



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 13, 2019 REPORT NO. HRB-19-020

HEARING DATE: June 27, 2019

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Illinois 44 LLC represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 4341-4351½ Illinois Street, North Park Community, Council District 3  
APN 446-181-07-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court located at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court located at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1940 under HRB Criterion A. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is a special element of North Park and San Diego's historical and architectural development and retains integrity to its 1940 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource embodies the character defining features of a recognized variety of bungalow court, is one of a finite and limited number of bungalow courts remaining which reflect the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development of multi-family housing in North Park and San Diego; and retains integrity for that association.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section [143.0212](#). The property consists of a single parcel containing three attached units, one single unit and two-story attached unit over a garage structure arranged around a common central courtyard. The property is located on the east side of Illinois Street between Meade Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard in the North Park Community.

The property was identified in the 2016 North Park Historic Resources Survey and included in a potential Residential Court Multiple Property Listing as a good example of residential court development.

The historic name of the resource, the Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ben and Hilda Bredeson, who constructed the bungalow court as their personal residence and investment property.

*Referral to the Historic Resources Board under SDMC [143.0212](#)*

Prior to the current project, a multi-discipline preliminary review application was submitted for the property at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street with Development Services Department (DSD) on October 19, 2017. The Preliminary Review Questionnaire provided by the applicant requested a determination on potential historic significance for the subject property and if a historical report be required and if so what kind. Historic staff completed their review on November 8, 2017 and could not make a determination at the time on the potential historic significance of the property as the applicant had not submitted the required documentation for the historic review. The applicant never submitted the required documentation to complete the review, and a determination was not made.

On June 4, 2018, a permit application was filed, and plans were submitted to DSD for the current project; with documentation for the Historic review submitted on August 13, 2018. Historic staff completed review of the permit application on August 27, 2018 and determined the property potentially historic and that the project proposed was not consistent with the Standards. Comments provided to the applicant included the option to either revise the project consistent with the Standards or submittal of an historical resource research report.

On February 20, 2019 the applicant submitted a historical resource research report. Staff reviewed the report and deemed it incomplete, requiring revisions and updating of the photos. This review was completed on March 6, 2019. The applicant submitted the revised historic research report on March 15, 2019, and during this review it was noted by staff that a significant amount of unpermitted work had been completed on the property in recent months and it was reflected in the updated photos provided in the report. Staff completed review of the report on March 29, 2019 and deemed it incomplete, requiring revisions to include photos of the property prior to the unpermitted changes and limit the number of photos that depict the house in its current unpermitted state.

A revised report was submitted on April 11, 2019. On April 12, 2019, staff deemed the report complete and an email was sent to the applicant the same day with cycle issue comments. Staff informed the applicant that they disagreed with the conclusion of the report, and that the property would be forwarded to the Historical Resources Board with a recommendation to designate the building.

#### *Building Condition Evaluation*

The City Attorney's Office issued a Memorandum of Law dated April 18, 2007 which speaks to when the physical condition of a nominated historical resource must be evaluated by the Historical

Resources Board for the purposes of designation (Attachment 2). This memo was issued in response to a similar situation where work began before a permit was obtained. The memo concludes that the Board must consider the building's condition at the time a building permit was applied for or should have been applied for. Therefore, the Board can and must evaluate the building prior to the unpermitted modifications.

The applicant's report provides an evaluation of the building prior to the unpermitted alterations and includes photos of the building prior to the start of work. The analysis provided in this report evaluates the building's eligibility under each Criterion based upon its condition and appearance prior to the unpermitted work, based on available photographs as well as information provided in the applicant's report.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion A. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

*CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.*

The development of the North Park community began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and grew to contain diverse neighborhoods of both single-family and multi-family residential structures, as well as some commercial use areas along main thoroughfares. Much of the area's development was influenced by the establishment and growth of streetcar lines and the Panama California Exposition. Through the 1920s, North Park was marked by robust residential construction until the years following the Great Depression during which there was a significant period of decline. The 1935 California Pacific International Exposition helped North Park rebound more quickly than other communities. However, the formation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) helped reignite the construction of single-family homes and soon, unimproved lots in established neighborhoods throughout North Park were infilled with single-family homes and residential courts.

