

Dear Cultural Heritage Commission Chair Irvine, Vice Chair McGuan, and Commissioners Grisafe, Hinds, Hunter, Ramos, and Bodek:

I'm writing in opposition to the proposed addition to the original historic residence at 2749 E. Ocean boulevard (aka the Samuel Raymond house), by architect Irving J. Gill. This home is one of the last intact and largely unaltered works by one of America's pioneering modernist architects—and it's one of the most important buildings in Long Beach.

Much of Gill's early work is celebrated in the San Diego area, where he built homes, churches, schools, and public buildings. Following his timeline to Los Angeles, in 1916 the Dodge Estate was considered his masterpiece, but was unfortunately demolished in 1970 under much protest (a battle that resulted in the formation of the LA Conservancy in 1978). The Raymond house built in 1918, is one of Gill's last single-family homes that is a continuation of the masterful Dodge house.

Gill's significant contributions include:

- Pioneering the use of concrete tilt-up slab construction in the early 1900's that is still in use today for industrial applications. The Raymond house is constructed using this method.
- A focus on sanitation went hand-in-hand with the use of concrete—e.g., polished concrete floors and kitchen counters.
- Embracing the ideas of indoor/outdoor California living through sensitive siting to the landscape by designing low walls connecting the home and extending to the outside; as well as incorporating large second story balconies. Nature and garden plantings were the only “ornament” Gill used to soften the geometry of his buildings. This is all reflected in the Raymond house.
- Simplification and omission of decorative details and ornament. Instead he emphasized space and large window openings for light which was considered forward thinking at the time.
 - skylights in stairwells and bathrooms to illuminate dark areas.
 - built-in cabinets flush to the walls.
 - simplifying construction methods by replacing multiple tasks with one, which resulted in making homes more cost efficient.
- Again, being ahead of his time, Gill was an early proponent of affordable low-cost housing for workers in the city of Torrance (unfortunately those examples have been altered); multifamily housing in the Lewis garden court in Sierra Madre (also heavily altered); Horatio West Court apartments in Santa Monica. Over 100 years later, his work continues to be studied and influential today.

Irving Gill was a mentor who influenced the younger generation of prominent modern architects, notably, Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra. There is even a Irving J. Gill foundation celebrating his works. One notable book, *Five California Architects* by Esther McCoy (1960), revived the study of Gill's work and is considered one of the most important books on American Architectural history. Gill's importance is not just confined to Long Beach, or California, it stretches internationally and he is credited with creating a uniquely humanistic modern style before the term “modernism” even existed.

At the time of 2749 E. Ocean boulevard's most recent sale, the realtor's description stated:
“...masterpiece built by Irving Gill, Father of modern architecture known for his use of concrete, archways, & corridors of light. This historic home....”

The new owner knew the significance of the home he was buying, and yet sadly he as made an unwise decision to install an insensitive two-story structure attached to the original historic main building. It appears that Obelisk architects, perhaps at Staff's request, have done the bare minimum by lowering the roofline of the addition out of street view to conform to the basic local historic guidelines. However, that is not a good enough reason for approval to diminish this important cultural asset, and after reviewing the plans, there are other inappropriate proposed changes to consider:

- The addition of a front walkway to the main house knocks out a section of the front low wall. Gill designed two entrances on either side that led to a main hallway going the length of the house, so there was never meant to be an entrance in front—too much activity would interrupt the ocean view.



West side main entry hallway from the carport. Gill knew the car would be a future necessity



East side main entry from the side garden shows the integration of nature to the structure

- The placement of the two story addition will essentially cut the outdoor garden in half. Both addition and ADU will be tall two-story focal points that will box-in the garden, upsetting Gill’s open layout and will result in a lopsided, unbalanced overall design.



Early photo displaying the extension of the home to the outside with low walls, steps to different levels, and specific planters that enhance the design



Dark area shows the lopsided massing and destruction of original windows, and doorway, plus the elimination of structural features to the garden design

- To get a better picture of what would be lost due to this proposed addition, please refer to the 3D tour of the Raymond home created by the realtor here: https://youriguide.com/2749_e_ocean_bldg_long_beach_ca/

I would argue that the Staff’s justification for this proposed addition attached onto the main residence does not conform to a number of the Secretary of Interior Standards as laid out to you. For instance:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Stating that the back is of “less significance,” shows that Staff doesn’t understand Gill’s mature work or importance. Due to Gill’s simplicity and lack of ornamentation, Staff is overlooking Gill’s original proportions in the design and is wrong in its justification. Repeatedly, Staff suggests removing a window and doorway “...will not be a significant historic feature but will be documented...” this contradiction only highlights their misguided attempt at preservation. This blatantly ignores the key point that “the removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces....shall be avoided.”

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Gill's simplicity in design is notable for its proportional massing. The justification for the proposed two-story addition is only slightly lowered to simply hide it from public view, and its only compatibility is copying the style of the windows, but again the proportions are off. The addition is too tall and incompatible with the old. It violates the original architectural features and historic integrity. Whereas, the ADU is placed far from the original, is clearly differentiated, and is compatible in the back of the garden property.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

It just doesn't make sense to go to the trouble and expense of a costly two-story addition and then for Staff to claim it could easily be brought back to original by demolishing the addition in the future. *To get it back to the original?* It's already in it's original state, why would it be okay to demolish half the back, if someone in the future has to go to the expense of a more costly restoration? This requirement refers to materials like brick, or wood that can be more easily removed or replaced. This original building is made of concrete—a difficult material to restore once demolished. This addition will definitely compromise the original form and integrity.

Look at how additions—even those done by skilled architects—can be a major and costly mistake. Examples of Irving Gill's Ellen Scripps house when it was deeded to the city of La Jolla and became the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD). Ridiculed by architecture critics nationwide, the museum has been redone multiple times. Please prevent a similar embarrassment from occurring in Long Beach.



Original Ellen Scripps house by Irving Gill (1916)



Addition in 1960, modern columns obstruct Gill's building and has distinctive pergola removed.



Postmodern version with recreated bloated "toontown" pergola is overdone and it blocks the original building.



Quadrupled in size, the new Gill building is just a shell. Should've been saved originally and left alone.

Keep in mind, the Samuel Raymond house is the only Gill building in near original state, and it's in Long Beach. Irving Gill's importance as the "Father of Modern Architecture" cannot be overstated. For all these reasons I've provided, I ask you to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lee Fukui
a member of Long Beach Heritage