

**NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MARCH 2025 MEETING SUMMARY**

**DATE: MARCH 20, 2025**

**TIME: 6:00 PM**

These notes summarize information that was presented at the March 20, 2025 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 March 22, 2025. Board Members Steve, Katherine, Jody, Allison, Randy, Claudia, and George attended. 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. **Our next meeting will be April 17.**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

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

**2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

George Franck announced his intention to relinquish his position of Vice President, and Randy Sappenfield announced his intention to relinquish his position of Treasurer. Both confirmed their intentions in writing via email to the President and Secretary, in accordance with Article 4, Section 4 of the NPHS Bylaws. Both George and Randy will remain on the Board of Directors.

**3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE**

The meeting notes from the February 20, 2025 meeting have been posted on the website.

**BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING**

**4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND NEW OFFICERS**

**REPORT.** The financials for this meeting are for February 19 to March 20, 2025 and were sent to Board members on March 20, 2025. In this time period, four members renewed for one year (thank you, Bob, Michael, Lu, and Allison!), one member renewed for five years (thank you, Luvonne!), and two members renewed for two years (thank you, Thomas and Claudia!) for income from dues of \$260. Also, one member donated for getting a special tour (thank you, Sheryl!), and two renewing members made additional donations (thank you, Thomas and Claudia!) for income from donations of \$110. There was also Miscellaneous Revenue consisting of \$5.00 refunded for one bank fee, plus \$0.01 in interest to the savings account. Total revenue in this time period was \$375.01. Expenses in this time period totaling \$16.50 consisted of Permits and Fees expense from two bank fees of \$5.00 each for the savings account being below \$500.00 in January and at the beginning of February, plus a bank fee of \$6.50 for receiving paper bank statements in the mail (now switched to digital statements sent to President Steve Hon via email). These bank fees were a result of Union Bank being acquired by U.S. Bank. Steve reported that he closed the savings account and had the funds transferred to the NPHS checking account, as U.S. Bank does not require a customer to have a savings account like Union Bank did. Also, if the Board becomes dissatisfied with U.S. Bank, Steve noted the San Diego County Credit Union now offers business accounts.

**NEW OFFICERS.** Article 4, Section 5 of the NPHS Bylaws notes that any vacancy of any officer shall be filled by the board of directors. Randy moved to nominate Claudia Watts to be Vice President, seconded by Allison. All seven attending Board Members voted in favor. George moved to nominate Allison Falkenstein as Treasurer, seconded by Jody. All seven attending Board Members voted in favor. Congratulations to our new officers!

## ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

### 5. UPDATE ON BUNGALOW COURT HISTORIC DISTRICT

George reported on the project with University Heights Historical Society (UHHS) to establish a non-geographic multi-property National Register bungalow court historic district. The City is not accepting National historic designations as equivalent to City designations, and is not allowing Mills Act contracts unless a city designation process is completed. UHHS President Kristin Harms continues to work with her consultant, SOHO and State offices to determine any alternatives, and will make another presentation to NPHS when UHHS decides how to proceed. A contract has not been signed and the Hillcrest and North Park money will be returned if the project does not go forward. George will continue to coordinate with UHHS.

### 6. WALKING TOUR – BURLINGAME HISTORIC DISTRICT

July 12 is the Saturday chosen for the Burlingame walking tour event. That Saturday in July was ok for George and Michael, with Bob, Allison, Claudia and Jody as well as Steve and Katherine helping. On March 23, Katherine and Steve will meet with a Burlingame contact and explore possible tour routes.

### 7. APRIL 26 EVENT IN MORLEY FIELD

We will put up our canopy in Morley Field and offer walking tours of the park and Pauly's Addition on Saturday, **April 26**, the week after Easter.

George, Michael, Jody, Paul, Sharon, Allison, Steve and Katherine will participate. A draft flyer was reviewed in advance via email by the entire Board, and the final version was reviewed by attending Board members. Allison moved to approve the flyer, Claudia seconded, and all seven attending Board members voted in favor.

The North Park Historical Society is having a

## Spring History Celebration

Choose a free 1 1/2-mile walking tour of the Pauly's Addition neighborhood OR the Morley Field Recreation Area; ask your history questions at our canopy from 9:30 am to 1 pm.