One type of multi-family housing that emerged in North Park and elsewhere in San Diego, and was attractive to both developer and resident alike, was the bungalow court. The history of bungalow courts and their characteristics are well outlined in an article in the Spring 1988 issue of the *Journal of San Diego History* entitled, "Bungalow Courts in San Diego: Monitoring a Sense of Place" (Attachment 1), and also in the Bungalow Court Context Statement prepared for the City of Pasadena, where the bungalow court is generally acknowledged to have originated in 1909. Bungalow courts are understood to be "well-designed, small houses carefully arranged around a planned open space." The article identifies four classifications of bungalow courts based on spatial arrangement: "(1) detached full court - the "classic" court consisting of individual cottages arranged around a spacious central garden (2) detached, narrow court - individual cottages arranged around a long, narrow, garden-like walkway (3) attached, full court - when two or more of the bungalows share a common wall, and (4) attached, narrow court. Since the term "court" implies an enclosed,

designed space, in all cases the building arrangement included an end structure and a proper garden.”

The bungalow court was a unique type of housing solution during times of immense social change, and when housing was in short supply – it provided an attractive balance between the demands for both density and private living. The spatial arrangements of bungalow courts allowed a sense of community while still providing space for greenery and sometimes even private gardens. Living in a bungalow court was generally more affordable and less demanding than life in a single-family home, but not as sterile and impersonal than apartment living. Bungalow courts took advantage of the agreeable climate of Southern California and offered unique settings which fostered both community involvement and a good sense of security.

According to the 1988 article, few regions outside California saw meaningful quantities of bungalow courts develop. In San Diego, bungalow courts were built primarily in the communities surrounding Balboa Park and generally along or near the streetcar lines. In 1988, the article’s authors reviewed the 1940 Sanborn map to take account of all bungalow courts within the central area of the City. At that time 217 of the 278 full bungalow courts (nearly 80%) shown on the 1940 Sanborn were extant, with only a handful in disrepair. The authors branded this rate of “staying power” of the bungalow court as a testament to its value as a housing type.

As noted in the North Park Historic Resources Survey, bungalow courts are a relatively uncommon residential property type within North Park and were constructed primarily between World War I and World War II. The bungalow courts were built in a variety of styles and provided unique living opportunities for those who could not afford a single-family home. Despite their apparent popularity, fewer bungalow courts were built after World War II, as developers began to return their focus to single family homes and large apartments.

#### Residential Court Multiple Property Listings (RCMPLs) in Uptown, North Park and Golden Hill

The significance of the bungalow court as a limited resource in San Diego is also supported by the Residential Court Multiple Property Listings (RCMPLs) identified in the Uptown, North Park and Golden Hill Communities. These potential multiple property listings represent discontinuous groupings of resources which are thematically related and found individually eligible under one or more HRB Criteria. Each RCMPL identified a limited number of residential courts and a period of significance.

The RCMPL in the Uptown Survey identified approximately 150 residential courts and was given a period of significance of 1900-1960. The RCMPL of the North Park Survey identified approximately ninety (90) residential courts with a period of significance of 1920-1959. The RCMPL of the Golden Hill Survey identified a total of sixteen (16) residential courts, including the subject property, with a period of significance of 1920-1959. For these three RCMPLs, the periods of significance accommodated all the residential courts identified, to include not just bungalow courts but also the later and closely related linear courts or apartment courts. These survey results, while not entirely exhaustive, indicate the presence of approximately 256 total residential courts within the Uptown, North Park and Golden Hill communities, which together are comprised of roughly 20,533 land parcels. These figures reveal that residential courts comprise approximately 1.25% of the building stock in the three communities where residential courts are most likely to be found City-wide; and

when one considers that not all of the 256 residential courts identified will ultimately be found eligible, the limited and finite nature of residential courts become clear.

