

**NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MARCH 2016 MEETING NOTES**

DATE: MARCH 17, 2016

TIME: 6:30 PM

The first part of this meeting was a Business Meeting of the North Park Historical Society (NPHS) Board of Directors, and the second part was the activities discussion for the organization. These notes include updates as of March 29, 2016.

The next meeting will be **THURSDAY** April 21, 2016 at 6:30 pm in a second floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church, 3967 Park Boulevard.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The following members of the NPHS Board of Directors were present:

Steve Hon	Hilda Yoder
Claudia Watts	Paul Spears
Jody Surowiec	Judy Ciampoli
George Franck	

The following members of the NPHS Board of Directors were absent:

Bill Vivian	Randy Sappenfield
Katherine Hon	Michael Thornhill
Sharon Turner	Bob Bauer

Members Sue, Eva, Pat and Don joined us. Welcome!

2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Steve noted that North Park Main Street is putting out a new version of their Explore North Park magazine which will feature articles by Katherine about the Water Tower, the North Park Theatre, and Joe Schloss, and several historical photos that NPHS controls. The *Voice of San Diego* article that Steve wrote entitled "North Park Had One Density Makeover; it Doesn't Need Another" was 4th on the list of favorites/most read articles.

It was announced that the Friends of San Diego Architects held a lecture on Historic Preservation by David Marshall on March 19 at the New School of Architecture.

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The minutes from the February 18, 2016 NPHS meeting have been posted on the website. Note that the February 2016 minutes include the third letter of comment from NPHS to the City on the Community Plan Update (CPU) focusing on a compilation of concerns.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials were sent to the Board in advance of the meeting. In the period from February 17 to March 16, 2016, eight North Park history books were sold to Paras Newsstand and one to Amazon. One Burlingame book was sold to Amazon. Four NPHS members renewed. We received \$75 in walking tour fees for our commercial tour conducted on March 5. The total income in this time period was approximately \$279. No expenses were recorded in this time period.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. WATER TOWER PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Katherine sent the preferences and ideas generated by attendees at the February meeting to Gail. She is compiling the results of our work to date and writing up how to proceed for the proposal submission.

6. WALKING TOUR ON MARCH 5, 2016

The private walking tour of the commercial area for a group that includes descendants of North Park's founding Hartley family was successfully conducted on Saturday, March 5, 2016. George and Michael teamed up guiding, and Sharon and Jody were our able assistants with photo notebooks. We had about 12 attendees and generated \$75 in walking tour fees.

We have been enjoying conducting walking tours for private groups as it eliminates publicizing efforts and provides for a very congenial and energetic audience. If you have a group of about six or more who would like a private tour of the commercial area, Dryden District, Burlingame, Morley Field, or Hamilton Street area, contact Katherine via email at info@northparkhistory.org.



7. NORTH PARK FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

NPBS will have a free booth at the Festival of the Arts on May 21, 2016, which was in exchange for the articles we provided to North Park Main Street for their new Explore North Park Magazine. We will exhibit from 9 am to about 5 pm. North Park Main Street may provide a canopy and table and chairs to facilitate another non-profit exhibitor coming after 5 pm to take over the space. If that works out, we will be on University Avenue instead of a side street. And we won't have to haul our own canopy, etc., which will make set up and take down extremely easy. Angie will let us know if that all works out. Meanwhile, please consider coming to help at the booth for a few hours on Saturday, May 21. Any time between 9 am to 5 pm will be good. If you know you can help, email Katherine at info@northparkhistory.org with your time preference and she will begin compiling the sign-up sheet.

8. NORTH PARK COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE STATUS

As reported in the February meeting notes, the third letter of comment on the draft North Park Community Plan Update (CPU) was attached to the February meeting notes and was sent via email to the recipients, including the city planner, Lara Gates, with copies to Council District 3, North Park Planning Committee, University Heights Community Development Corporation/Historical Society, SOHO, North Park Main Street, El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association, Anthony Bernal, and Chris Ward.

A North Park Planning Committee meeting was held on March 22 to discuss certain zoning and historic implementation issues, but quite a bit of time at the meeting was also devoted to board member voting administrative issues created at the previous North Park Planning Committee meeting. City Planner Lara Gates provided the presentation materials on the City website at <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/greaternorthpark/>

Update: We are particularly opposed to the concept of density bonus (which the City has re-named "development enhancement program"), which allows developers to exceed zoning

parameters in the CPU. George, Paul, Steve and Katherine are assisting a group of concerned University Heights residents who are compiling information about the area between Lincoln and Howard avenues from Florida to Texas streets. This part of University Heights is included in a "pedestrian-oriented" density bonus area that would allow development proposals up to 73 dwelling units per acre (Du/Ac) instead of 44 Du/Ac specified in the CPU zoning (which is an increase from current 35 Du/Ac zoning). See the photos below provided by the city on their website at https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/density_examples_-_north_park_5.pdf for examples of the differences.



The 28-unit, 2-story complex at 4420 Cleveland Avenue is an example of 44 Du/Ac density.



