the district. Generally, these exclusions result in an irregular boundary that divides blocks or street faces from comparable properties within the district. These boundary issues can be addressed, and a more coherent boundary achieved, by adding these properties to the district with the caveat that their status as contributors or non-contributors will need further evaluation.

**Table 1- Proposed Additions to District Boundary**

<b>Address</b>	<b>APN</b>	<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Potential Status (subject to further detailed evaluation)</b>
1102 W. Arbor Dr.	4442640800	1917	Craftsman Bungalow along east boundary, west of canyon	Contributor
1111 W. Arbor Dr.	4443911200	c. 1930	Spanish Colonial Revival along east boundary, west of canyon	Contributor
4226 Hawk St	4442630700	1921	Craftsman Bungalow along north/east boundary	Non-Contributor

4220 Ibis Street	4442640900	1951	Ranch resource along north/east boundary	Non-Contributor
4233 Ibis Street	4442631000	1956	Altered bungalow resource along north/east boundary	Non-Contributor
4227 Ibis Street	4442630900	1915	Craftsman bungalow resource along north/east boundary	Contributor
1004 W. Montecito Way	4443920500	1916	Craftsman Bungalow along east boundary.	Contributor
1011 W. Montecito Way	4443951200	1960	Ranch along east boundary	Non-Contributor
4176 Ibis Street	4443911300	1900	Queen Anne Free Classic along east boundary	Contributor
4179 Ibis Street	4443920100	1960	Ranch along east boundary	Non-Contributor
1609 Fort Stockton Dr.	4436636060	2000	Contemporary building along south/west boundary.	Non-Contributor
1611 Fort Stockton Dr.	4436630500	1925	Vernacular Bungalow along south/west boundary	Contributor
1621 Fort Stockton Dr.	4436630200	c. 1925	Mission Revival along south/west boundary	Non-Contributor
1629 Fort Stockton Dr.	4436631000	1924	Spanish Colonial Revival along south/west boundary	Contributor
4005 Stephens Street	4436630300	1924	Spanish Colonial Revival along south/west boundary	Contributor
4277 Jackdaw Street	4442611200	1940	Ranch along north boundary	Contributor
4309 Plumosa Way	4431800200	c. 1929	Craftsman resource along north boundary. *Also home of the second director of Francis Parker, Ethel Mintzer	Contributor
4255 Randolph Street	4433103300	1920-1952	Craftsman Bungalow adapted to Mid-Century resource within period of significance (Lloyd Ruocco, Homer Delawie) adj. to Francis Parker School *not within 2016 Uptown Survey district boundary	Contributor
1320 Washington Place	4436840600	1915	Craftsman Bungalow along southern boundary	Non-Contributor
1330 Washington Place	4436840600	1915	Craftsman Bungalow along southern boundary	Non-Contributor
4004 Lark Street	4436850900	c. 2017	Contemporary building along southern boundary	Non-Contributor
4010 Lark Street	4436851000	2018	Contemporary building along southern boundary	Non-Contributor
4021 Lark Street	4436840500	1922	Colonial Revival	Contributor

## CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

A list of contributing and non-contributing resources can be found in Section 7, pages 89-96 of the National Register nomination. Descriptions of all resources including address, assessor's parcel number, contributing status, year built, and builder (as known) is in Section 7 pages 12-88 of the nomination. City staff has reviewed the nomination and conducted a high-level review of the entire historic district via field survey, Sanborn maps, and Google maps street view feature and concurs with the survey methodology as stated in the nomination and concurs with the classification of all but 6 of the 352 properties (see table below).

Buildings that were unaltered, or with some alterations that are minor and do not compromise original design intent were classified as contributors. In a historic district context these alterations do not significantly impair integrity and include minor alterations such as window replacements in original openings and porch enclosures where the original form is clearly visible with original supports and most structural framing generally intact.

Buildings with substantive changes, changes not readily reversible, and/or buildings with changes that significantly change its design intent and appearance from the public right of way were generally classified as non-contributors. Common examples of substantive changes include additions to the primary façade, large additions to secondary facades that overwhelm the building and modify essential spatial relationships, major alterations to balconies and porches, and the resizing of window openings. Buildings were also classified as noncontributors if they incorporated many lesser alterations, which together diminished the resource's integrity.

However, the National Register listing process does not require that a nomination append research documents such as Sanborn Maps, Assessor's Building Records, or current or historic photos of resources. A typical City intensive-level survey for a potential historic district would ideally include a review of assessor's building records, lot and block books, as well as any other archives, in order to document original construction dates along with alterations to physical characteristics. Photo documentation is important to document the design features and condition of the resource. This was not able to be done due to time and resource constraints.