For North Park, and more broadly for the communities of San Diego surrounding Balboa Park, bungalow courts are a finite resource representing a limited period of multi-family residential development that is very rarely if no longer seen in today's new construction. What bungalow courts offered during their time in North Park and other centrally located suburbs was a unique and affordable housing option for the City's growing middle class in the early to middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bungalow court provided safe and social living spaces considered ideal for singles, especially women entering the labor force, and young men returning from service in the military. The distinctive qualities of this type of multi-family housing contribute to an overall character and identity for San Diego suburban life.

The 1988 article is nearing thirty years old and the latest context and survey information from the Uptown, North Park, and Golden Hill surveys add to our understanding of the bungalow court and its significance to San Diego's residential development. It appears that some bungalow courts were built post-war, and most were built between the World Wars. However, a comprehensive historic context statement and survey focusing exclusively on bungalow courts in San Diego has not been performed in recent years, and without such information it is not clear precisely when the development of bungalow courts fully ceased. Nevertheless, bungalow courts can be adequately identified by their overall designs and spatial arrangements.

The subject property was included in the potential Residential Court Multiple Property Listing of the North Park Survey and its date of construction is within the RCMPL's period of significance of 1920-1959. This bungalow court was built in 1940 in the Spanish Eclectic style, with nine residential units arranged around a central landscaped courtyard. Three attached units and one single unit surround the courtyard on either side, and the fifth, two-story attached residential unit over an eight-car garage encloses the space at the rear. The central courtyard was formerly a simple lawn but remains landscaped and retains its courtyard feeling. The subject property's building arrangement; constitutes an attached, full (wide) court, with two or more of the bungalows sharing a common wall, a wide, landscaped court in the center, and a structure at the rear to properly enclose the courtyard.

Several modifications to the property were made prior to the initial review by historic resources staff. These alterations include the replacement of the original wood windows with vinyl in all nine units and the installation of a wood balcony and tiles on the rear structure. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, feeling and association as it relates to Criterion A.

Significance Statement: The resource reflects a special element of North Park and San Diego's historical and architectural development and retains integrity to its 1940 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource embodies the character defining features of a recognized variety of bungalow court, is one of a finite and limited number of bungalow courts remaining which reflect the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development of multi-family housing in North Park and San Diego; and retains integrity for that association. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion A.

*CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion B.

*CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.*

The subject property is comprised of nine units in total; three attached units, one single unit and a two-story attached unit over a garage structure arranged around a common central courtyard, constructed in 1940 in the Spanish Eclectic style. The structures have a flat roof and are clad in stucco. Each unit has a small shed roof with clay barrel tile at the entry. Vinyl windows have been installed within the original window openings on all of the buildings.

The structures on the property exhibit minimal characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style, and the overall integrity has been greatly impacted by the vinyl window replacements. Therefore, Staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion C.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

The subject property at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street was likely built by the original owner Ben Bredeson. Bredeson, and no other individuals were identified in association with the property's original design or construction. Bredeson has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

*CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

*CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

The property at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills

Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process; and included in any future Mills Act contract.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court located at 4341-4351½ Illinois Street be designated with a period of significance of 1940 under HRB Criterion A as a resource that reflects a special element of North Park's historical and architectural development.

  
Shannon Anthony  
Junior Planner

  
Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner

SS/ss

#### Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. City Attorney Memorandum of Law dated April 18, 2007
3. "Bungalow Courts in San Diego: Monitoring a Sense of Place," from the *Journal of San Diego History*
4. Photos
5. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
6. Staff Memorandum dated June 13, 2019
7. Addendum to Historical Report dated June 7, 2019

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/27/2019

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/27/2019, to consider the historical designation of the **Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court** (owned by Illinois 44 LLC, 17828 Villamoura Drive, Poway, CA 92064) located at **4341-4351½ Illinois Street, San Diego, CA 92104**, APN: **446-181-07-00**, further described as BLK 113 12 13 & 14 in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Ben and Hilda Bredeson Bungalow Court on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of North Park and San Diego's historical and architectural development and retains integrity to its 1940 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource embodies the character defining features of a recognized variety of bungalow court, is one of a finite and limited number of bungalow courts remaining which reflect the early- to mid-20th century development of multi-family housing in North Park and San Diego; and retains integrity for that association. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney



