

**NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING SUMMARY**

DATE: September 19, 2024

TIME: 6:00 PM

These notes summarize information that was presented at the September 19, 2024 Business Meeting of the North Park Historical Society (NPHS) Board of Directors, and the activities discussion for the organization. These notes include updates as of September 20, 2024. Board Members Steve, Katherine, Jody, Bob, Claudia, Paul, George, and Allison attended. Our guest, Kristin Harms, President of the University Heights Historical Society, also attended. Welcome!

All future public meetings scheduled for the **third THURSDAYS of the month starting at 6:00 p.m. WILL BE** held in a meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church. In addition, we continue to provide information to all who contact us with questions about North Park history and document those communications in our monthly meeting notes. **Our next meeting will be October 17.**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

We hope all our members and friends are staying safe and healthy and enjoyed their summer.

2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The latest Pacific Beach Historical Society newsletter was shown. We also shared the Fall 2024 issue of the newsletter of the Balboa Park Committee of 100, entitled "Park & Restoration."

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The meeting summary from the August 15, 2024 (non-)meeting has been posted on the website.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials for this meeting are for August 12 to September 18, 2024 and were sent to Board members on September 18, 2024. In this time period, six members renewed (thank you, Donna, Steve, Katherine, George, Sharon, and Kelly!) and one new member household joined (thank you, Leonard and Rosalynn!). Three renewing members gave additional donations (thank you, Donna, Steve, and Sharon!) Total income in this time period was \$450.00. There were no expenses in this time period.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. PROPOSED BUNGALOW COURT HISTORIC DISTRICT

NPHS Vice President George Franck and University Heights Historical Society (UHHS) President Kristin Harms, presented a proposed project to establish a framework for National Register Nomination of bungalow courts in San Diego. They provided the following information:

In 2021, the City of San Diego completed a Bungalow Courts and Apartment Courts Historic Context Statement (HCS) with a grant from the state. The HCS included six recommendations, as follows:

1. Conduct City-Wide Survey of Bungalow Courts and Apartment Courts
2. Prepare a Multiple Property Listing for Bungalow and Apartment Courts
3. Identify Common Architects and Builders of Bungalow and Apartment Courts
4. Consider Additional Research into Resident Populations
5. Develop City-Wide Multi-Family Housing Context
6. Explore Planning and Policy Initiatives to Incentivize Preserving Bungalow Courts and Apartment Courts

At a meeting with HRB staff in January 2021, staff outlined a process for drafting a Bungalow Court MPL ordinance for City Council approval in 2022, and for revising the Municipal Code to establish Multiple Property Listings.

Unfortunately, staff did not follow through on these actions and the HRB has not taken further action on any of the recommendations identified in the HCS. The HRB has also stalled approval of several historic districts throughout the city as identified in the SOHO letter submitted to the HRB in August of this year. Local groups have therefore pursued nomination of some of these districts at the national level including those located in Bankers Hill, Mission Hills, and Talmadge.

Following the example of people in Bankers Hill, Mission Hills, and Talmadge, the UHHS and volunteer Amie Hayes reached out to California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff to discuss the possibility of nominating bungalow courts in San Diego to the National Register. SHPO staff concurred and recommended nomination through the National Register Multiple Property Document (MPD).

This process would establish registration requirements for all bungalow courts throughout the city that may be nominated in the future. Once the initial nomination to the National Register is approved, additional bungalow courts in the City of San Diego can be added, with a reasonable level of documentation.

The UHHS reviewed the National Register documentation, prepared an RFP, and sent it to two historical research consultants. South Environmental in Pasadena was selected for their experience with National Register MPDs, their interest in the project, and willingness to negotiate their fee, which is \$7,240.

George moved that the NPHS join with UHHS to establish a framework for National Register Nomination of bungalow courts in San Diego. Specifically, providing \$1,810 to fund 25% of the \$7,240 project cost. (NOTE: The UHHS, Hillcrest History Guild and other groups will fund the remaining 75%). In response to this funding, NPHS requests the opportunity to monitor the preparation of the nomination documents, that are expected to be completed next Spring.