The 37-unit, 6-story DECA complex at 3740 Park Boulevard is an example of proposed 73 Du/Ac density that would be allowed in non-transit related residential areas in University Heights from Lincoln to Howard avenues between Florida and Boundary streets.

NPBS may write another letter to the City or consider supporting a letter being prepared by University Heights residents specifically objecting to the "pedestrian-oriented" density bonus area, because we agree that intense development in these neighborhoods will further disrupt the setting and integrity of remaining early 20th century resources.

9. MAY IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

Steve proposed asking Chris Wray, a local author of historical books about San Diego's back country areas, to come to our May 19 meeting to give a presentation about Old Highway 80. The group agreed this would be very interesting. Steve will follow up with Chris.

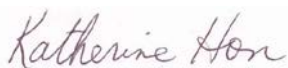
10. ARTICLES IN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Uptown News continues to feature history-themed articles from Katherine in her column "Past Matters." See the next page for a scan of the most recent article, which is about the 1985 Normal Heights fire. Links are posted on our Facebook page.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be **THURSDAY** April 21, 2016 at 6:30 pm in a second floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church, 3967 Park Boulevard, corner of Park and Lincoln Avenue.

Prepared by



Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society
(with input from Jody Surowiec)



Remembering the 1985 Normal Heights fire

The fire raged along North Mountain View Drive, consuming one house after another. (Courtesy of Jim Baross)

PastMatters Katherine Hon

Many residents who lived through the 1985 Normal Heights firestorm are amazed that 30 years have passed. Time enough for children to grow up and have children of their own, time enough to complete a career and enter retirement. The blaze was seared into everyone's memories, and it changed the community forever.

The firestorm started just before noon on June 30, 1985. It was a very hot day with temperatures in the high 90s. The flames started in the canyon south of Interstate 8, below the neighborhood perched along Mountain View Drive and side streets between I-805 and I-15. The fire's cause was never determined, according to KPBS interviews commemorating the 30th anniversary of the disaster on June 30, 2015.

Flames raced up finger canyons and engulfed houses at the top as the firestorm leaped from street to street. A total of 76 homes were destroyed and 57 more were damaged. Local fire-fighting resources concentrated on structures; personnel from north San Diego County, Orange County and Los Angeles helped put out the flames in the canyons, finally bringing the firestorm under control by evening and stopping its eastward spread near I-15.

At the time, it was called the worst brush fire in the city's history, although that status sadly has been far surpassed by multiple firestorm events, including in 2003 and 2007.

Normal Heights is bounded by I-805 on the west and I-15 on the east, and I-8 on the north and El Cajon Boulevard on the south. The original subdivision map was filed in 1906 by D.C. Collier and George M. Hawley, and the area was annexed into the city of San Diego in 1925. The community grew up in the early 1900s with other "streetcar suburbs" like University Heights, and the dominant architectural styles are Craftsman and Spanish/Mission Revival.

In the disaster's aftermath, the community gathered to discuss how to maintain architectural coherence as rebuilding proceeded. The San Diego Chapter of the American Institute of Architects prepared voluntary



The fire damaged parts of the Carmelite Monastery on Hawley Boulevard but spared the main buildings, upper right. (Photo by Bob Stemen)

guidelines that emphasized preserving existing character.

In a Sept. 18, 1986 Reader article, Jeannette DeWyze discussed progress one year after the fire, noting, "The houses being built in Normal Heights today, for the most part, don't look like the orderly offspring of some disciplinarian document." She asked, "Of all the thousands of ways to make a single family home look, why does any particular one look the way it does?" In San Diego's streetcar suburbs built up before the era of massive planned residential developments, there are as many answers to that fascinating question as there are houses. In her article, DeWyze interviewed the architects and homeowners replacing six houses to provide six perspectives.

Architect James Robbins felt that houses built in the neighborhood after World War II "that defy classification" provided more stylistic freedom. He called the house he designed at 5166 34th St. a "Spanish revival interpretation." Architect Richard Baker designed 3344 N. Mountain View Drive as a sculpture in western red cedar for the owners and contended the differences among various homes made for an interesting neighborhood. Architect Joe Martinez, who designed 3363 N. Mountain View Drive to replace his parents' house

that burned and 3358 across the street, predicted some replacement houses would "really blossom," while landscaping would take care of others.

Thirty years later, although mature trees do soften the architectural contrasts, long-time residents know the differences resulting from the fire.

Bob Stemen has lived in the neighborhood since 1981. His house survived the fire, but he is still sad about older neighbors who did not have insurance and had to move away because they could not afford to rebuild. Stemen, whose grandfather built Revival-style homes in City Heights during the 1920s, also laments the loss of front porches in the replacement houses that placed large garages out front. In his opinion, that newer style diminished the previous neighborliness of the community, when a person could walk around and greet friends who were on their porches. But the neighborhood of single family homes remains walkable and friendly, true to the prediction of Joe Martinez in 1986 when he said, "In five or 10 years, the neighborhood will all come back together again."

—Katherine Hon is the secretary of the North Park Historical Society. Reach her at info@north-parkhistory.org or 619-294-3990.