The City defines and regulates designated historical resources as those listed on, or formally determined eligible for listing on, the State or National registers. As a result, staff reviews State and National register nominations in detail to ensure an adequate analysis and information exists to regulate these resources effectively and preserve the features and characteristics that are critical to conveying their significance. Consistency in evaluating district resources and determining their status as contributors or non-contributors is important for multiple reasons. First, in order for a district to be eligible for listing on any Register, a district must have a clear majority of contributing resources. Second, a contributing vs non-contributing status confers significant differences in the application of the City's Historical Resources Regulations and Guidelines on a property. Lastly, in the event that a National Register District is listed on the City's Register through a future action, contributing resources are eligible to apply for a Mills Act agreement.

**Table 2 - Proposed Changes to Individual Property Contributing Status**

<b>Address</b>	<b>APN</b>	<b>City Proposed Status</b>	<b>City Staff Comments</b>
4027 Ingalls	4436830300	Non-Contributor	The prominent porch enclosure on the front façade does not showcase the original design intent and legibility.
4077 Lark	4436820300	Non-Contributor	The porch is a prominent alteration and was confirmed by City Staff. The porch supports, foundation, design, and materials have all been replaced in a new design fashion.
1231 W. Lewis	4443840100	Non-Contributor	The front façade openings and windows are not original and not replaced in a manner that kept enough integrity.
4121 Randolph Street	4434840400	Contributor	The second story addition was approved, permitted, and stamped in 2018 by city staff. Applicant noted agreement on changing status.
4127 Stephens	4434740400	Contributor	Although the windows have been replaced on the front façade, the building retains enough integrity to agree with the Uptown survey contributor status. Applicant noted agreement on changing status.
4111 Palmetto Way	4434730500	Contributor	The resource was assigned 5D3 (contributor) in the Uptown survey. The original porch configuration is legible, and the replacement windows were installed in original openings- enough integrity remains to be included. Applicant noted agreement on changing status.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION A – *Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

The National Register nomination report outlines the development history of Arnold and Choate’s and North Florence Heights, specifically the association with intraurban transit, the rise of streetcar suburbs, and it’s continued growth in the post-war period. The National Register nomination outlines the early history, railroad speculation and the origins of Arnold and Choate’s Addition subdivision, the advent of intraurban transit, origins of the North Florence Heights subdivision, the work of Kate O. Sessions, emergence of the streetcar suburb era, and postwar development. The origins of the historic district are rooted in speculative real estate development that took place in the late nineteenth century, when the promise of a transcontinental railroad line to San Diego dominated the public discourse and influenced the trajectory of development. Prominent



horticulturist Kate O. Sessions used numerous lots in North Florence Heights as growing grounds for her nursery and helped bring the streetcar line into the neighborhood. When the Number 3 streetcar line began running in 1908, a residential neighborhood immediately began to take shape alongside it. The vast expanses of barren land in Arnold and Choate's Addition and North Florence Heights were thereafter improved with suburban dwellings and soon developed into cohesive residential blocks comprising single-family houses.

These houses were built incrementally on an ad-hoc basis by both individual owners and speculative developer-builders. Some prospective homebuyers would purchase a single parcel and construct a house of their choosing, but often developer-builders would acquire several parcels and build speculative houses that they would then offer for sale – a common development tactic in San Diego in the early twentieth century. Martin V. Melhorn, Morris B. Irvin, Alexander Schreiber, Nathan Rigdon, and Walter Trepte were among the San Diego developer-builders who invested in the area and factored heavily in its early development.

#### Analysis of Criterion A

Staff notes that Arnold and Choate's Addition and North Florence Heights developed in direct response to the expansion of San Diego's streetcar network in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The district nomination can be supported under National Register Criterion A. Specifically the District:

1. Has a direct association with patterns of streetcar suburbanization in San Diego;
2. Represents the expansion of San Diego's streetcar network to Mission Hills in 1907-1908;
3. Showcases how streetcars directly dictated patterns of development.

*NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.*

The proposed district is discussed as a cohesive, intact concentration of early twentieth century residential architectural styles. Buildings within the district exhibit some variety in terms of their relative scale and grandeur, with a variety of both modest and high style residences. Together, they exist as an intact example of a mixed income suburban neighborhood. The nomination identifies the following architectural styles present: Late Victorian-Era Architecture, Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements (Prairie, Craftsman, American Foursquare), Period Revival (Spanish Colonial Revival, Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Tudor Revival), and Minimal Traditional. The nomination thoroughly evaluates the architectural significance of the proposed district.