After the presentation, the Board asked several questions, including:

-Assuming the MPD is successful, what kind of documentation would be needed to add bungalow courts, and what would that effort likely cost? Would it be similar to the process for preparing a house Historical Resources Report for an individual nomination or would it be simpler and less expensive?

Kristin said she would ask the consultant about that. She noted the information about MPDs indicates a form including the name, location, function, statement of significance, USGS map, and photos would be part of the submittal for additional bungalow courts.

-Does the owner of a bungalow court need to be in favor of being added to the MPD? Kristin said not necessarily, but it would be desirable to get owner approval, and outreach about the benefits would be important. If the City later approves the non-contiguous Multiple Property Listing at the local level, Mills Act would be possible for an added bungalow court. But even without local City approval, there are benefits at the federal level, including federal preservation grants for planning and rehabilitation, federal investment tax credits, preservation easements to nonprofit organizations, and international building code fire and life safety code alternatives.

-Is SOHO participating? Kristin said they told her they could offer staff support.

-If more than four organizations participate in funding the MPD preparation project, would the other funding organizations get a commensurate "refund"? Kristin thought that would be reasonable.

After the questions discussion, George moved NPHS fund one-quarter of the cost of the MPD preparation (\$1,810.00) and request the opportunity to monitor the project. Bob seconded, and all attending Board members approved. Since the NPHS Treasurer was not in attendance, Steve will contact him and arrange for a check to be prepared for UHHS. We will then coordinate with Kristin for delivering the check before the end of October.

6. MEETING AT NORTH PARK MAIN STREET REGARDING SWITZER CANYON/30TH STREET OVERCROSSING

Tatiana Perez, Senior Associate with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) San Diego-Tijuana emailed NPHS to ask if ULI could have a brief interview with NPHS Secretary Katherine Hon and NPHS President Steve Hon on September 16. The ULI has formed a Technical Assistance Panel as part of a project with the North Park Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) focused on the Switzer Canyon Bridge (an overcrossing on fill since 1956). ULI's Technical Assistance Panels provide expert, multidisciplinary advice to local governments, public agencies and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the San Diego-Tijuana region. For this project, the ULI panelists are tasked with coming up with ideas/plan for placemaking and the overall enhancement of the section of 30th Street between Laurel and Olive, so they were looking for insights about the community, the bridge, and the canyon.

Katherine and Steve brought the NPHS books, *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946* by Donald Covington, and *Images of America: San Diego's North Park* published by Arcadia Publishing Company to show historical photos of the Switzer Canyon Bridge, which was completed in 1908. The bridge was difficult to maintain as traffic increased and fires and floods damaged it. As related in our Arcadia book, the bridge was closed in August 1956 for replacement by an earthen causeway using fill from improvements to Nile Street to the east. The bridge was demolished, and for 8 months, traffic was detoured along 32nd, Juniper, and Redwood streets. The new causeway opened on May 23, 1957.



During the interview, potential improvements the MAD could feasibly implement to the experience of traveling along the overcrossing, which links North Park and South Park/Golden Hill neighborhoods, were discussed. Ideas included placing markers with historical photos, changing the roadway/sidewalk cross section to provide more buffer between traffic and pedestrians, lowering the sidewalk to be below street level, and providing information about the biology of the canyon below.

At the Board meeting, Paul noted he did not like the idea of lowering the pedestrian walkway below eye level, because the more visible pedestrians are, the better. After the meeting, Jody noted she was "at the ULI panel presentation they gave at the MAD mtg (over one hour). Really cool, lots of pictures. Apparently the MAD is taking on the project."

