

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

DATE: APRIL 21, 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 May 6, 2016.

The next meeting will be **THURSDAY** May 19, 2016 at 6:30 pm in the second floor Fellowship room at Grace Lutheran Church, 3967 Park Boulevard. The focus of the meeting will be a presentation by author and historian Chris Wray, who will take us on a photographic journey along Historic Highway 80. See page 4 of these notes for details.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

Steve Hon	Katherine Hon
Claudia Watts	Paul Spears
Sharon Turner	Randy Sappenfield

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

Hilda Yoder	Michael Thornhill
George Franck	Bob Bauer
Jody Surowiec	Judy Ciampoli
Bill Vivian	

Members Sue, Sara, and Pat joined us. Welcome!

2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no special announcements.

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The minutes from the March 17, 2016 NPHS meeting have been posted on the website.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials were sent to the Board in advance of the meeting. In the period from March 17 to April 5, 2016, two NPHS members renewed and one donated an additional \$80. The total income in this time period was \$120. Expenses recorded in this time period totaled \$75 for the booth fee for the Old House Fair. Arcadia Publishing sent us a notice that a royalty of approximately \$143 will be deposited in the NPHS checking account in April.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. SAN DIEGO HISTORY CENTER

Sara is visiting different history organizations to inform them on what the San Diego History Center (SDHC) is doing. She presented information about the latest exhibits at the SDHC, including "The Lore Behind the Roar! 100 Years of the San Diego Zoo" to celebrate the centennial of the zoo. The SDHC has an upcoming exhibit in October to celebrate Irving Gill.

Also, the SDHC is partnering with the Congress of History to hold a local history forum to discuss operational needs of historical organizations and to share ideas. The forum will be Saturday, November 12. She is developing a survey to narrow the focus of the forum to information and presentations that will be most useful to local groups. She noted there are about 65 historical/archaeological groups in San Diego County.

6. MCKINLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ESSAYS

Pat has been volunteering at McKinley Elementary School since 2001. She challenged three 5th grade classes to write essays about Historical Preservation—Does It Matter? She showed them photos from our Arcadia book, "Images of America: San Diego's North Park." About 60 students wrote essays, and although it was a pro-con writing exercise, nearly all of the students championed the pro side in favor of historical preservation. Pat asked NPHS to select a set of winners from all of the essays. **Update:** Sharon, Sue, Jody and Katherine read the essays and picked three "Gold Star" winners plus seven "Honorable Mention" essays. The Gold Star winners each received a copy of the Arcadia book, donated by Pat, Sue, and NPHS. The Honorable Mention winners each received a \$10 gift certificate to Verbatim Books, a rare and used bookstore newly arrived in the heart of North Park at 3793 30th Street. All ten of the winning essays will be on display at our next meeting on May 19. Also see page 23 of the May 8 issue of *Uptown News* for Katherine's PastMatters column highlighting the essays. The online link is <http://sduptownnews.com/historical-preservation-matter-ask-fifth-grader/>



Thank you, "Miss Pat" (center) for helping all of these 5th graders at McKinley Elementary School express their feelings about the importance of historical preservation. NPHS appreciated being part of their essay project.

7. WATER TOWER PUBLIC ART PROJECT UPDATE

Gail is preparing her report. Stay tuned!

8. NORTH PARK FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

NPHS will have a free booth at the Festival of the Arts, which is happening from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm on May 21, 2016. North Park Main Street will provide a canopy and table and chairs to facilitate another non-profit exhibitor coming after 5:00 pm to take over the space we will use from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Sharon, Sue, Claudia, George, Bob, and Jody are planning on coming by to help Steve and Katherine in the booth. It is best to have at least two people there at all times. 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.

9. OLD HOUSE FAIR

The Old House Fair in South Park will be Saturday, June 18, 2016, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. This is another good event for NPHS, and we have signed up to have booth space. We do have to bring our own canopy to this event, so Steve and Katherine will need help to set it up and take it down, and all times in between. Save the date and get ready to help!

10. NORTH PARK COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE STATUS

We continue to be 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 Community Plan Update (CPU). We are especially concerned about the non-transit related density bonus area being proposed in University Heights between Lincoln and Howard avenues from Florida to Texas streets. Paul noted University Avenue is now classified as neighborhood commercial with a 65-foot height limit.

11. MAY IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

Chris Wray, a local author of historical books about San Diego's backcountry areas, will come to our May 19 meeting to take us on a photographic journey along Historic Highway 80. See the flyer on the next page. **Everyone is welcome to attend this free event.** Bring your friends and family!

12. ARTICLES IN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Uptown News continues to feature history-themed articles from Katherine in her column "PastMatters." See the end of these notes for a scan of her April article about expendable gems—historical homes at risk because of the non-transit density bonus area in University Heights. Links are posted on our Facebook page.