Arnold and Choate's and North Florence Heights are also significant for its high concentration of properties designed and built by notable local architects and builders, many of whom have been established as Masters by the City of San Diego's Historical Resources Board. These professionals include Joel L. Brown, Louis J. Gill, William Templeton Johnson, Frank Mead, and Richard S. Requa (Mead and Requa), Emmor Brooke Weaver, and William H. Wheeler.

#### Analysis of Criterion C

The proposed district contains many contributing resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of the various architectural styles popular during its period of development. These styles are Victorian,

Prairie, Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Monterrey Revival, Tudor Revival, Mediterranean Revival, American Colonial Revival, and Minimal Traditional. Additionally, the subdivision contains a high concentration of properties designed and built by architects and builders who have been established as Masters by the City of San Diego's Historical Resources Board. Therefore, staff supports the nomination of the proposed district under National Register Criterion C.

## CONCLUSION

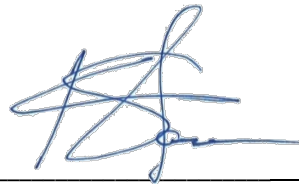
A district derives its importance from being a unified entity, even though it is often composed of a wide variety of resources (in this case, homes of several architectural styles). The identity of a district results from the interrelationship of its resources, which can convey a visual sense of the overall historic environment. Beyond being an identifiable entity, a district must be significant (in this case under National Register Criterion A and Criterion C). The National Register Bulletin 15 acknowledges that a district may be considered eligible even if all of the components lack individual distinction, provided that the grouping achieves significance as a whole within its historic context and retains integrity. In general, the proposed district has not been impacted by teardowns, inappropriate infill or redevelopment to any significant degree and retains a distinct sense of time, place and character as a whole.

Staff has determined that the proposed district exhibits these characteristics and recommends the HRB support the National Register nomination under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance and further recommends amending the nomination to expand the boundary and change the contributing status of several individual properties as discussed above.



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Bernie Turgeon  
Senior Planner  
City Planning Department



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Kelley Stanco  
Deputy Director  
City Planning Department

BT/KS/bt

### Attachment(s):

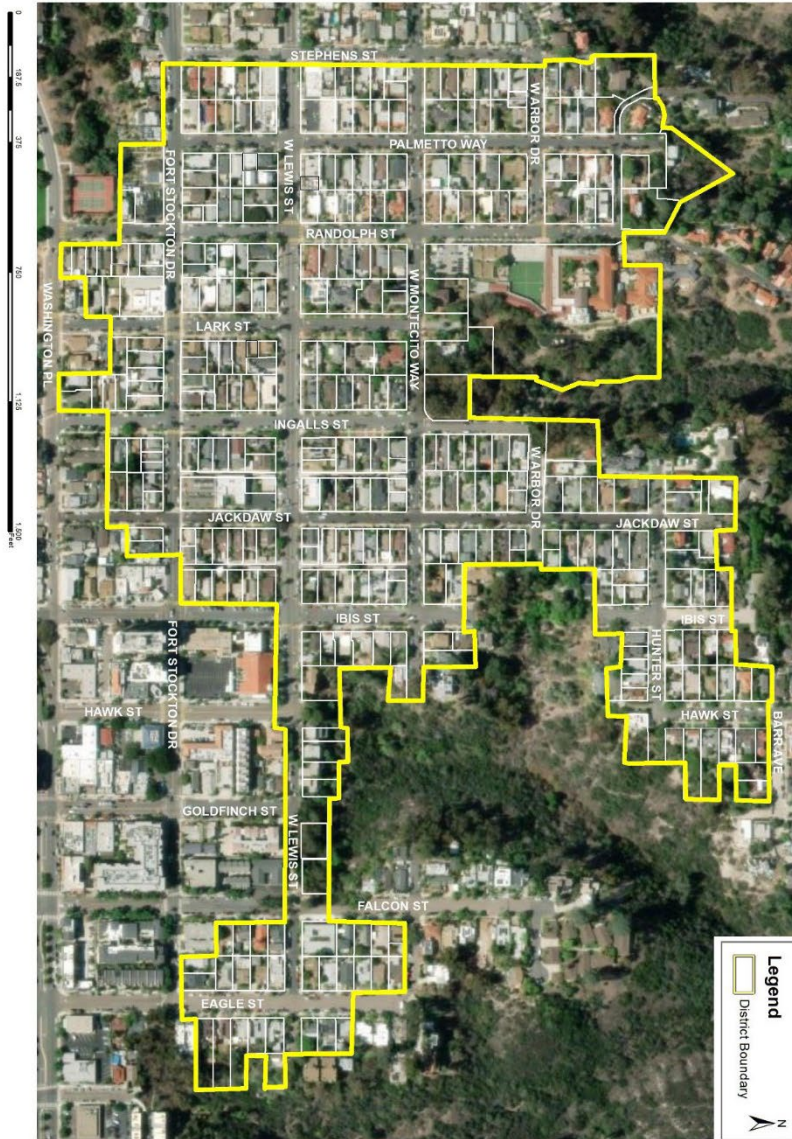
1. Proposed National Register District Boundary Map
2. Proposed District Contributors
3. Uptown Survey Report Map of Arnold & Choate's Potential Historic District
4. Uptown Survey Report Map of North Florence Heights Potential Historic District
5. Applicant's National Register Nomination Report (see Resource Info weblink on page 1; also distributed under separate cover)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form  
NPS Form 10-900 OMB Control No. 1024-0018