7. WALKING TOURS AND OTHER NPHS EVENTS

Future Walking Tours At previous meetings, the Board discussed if we want to hold another walking tour event starting at Morley Field in October. In early September, Pat Guerrero, Director of Community Life at White Sands La Jolla, located at 7450 Olivetas Avenue, La Jolla, emailed to ask if we could conduct a walking tour of North Park for the residents at this senior community. We replied that we have a very nice walking tour that multiple senior groups of the Rediscovering San Diego class have enjoyed. It is a tour of Morley Field, the recreational area of Balboa Park south of Upas Street by Texas Street, where the tennis courts and pool are located. Pat said she would advertise the trip to her residents to find out who is interested and how many. She will get back to us. Therefore, the Board decided to table holding an event at Morley Field until we know what the White Sands La Jolla group would like to do.

Our guest tour guide for a focused part of the Burlingame Historic District won't be available until next spring, so we will postpone that tour until next year.

8. SLIDE AND PHOTO SCANNING PROJECT

We are in the process of scanning slides and notebooks with photos and notes from the Covington Family and other sources. Stuart Hartley scanned the 1950s slides of the Toyland Parade given to NPHS by Joe Schloss. We only had very low-resolution scans of these slides, and Stuart's scans at high resolution really brought out the beautiful vibrancy of the original slides. Three slides were presented in the August meeting summary. Here are a few more.



This street scene is looking east from around 29th Street and University Avenue.

The hanging North Park sign is in the center distance.

At this time, the IOOF building on the left hosted MacLean's Electric Appliances and Smith's Shades. The tan building in the background on the left is what was more recently the Western Dental building, originally the Stevens Hartley Building on the northwest corner of 30th Street and University Avenue.



Recognize this parade scene? It's a trick question!

We wondered when North Park had a Jaguar/Aston Martin dealership along University Avenue. This photo is of the Rose Parade in Pasadena but was among the slides given to NPHS by Joe Schloss.

9. COMMUNITY COORDINATION AND ACTIVITIES

In September 2024, we responded to requests for information (and received interesting information) and participated in community activities as summarized below.

1. SOHO apologized for the short notice, but greatly appreciated a vote from the North Park Historical Society on approving a letter from SOHO on behalf of the Neighborhood Historic Preservation Coalition to the city Historical Resources Board. The letter requested action on the part of the HRB to re-start the processing of promised historical districts, among other preservation actions. The letter included the following requests of HRB members:

We are writing to seek your assistance in addressing what has become a broken and non-functioning process for the designation and processing of historic districts. At this time there is effectively no local process for the designation of historic districts in the city of San Diego. The city is not processing any historic districts.

It should be of great concern to the Historical Resources Board (HRB) that the city has not processed a district designation since 2017. There are approximately 26 other districts awaiting action, some districts have been waiting as long as 50 years to be brought forward. During this time, historic resources have been lost or irreparably altered.

Local district designation matters. The public deserves and has the right to a reasonable and fair local process. It is essential for fostering community engagement and trust in historic preservation efforts. By addressing these concerns, the HRB can better fulfill its role and work collaboratively with the community.

We are asking for the board's help. We are asking for the HRB to restart the processing of historic districts. You have the power to instruct staff on what you want done, and you have the power to ensure they do not stonewall you—or, by extension, the public you serve.

We are requesting your direct actions to help get the process back on track.

Ten NPBS Board members promptly approved the letter and no Board members objected. Alana Coons with SOHO said "Thank you so much!!!!!"

2. New NPBS member Leonard asked about his house on Howard Avenue. In searching available information, we found the property is within the tract of University Heights, and the first time a value of improvements was indicated was January 1927. Prior to 1927, City Lot Books indicate the owner of the lots was Preston Reynolds, a chiropractor. In January 1927, the owner listed was Josephine Roncelli, and the notation in the lot book indicates 3 units had been built on the two lots. It is possible Josephine had the houses built for rental. She was the first listed owner although she did not live in them. In searching Ancestry.com, we found that Josephine (Odile) Roncelli was born in France on September 14, 1867 and came to the U.S. in 1903. Before coming to San Diego in the early 1920s, she lived in San Francisco, where she was a dressmaker. Her husband, Frank Roncelli, was born in Italy in 1857. He died in San Francisco on January 17, 1906 at age 49.