**Where:** Morley Field by the pool

**When:** Saturday, April 26

**Tour Times** Leave canopy at 10:00 am  
Return at 11:30 am

Questions? Email [khon@honconsultinginc.com](mailto:khon@honconsultinginc.com)



## 8. SOHO ECONOMIC STUDY ON IMPACT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) proposed an economic study by PlaceEconomics, a nationally renowned consulting firm, to factually document the positive effect historic preservation has on housing, climate change, and community equity and diversity. SOHO received sufficient donations to fund the study and announced it is underway. Alana Coons with SOHO emailed the following details:

“this study will provide critical, fact-based evidence to assess how protecting San Diego’s historic buildings:

- **Impacts Affordable Housing** - By analyzing the role of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH), Mills Act and adaptive reuse in housing affordability.
- **Contributes to Climate Action** - By evaluating the effects of preservation on demolition waste reduction and embodied carbon retention.
- **Supports Community Equity** - By examining how historic places help maintain cultural identity and sustain diverse communities.
- **Economics:** Cost-effectiveness of preservation and adaptive reuse vs. new construction.

A bit more detail here on analysis of at least these crucial areas that are central to understanding San Diego’s housing and preservation needs. These include:

•**Analyze the Housing Market for Affordability:** This would look at existing buildings and if or how they support affordability. This data could also identify the types of housing and areas within the City that contribute to housing affordability, such as bungalow courts, apartment buildings, and historic districts. Analysis of rents vs. unit age across all units, putting historic preservation in the overall context of preserving naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH)

•**Environmental Impacts:** This assessment will help the city account for landfill capacity and the loss of embodied energy when buildings are demolished. Investing in existing buildings retains housing affordability and supports responses to climate change. Measuring the environmental impacts will support the City’s Climate Action and Resiliency plans and will help meet their stated goals with a variety of solutions. Important argument, especially with respect to resource efficiency of adaptive reuse.

•**Historic Districts:** Identifying patterns that exist within historic districts that are different from those in the rest of the city. Possible metrics include property value change, job and business creation, population density, demographic patterns, walkability, foreclosure rates, tree canopy coverage, landfill diversion, embodied energy calculations, and more.

•**Mills Act:** The value of the Mills Act. Such a study would consider the larger economic context in which the Mills Act operates. Also, the benefits of Mills Act to being able to buy and stay in a house. (Mills Act as an affordability tool rather than a benefit only for the wealthy.)

• **Social Justice:** Measuring homeownership rates, displacement, and the burdensome cost of housing will help identify the shortfalls of San Diego’s policies and regulations and demonstrate how historic preservation and adaptive reuse can serve these communities, especially with affordable housing. Traditionally, historic districts have smaller, more affordable homes, which is distorted by ADUs, so this could be an important argument. Include an analysis of income for current SD districts (e.g., are historic districts middle class, contrary to anti-preservationists’ assertions).”

## 9. SCANNING PROJECT

We continue our process of scanning slides and notebooks with photos and notes from the Covington Family and other sources. We are coordinating with professional photographer Stuart Hartley on scanning some oversize items. Allison has set up an Instagram account for NPHS, with the username northparkhistory. The link is <https://www.instagram.com/northparkhistory/> She has posted three photos so far, and we have five followers.

## 10. COMMUNITY COORDINATION AND ACTIVITIES

In March 2025, we responded to requests for information (and received interesting information) and participated in community activities as summarized below.

1. Ken Kramer emailed Katherine, saying he loves her 2019 History Snippets book and is “putting together a segment on the historic North Park Water Tower, inspired by the story in the book.” He asked for photos, including of someone marching “in a parade dressed like the tower and shots of the tower from early days along with the plaque presentation.” We sent him 10 photos, including the following of the first paper water tower costume constructed by former Board Member Vince Rivera, the second water tower costume made by Rory at the Old Globe props department, and the 2015 plaque dedication ceremony attended by City and County officials. Allison asked for the photos so she can put them on the NPHS Instagram page, and Katherine sent them to her.