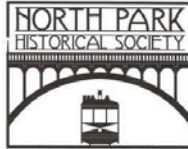
NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be **THURSDAY** May 19, 2016 at 6:30 pm in the second floor Fellowship meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church, 3967 Park Boulevard, corner of Park and Lincoln Avenue. The focus of the meeting will be the presentation by Chris Wray about Historic Highway 80.

Prepared by



Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society

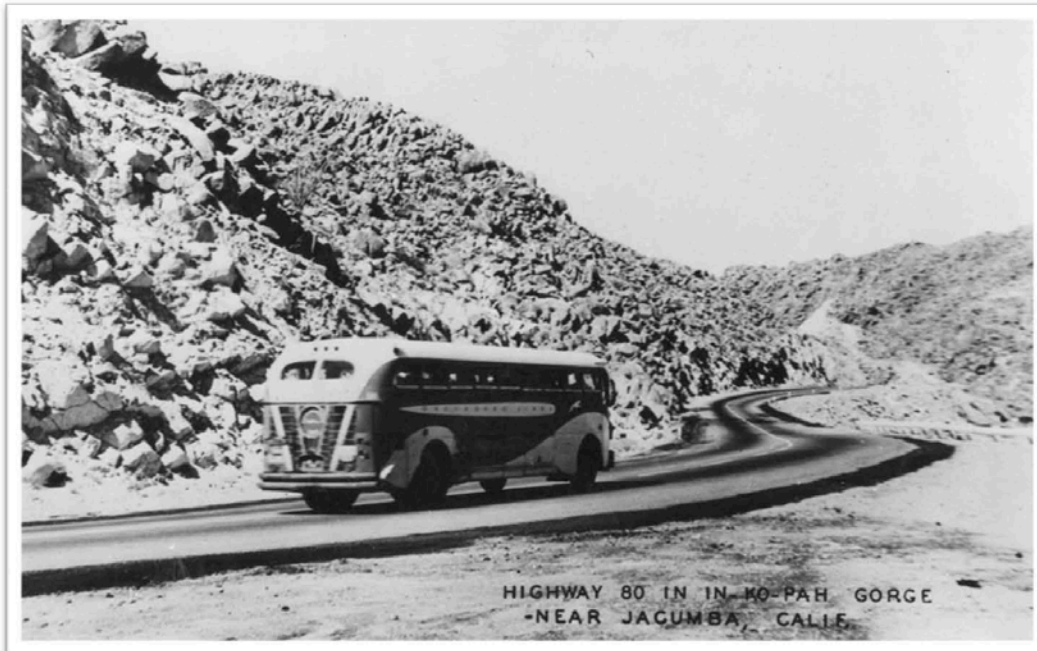


SPECIAL PRESENTATION

*Sponsored by the North Park Historical Society
TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL PRESERVATION MONTH*

Historic Highway 80 across California **by Chris Wray**

«Join us on a journey along Historic Highway 80 in vintage photographs showing the places and history of the route between Yuma and San Diego. We will discuss the early highway developments and changes that led to creation of this vital travel corridor between San Diego and the eastern U.S.»



FREE!

**EVERYONE IS
WELCOME!**

DATE AND TIME

Thursday, May 19, 2016
6:30 pm-7:30 pm

LOCATION

Grace Lutheran Church
Fellowship Room, 2nd Floor
3967 Park Boulevard
Free parking at back of church.
Enter through the small gate and
come up the stairs or elevator.

NorthParkHistory.org

619-294-8990

info@northparkhistory.org

Expendable gems?

University Heights residences could be at risk in North Park Community Plan update

PastMatters
Katherine Hon

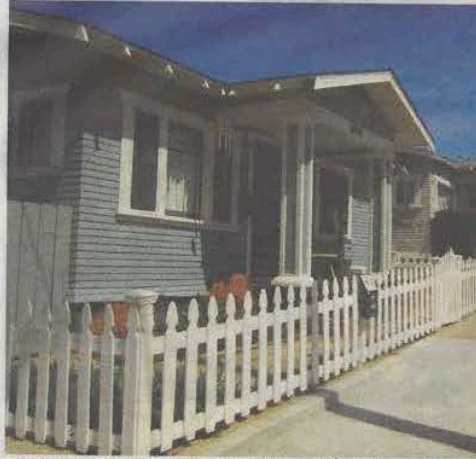
The community plans for many areas of San Diego, including Greater North Park, are being updated. At a recent meeting, the city project manager for the North Park Community Plan update cheerfully assured North Park Historical Society representatives that in 20 years, we won't recognize North Park.

If the current version of the update is fully implemented, she will be right. But to those who treasure the historic soul of Greater North Park, that thought is horrifying. So before we rush headlong in pursuit of all that is shiny, new, dense and high, let's take a walk and look at what the city has earmarked for replacement by higher density development in the March 2016 version of the update. This column focuses on University Heights.