City directories indicate that after coming to San Diego by 1925, Josephine lived at 2730 El Cajon Boulevard, a bungalow court likely built around 1923 and listed in the 1937 city directory as "Georges Chalait Court," which Josephine managed. That location was directly across El Cajon Boulevard from the Water Tower. Josephine may have continued to own the house on Howard Avenue as rental property well after 1927. It appears Josephine owed taxes on the house in 1938, even though four families had lived there from 1929 to 1938. Josephine died on July 16, 1955 at age 87 and was buried at Mt. Hope Cemetery.

3. The San Diego County Archives is holding a special event on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 5:00 pm at the East County Office in Santee. The event is "History of Home: Conducting Research at the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk," and they will also be honoring five local organizations as Cultural Heritage Champions for their contributions. See the flyer on the last page of these meeting notes.

4. Steve contacted the new County Supervisor representative to introduce NPHS, and the representative is interested in a Dryden District tour on November 4 at 10 am. Katherine can do the tour and Steve will be photo book holder. We think it will be a small group, or even just the one person.
5. Steve got an email from Grace Lutheran Church that they are holding an auction event to raise money to help maintain the church buildings, and they are asking local businesses/organizations for donations of gift certificates and merchandise to be auctioned. Steve asked if the Board thought we could provide a copy of our books. George moved we donate a number of books, which Bob amended to be two each of the Arcadia book and the history book by Donald Covington, and Allison amended to add a branded ballcap. The finalized motion was approved by all attending Board members. Steve will notify our church contact to verify these would be the kind of items they are looking for.

10. CITY OF SAN DIEGO POLICIES AND HRB UPDATES

You can use the following link on the Planning Department webpage to sign up to get updates with the city's info about the review process and timeline:

[Preservation and Progress | City of San Diego Official Website](#)

You can also request notifications of other city meetings, like the HRB, through this site.

This week, the City sent a link to the Fiscal Year 2025 Work Program, at [planning-work-programs.pdf \(sandiego.gov\)](#)

The document has information about Preservation and Progress, the update to the city's historic preservation program planned to be completed in 2025, at [Preservation and Progress | City of San Diego Official Website](#)

and a planned citywide Historic Context Statement planned to be completed in 2028 at [Citywide Historic Context Statement | City of San Diego Official Website](#)

11. PAYMENT FOR NPHS MEMBERSHIP

We have activated Venmo for people to use for membership dues, and it has tested out as working. Our @ is northparkhistorical. If a number code is requested, use 1274. We have modified the membership form to note that people can pay via Venmo, and they can find the membership form on our website at [Membership Information | North Park Historical Society \(northparkhistory.org\)](#)

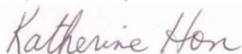
12. PLAQUE FOR WATER TOWER

Coordination with City Public Utilities Department staff regarding the feasibility of placing the plaque in a boulder or some kind of low wall next to the two-story building at the Water Tower site is pending completion of the city's construction activities at the site.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

All future public meetings scheduled for the **third THURSDAYS of the month starting at 6:00 p.m.** in a meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church **WILL OCCUR in 2024**, and we are still providing information to all who contact us with questions about North Park history. Our next meeting will be on **October 17**.

Prepared by



Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society

2024 American Archives Month

You're cordially invited to

A NIGHT AT THE ARCHIVES

Joins us as we present

The History of Home: Conducting Research at
the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk

and recognize our 2024
Cultural Heritage Champions

Tuesday

October 15, 2024

5:00 PM

East County Office and Archives
Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk
10144 Mission Gorge Road, Santee, CA 92071



Please RSVP to Archives@SDCounty.ca.gov
by September 30, 2024