Arnold and Choate's Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District  
Name of Property

San Diego, CA  
County and State

**Aerial Photo Map**



Arnold and Choate's Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District | San Diego, CA  
District Boundary

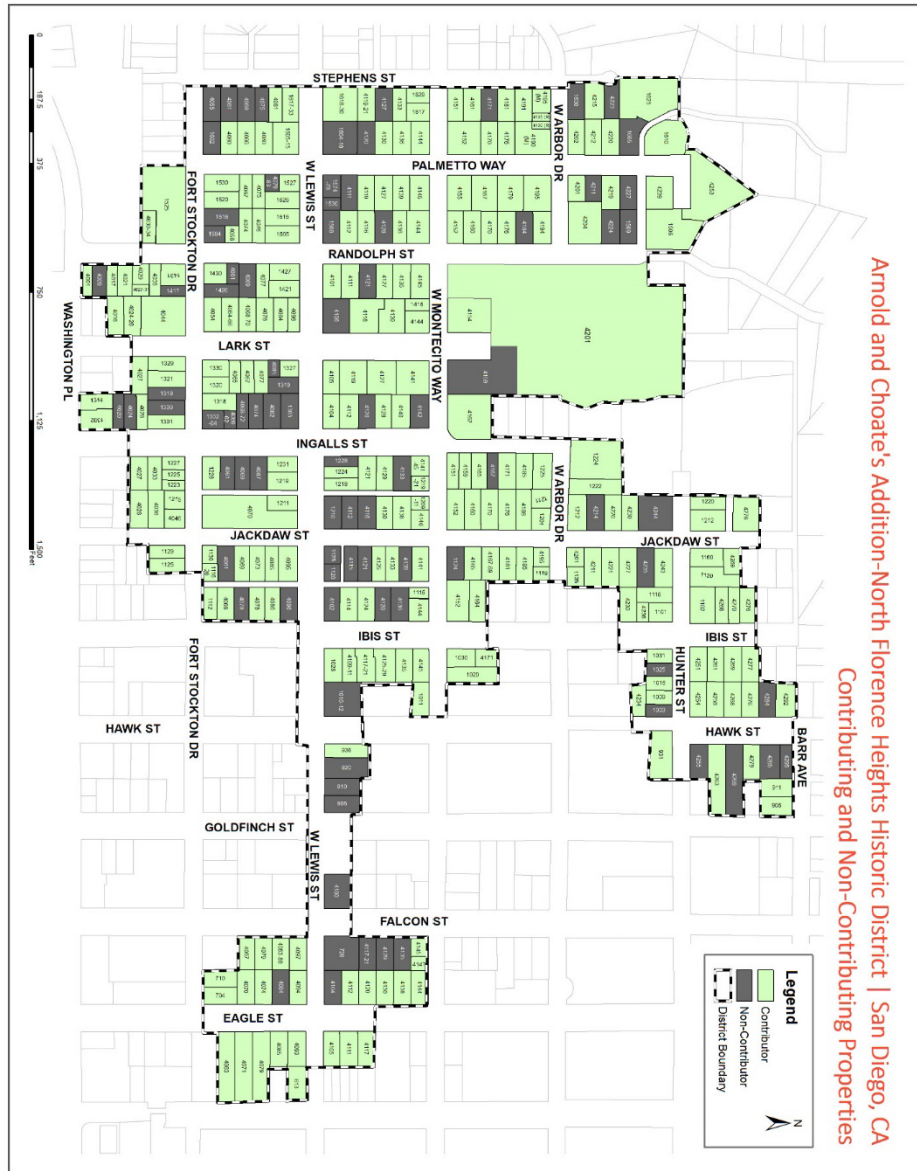
# ATTACHMENT 2

United States Department of the Interior  
 National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form  
 NPS Form 10-900 OMB Control No. 1024-0018