The historic subdivision of University Heights was mapped in 1888 and extends from the current location of state Route 163 to Boundary Street between University Avenue and the slopes above Mission Valley. The eastern half of this large subdivision from Park Boulevard to Interstate 805 is included in the city's Greater North Park Community Planning Area. Some of the oldest homes in Greater North Park are in University Heights, including two Victorian cottages built circa 1905 on Howard Avenue east of Georgia Street, and 10 Victorian/transitional/early Craftsman homes built before 1912 on Florida Street north of Polk Avenue.

Like the neighborhoods south of University Avenue, most original homes in University Heights were built before 1940, and many are approaching or have passed their 90th birthday. Nearly all residences between Lincoln and Howard avenues from Florida Street east to I-805 could be profoundly affected by the city's proposed "Pedestrian-Oriented Infill Development Enhancement Program" (formerly called a "density bonus" area) in the update. The zoning in this part of University Heights is being rezoned to residential-medium high, or up to 44 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) from the current density of 35 du/ac. But worse yet, the "enhancement program" would allow developers to propose up to 73 du/ac.

The two-story, 28-unit complex at 4420 Cleveland Ave. exemplifies a 44 du/ac development. In contrast, the six-story, 37-unit DECA complex at 3740 Park Blvd. exemplifies a 73 du/ac development. Such a development placed in the small-scale residential heart of University Heights would overwhelm the existing residences, even the much-maligned but typically only two-story Huffman-type apartment buildings. The "enhancement program" in this area would allow for such intense development that "ensuring



This Craftsman home on Polk Avenue is in the pedestrian-oriented "enhancement program" area that would allow up to 73 dwellings-per-unit development. (Courtesy of North Park Historical Society)

compatibility with the traditional character buildings," which is part of the Vision in Section 4 of the update, would not be possible.

The "enhancement program" is not the only way the update would put the integrity of historic neighborhoods at risk. Much of University Heights from University Avenue north to Adams Avenue and from Park Boulevard east to Boundary Street has been mapped by the city as "Multi-Character," which is described in Section 4 of the update as where "North Park's original character is no longer dominant" and where the neighborhoods "have experienced diverse changes in building scale, style, form and materials that are in contrast with the community's neighborhood origins." The subtle message here is that there is not much to lose by replacing existing residences with dense multi-family buildings.

It may be easy to color whole blocks on a map as having lost their original character, but an on-the-ground survey reveals a different story. A group of concerned University Heights residents conducted a detailed walking survey of the "enhancement program" area from Lincoln Avenue to Howard Avenue between Florida and Texas streets. Among their findings: both Lincoln Avenue and Polk Avenue from Park Boulevard to Texas Street retain 100 percent of their traditional architectural character, and Howard Avenue from Park Boulevard to Texas Street retains 95 percent of its traditional architectural character. Florida Street in this area, with 23 apartment buildings infiltrating after 1960, still has 37 pre-1960 single family homes and four pre-1960 multi-family units, retaining a 64 percent traditional architectural character. So how accurate is the "Multi-Character" label? Are post-1960 units really "dominant"?

Park Boulevard between El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue has been designated as a "Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Program Area," which would allow up to 145 du/ac proposals; however, even this major street has unique historic resources. These include Grace Lutheran Church, four bungalow courts built in the 1920s between Lincoln and Polk avenues, the Sprouts Farmers Market building near Howard Avenue, the yoga/Pilates building at 4201 Park

Blvd., and the centerpiece of the shopping center at Park and El Cajon boulevards, which was once a Piggly Wiggly grocery store.

In analyzing the impacts of the update, it is possible to conclude that the proposed zoning is not much different from zoning in the existing community plan in a "plan-to-plan" comparison, since relatively high densities are already allowed. But a walk through the neighborhood to conduct a "ground-to-plan" comparison reveals that a shocking number of unique historic structures could be lost by development encouraged inside and outside of the transit corridors in the update.

While encouraging high-density development in the transit corridors of El Cajon Boulevard and Park Boulevard makes sense, targeting generally intact and human-scale residential neighborhoods for dense infill through the "Pedestrian-Oriented Infill Development Enhancement Program" in University Heights does not. The contrast between historic single-family homes and "projects that were developed from the 1960s through the 1980s that were not sensitive to Greater North Park's character and its traditional architectural and design treatments," as stated in Section 2.8 of the update, cannot be improved by replacing existing compatible-scale six-plus-unit complexes with structures that will be more modern, massive, and at least twice as high. Furthermore, there is no definitive language in the update to prevent the description of targeted structures from being applied to historic bungalow courts, which typically provide six-plus units but were built in compatible styles and during the same time frame as historic single-family homes.

The North Park Historical Society is opposed to zoning and policies that will result in widespread loss of irreplaceable historic resources, and has joined others in asking the city to delete the pedestrian-oriented "enhancement program" from the NPCPU.

—Katherine Hon is the secretary of the North Park Historical Society. Reach her at info@northparkhistory.org or 619-294-8990. Her opinions are her own, and San Diego Uptown News encourages a diversity of opinions on its pages. ♡