2008 Toyland Parade



2009 Toyland Parade



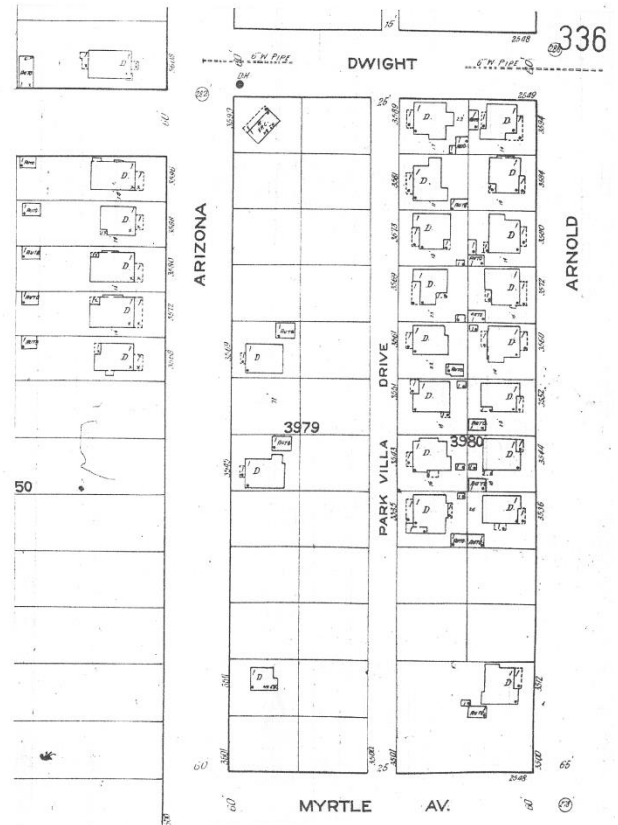
2013 Toyland Parade



2015 Plaque Dedication Ceremony

2. Alex Bevil, the historian who prepared National Register nomination documentation for the North Park Water Tower and the Georgia Street Bridge, has agreed to do a presentation on the history of the water tower and bridge, two iconic historic landmarks in North Park. His presentation will be on September 18 at our usual meeting time (6:00 pm) and place (Grace Lutheran Church). More details to follow as the event approaches.

3. Katherine toured our newest member, Sheryl, around the little street called Park Villas Drive between Arizona Street and Arnold Avenue. In 2020, the City investigated forming a historic district in this neighborhood at the request of the community during the 2016 Community Plan Update process. The City and their consultant prepared a report for the potential Arizona Street Tract (aka Park Villa) Historic District, which noted the area “is located on Block 80 of the Park Villas subdivision, which was re-subdivided by the Southern California Home Builders (SCHB) upon purchase in 1912. The re-subdivision created 48 lots out of 24, with the mid-block alley converted to Park Villa Drive.” Unfortunately, the fieldwork and analysis found the “district does not retain integrity to physically convey its identified significance...” but it was very interesting to walk the neighborhood and observe the changes that often occur that reduce historic character. The 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map to the right illustrates homes built within the Block 80 Park Villas subdivision by 1921. Dashed lines indicate open walls such as porches.



4. Simoni and Halla requested a Dryden Historic District walking tour and Katherine took them around on March 1. They were very interested in the progression of architecture and the story of development in the area.

5. Seven UCSD students in the Urban Studies Program visited North Park Historical Society “headquarters” and Katherine and Steve gave them an impromptu lecture on how North Park developed, architectural styles, and why our streets do not match.

6. Steve asked Bob via email, “Do you know what is going at the lot next to St. Luke’s where the Gill Chapel and the 2 small craftsman bungalows were and most recently was a community garden? A large bulldozer with a backhoe was doing some serious excavation today.” Bob replied, “A large apartment building with affordable housing. A total of 78 units ranging from studios to two bedrooms. There will be a ground floor commercial space at the corner of Gunn & 30<sup>th</sup> and a meeting space on an upper floor. In total it will be eight stories with no parking. The developers will have a 99-year lease with the church (the diocese is the technical owner).”

### 11. CITY POLICIES AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD UPDATES

- As a standing item in the meeting notes, the following link on the Planning Department webpage with the city's info about the review process and timeline is provided:  
[Preservation and Progress | City of San Diego Official Website](#)
- SOHO provided a letter of comment on the Planning Department staff memorandum regarding the Program. The SOHO letter is included at the end of these notes.

### 12. PAYMENT FOR NPHS MEMBERSHIP

As a standing item in the meeting notes, we remind everyone that we have activated Venmo for people to use for membership dues. Our @ is northparkhistorical, and 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 \(northparkhistory.org\)](#)

### 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 2025**. 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 on **April 17**.