Arnold and Choate's Addition-North Florence Heights Historic District  
 Name of Property

San Diego, CA  
 County and State

## Sketch Map and Contributor Key



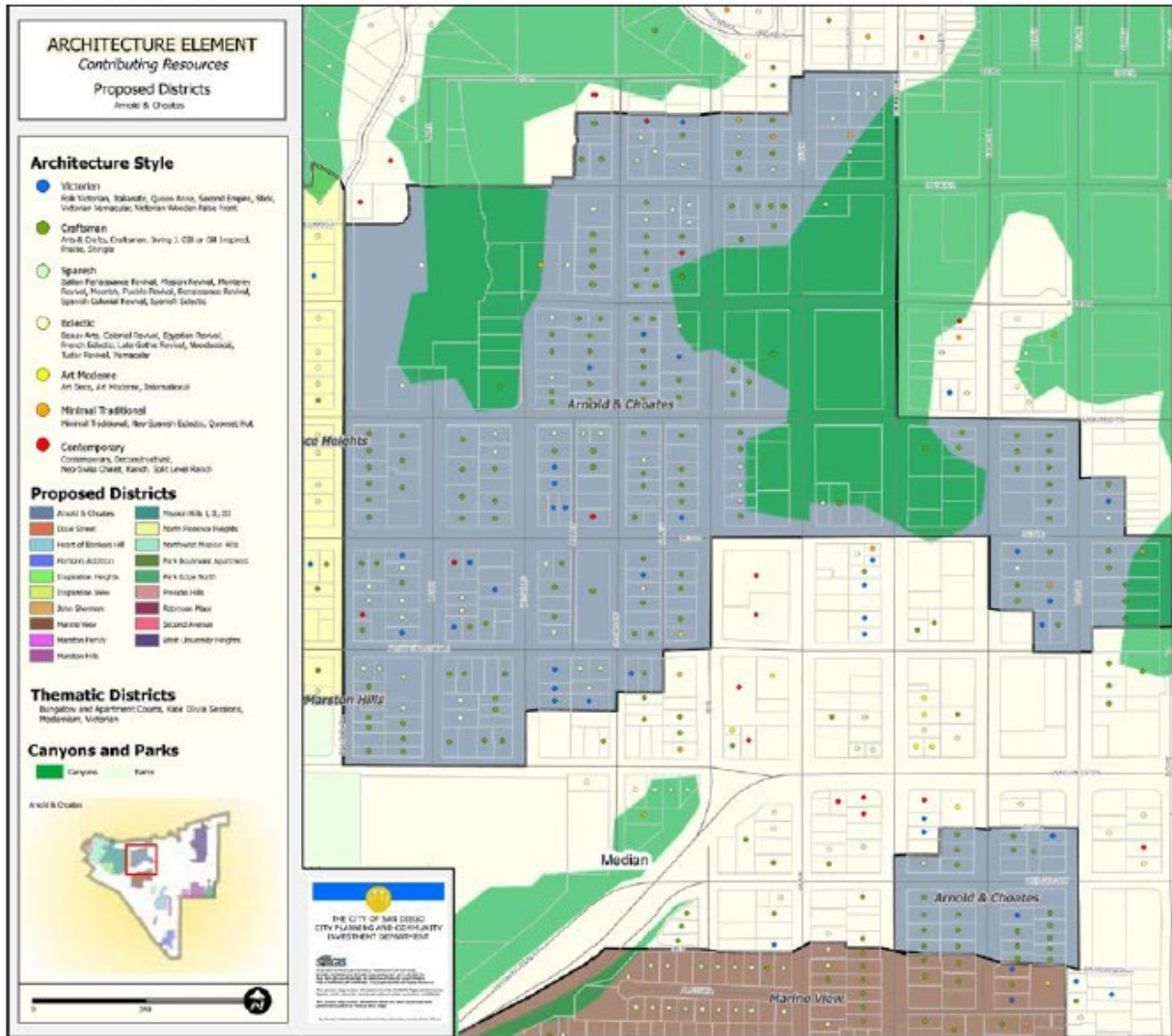
Sections 9-end page 139



Uptown Community Plan Area 2016 Historic Resources Survey Report

Figure D-3: Map of Arnold & Choate's Historic District\*

\*Graphic Dates to the 2004-2006 Survey Effort



Uptown Community Plan Area 2016 Historic Resources Survey Report

Figure D-16: Map of North Florence Heights Potential Historic District\*

\*Graphic Dates to the 2004-2006 Survey Effort

