

San Diego LGBTQ Historic Sites Project

April 26, 2022

Historical Resources Board
City of San Diego
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: April 28, 2022 Agenda
Item #3: The Center/The Gayzette/Albert Bell Building
3780-3786 5th Avenue
Report Number: HRB-22-013

Chair McCullough, Board Members and Staff,

The San Diego LGBTQ Historic Sites Project concurs with the staff report and strongly supports the designation of the The Center/The Gayzette/Albert Bell Building at 3780-3786 5th Avenue, together with its association with Albert Edwin Bell as an LGBTQ historic resource under HRB Criteria A & B.

Significant under Criterion A, 3780-3786 5th Avenue, identified as The Center (note that the identification as the 3rd location of The Center in the City of San Diego LGBTQ Historic Context Statement is listed with the incorrect address), was a significant and important milestone space for the growing and “out” LGBTQ community, thus reflecting a unique aspect of the city’s LGBTQ historical, cultural, political and social development.

Even before The Center moved from its second location at 1447 30th Street to this location on 5th Avenue, 3780-3786 5th Avenue was a place for the growing LGBTQ community. Most early notations of meetings and gatherings in the LGBTQ publications of the dates of significance used the address 3780 5th Avenue. A women’s space, Lily’s, was listed at 3780 5th Avenue even before The Center opened at the same address identified. White Unicorn Gifts, owned by gay businessman Meyers Jacobsen, opened in 1982 in the small single-story building using the address 3780 5th Avenue. An enterprise identified in the *Update* periodical (Issue 75, January 29, 1982) as the Hillcrest Cooperative Association became involved with the property at 3780 5th Avenue and its aim was “...to network with both Gay/Lesbian community and the holistic health community, in order to provide low-cost quality services in conjunction with other professional services in San Diego.”

Without further in-depth research all of the buildings identified in the consultant’s report may have been referred to as 3780 5th Avenue. It is possible that LGBTQ organizations and groups might have used a variety of spaces throughout the entire site. The specific addresses of 3782, 3784 and 3786 5th Avenue possibly could have appeared in a few of the community listings in LGBTQ publications. The San Diego LGBTQ Historic Sites Projects however concurs that the locations identified in the report as 3780-3786 5th Avenue represent the most significance.

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During the AIDS epidemic, 3780-3786 5th Avenue became ground zero for political activism including ACT UP; for AIDS related support such as AIDs Walk, Project Lifeguard, Mothers of AIDS Patients; and for social services including a Hotline, Military counseling, as well as Women and Men's rap groups, etc. It is clearly evident that 3780-3786 5th Avenue played a very significant, timely and consequential role in the development of San Diego's LGBTQ community and its goal of seeking its civil rights and equality under the law.

Also, significant under Criterion B, Albert Bell (as most refer to him), was instrumental in moving The Center from its 30th Street location to 3780-3786 5th Avenue, for serving on the Board of the Center and was its Board Chair during the period of significance. He was an important local activist and leader in the LGBTQ community who fought for lesbian and gay rights, and sought support for AIDS victims during the AIDS crisis in San Diego by his involvement with various activist and support organizations.

Albert Bell was one of the founders of the San Diego County AIDS Assistance Fund, founded ACT UP San Diego, created and taught *Homospiritual: A Gay Journey to Self Esteem* at The Center, was co-chair of the Gay & Lesbian Caucus of the State Democratic Party, and an active member of *Radical Faeries*. Bell was also a feminist supporter and a strong advocate for equal justice. Albert Bell was recognized in 2005 for his community involvement and service by being selected for the Community Wall of Honor located at the San Diego LGBTQ Community Center.

For these reasons, the San Diego LGBTQ Historic Sites Project urges the designation of The Center/The Gayzette/Albert Bell Building at 3780-3786 5th Avenue as an historic resource in the City of San Diego.

Respectfully submitted,

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