Prepared by



Katherine Hon  
Secretary, North Park Historical Society

**SEE THE NEXT THREE PAGES FOR THE SOHO LETTER OF COMMENT ON  
THE CITY PRESERVATION AND PROGRESS PROGRAM**



**Save Our Heritage Organisation**  
Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969

March 5, 2025

Land Use and Housing Committee  
of the City Council of the City of San Diego  
City Administration Building  
Council Committee Room - 12th Floor  
202 C Street  
San Diego CA 92101

Council President Pro Tem Kent Lee, Chair  
Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera, Vice Chair  
Councilmember Raul Campillo  
Councilmember Vivian Moreno

re: Agenda for Thursday, March 6, 2025, Item-2

Dear councilmembers,

**SOHO Comments to Staff Memorandum for the Preservation and Progress Information Agenda Item-2 for March 6, 2025.**

Many of the proposed amendments in the Preservation and Progress memorandum are too vague to be responded to in detail. However, we offer the following comments based on the limited information provided, where possible:

**General Comments**

The number of individual site designations would be significantly lower if historic districts were properly processed, this would bring San Diego in line with other jurisdictions. The standard for individual designations is already much higher than that for district contributors. Given that San Diego is the second-largest city in California, it follows that we have the second-highest number of Mills Act agreements. We are open to exploring an alternative to conducting the 45-year review process. Conducting a citywide survey similar to SurveyLA and processing identified districts and individual nominations would provide certainty to all stakeholders and significantly streamline the process.

**We Support:**

- The development of educational materials on:
  - The benefits of preservation
  - Sustainable and resilient maintenance and improvement of historic properties
- Allowing the use of the Historic Preservation Fund to serve as a source of small grant funding for low-income and traditionally marginalized communities to evaluate and designate new resources or

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- rehabilitate, restore, and improve designated resources.
- A more streamlined process for adaptive reuse of historic buildings, provided it is consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and does not pose a threat to public health and safety.
- Expanding incentives and improving design standards.
- Increasing penalties and enforcement of historic regulations
- Clear criteria should be established for Multiple Property Listings (MPL).

**We oppose all proposed updates and amendments that would seek to weaken current protections and incentives or San Diego's historic resources and potential historic resources including:**

- Any proposals that would weaken existing protections for historic and potentially historic resources, such as the creation of a de novo hearing of appeals before the City Council. These types of changes would require a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and substantial mitigation.
  - The current process was established by the City Council to prevent lengthy designation hearings and appeals. The determination of historic resources should remain with experts.
  - The supermajority vote of the HRB board requirement was established based on this procedure, along with the policy of no appeals for non-designations. The land use decision remains with the council, while designation serves as a baseline determination. It is essentially an environmental assessment—establishing whether a site qualifies as a historic site, an analogy would be is it a vernal pool or not a vernal pool? However, the ultimate decision on whether a resource is preserved, demolished, or relocated still rests with the council. The evaluation of the merits of a new project in relation to the designated resource is a separate process and remains under the council's purview.
- Payment into the Preservation Fund for mitigation should not become a routine checklist option for developers.

**Comprehensive Analysis: Independent Economic Study**

SOHO and the Neighborhood Historic Preservation Coalition formally requested that Historic Resources commission a study by PlaceEconomics to comprehensively analyze how historic preservation impacts San Diego's affordable housing, equity, and climate goals to assess the impacts of historic regulations and to inform the proposed overhaul.

Since the City has not responded, the preservation community has secured private donations to fund this independent study from the preeminent, well-established research firm dedicated to thorough and robust analysis of the economic impacts of historic preservation. No institution has conducted more analyses of the economic impacts of historic preservation than PlaceEconomics, and Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Phoenix have all retained this firm for similar purposes.

This study will evaluate the benefits and impacts of existing regulations, including the Mills Act program and historic districts, with a particular focus on:

- Affordability
- Equity
- Climate concerns

All of these factors are highlighted in the city's Preservation and Progress initiative as critical issues.

The study's findings are expected in the next few months. In light of this, SOHO ask the City to pause any proposed updates or amendments until the results of this study can be reviewed and incorporated.



Proceeding without this essential analysis would be a waste of City resources and risks undermining key aspects of the Heritage Preservation Program, which provides significant public benefits.

**Additional inquiry: City Budget Concerns**

What is the cost of this update program, given the City's current budget constraints? Historic preservation and development have not been in substantial conflict in recent years, raising further questions about the necessity of these changes at this time with no real benefit.

We have constructive recommendations for enhancements and look forward to a time when the City actively engages the community in a meaningful and collaborative discussion.

If we continue down this path, the historic ordinance should be expanded to better protect naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH). It can be an essential tool for preserving affordability in San Diego. Additionally, the Mills Act should be significantly broadened to benefit more homebuyers, as it remains the only existing incentive that reduces the cost of purchasing a home in San Diego.

Thank you,



Bruce Coons  
Executive Director