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**Michael J. Aguirre**  
CITY ATTORNEY

**MEMORANDUM OF LAW**

**DATE:** April 18, 2007

**TO:** Historical Resources Board

**FROM:** City Attorney

**SUBJECT:** When the Physical Condition of a Nominated Historical Resource Must Be Evaluated by the Historical Resources Board for Purposes of Designation.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This memorandum arose following the unauthorized, partial demolition of a private property, *after* a construction permit had been applied for, *after* the applicant was told by the City that the property may be historically significant, *but before* the City or the Historical Resources Board had had an opportunity to review the property, as required, in conjunction with the permit review process prescribed by the local Land Development Code. This matter caused the Historical Resources Board to question when a potential historical resource, in terms of its physical condition, must be evaluated for purposes of designation. The memorandum resolves this issue for historical resources whether nominated by the Historical Resources Board, the City Manager or, the City Council, or any member of the public.

**QUESTION PRESENTED**

What is meant by “current condition” for purposes of the Historical Resources Board designating an historic resource pursuant to its duties under the San Diego Municipal Code [SDMC] section 111.0206(d)?

**SHORT ANSWER**

When the Historical Resources Board evaluates a historical resource, where the nomination arises from SDMC section 143.0212, the “current condition” of the resource refers to when a project application is submitted to the City. The Board evaluates and designates historic properties, as part of the land development review process, in reliance on the information provided to the City at the time of project submittal. Where nominations arise outside SDMC

section 143.0212, the “current condition” of the resource refers to when a research report or similar documentation, prepared pursuant to the Historical Resources Guidelines, is submitted to the Board, as such submission, like a project application submitted to the City for a permit, triggers review for designation.

## **BACKGROUND**

On September 5, 2006, the owner of a single-family home located at 4004 Lark Street applied for a construction permit with the City. On October 5, 2006, pursuant to SDMC section 143.0212, because the project application indicated the home was over 45 years old, the City required a site-specific historic research report to assess the historical significance of the property. On November 15, 2006, neighbors notified the Historical Resources Board staff and Neighborhood Code Compliance that partial demolition had begun on the property. On or about November 22, 2006, the City issued the owner a Notice of Violation, for failure to obtain a permit before starting work. The non-permitted work included removal of two windows, part of the roof, a brick chimney, the entry door, concrete stairs, and original clapboard siding. These modifications are considered an “adverse impact to an historical resource,”<sup>1</sup> according to a January 11, 2007 staff report, recommending designation of the subject property. January 11, 2007 Historical Resources Board Staff Report No. HRB-07-004, Item #9 – August and Mabel Blaisdell Spec House #1, p. 3. On November 28, 2006, the owner submitted a site-specific historical research report which concluded the property is not significant based on its demolished condition. At the January 25, 2007 meeting of the Historical Resources Board, a motion was made to designate the property as an historical resource, as a good example of a Craftsman bungalow structure, pursuant to the local designation criterion C in the Draft Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria," November 2006, p. 11-13. The property owner countered that the property could not be designated because the property no longer possessed sufficient integrity in its current condition meaning at the time of the vote. Board members then questioned whether the property should be evaluated based on its condition at the time of the hearing or at the time the project was submitted for permit review. Pursuant to SDMC section 123.0202 (d) the item was continued at the request of the property owner.

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<sup>1</sup> A substantial adverse change to an historical resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et. seq.) “. . . includes demolition, destruction, relocation or alteration such that the significant of an historical resource would be impaired Pub. Res. Code § 5020.1(q). While demolition and destruction are fairly obvious significant impacts, it is more difficult to assess when change, alteration, or relocation crosses the threshold of substantial adverse change. The CEQA Guidelines provide that a project that demolishes or alters those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance (i.e., its character-defining features) can be considered to materially impair the resource's significance." See “California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historical Resources,” California Office of Historic Preservation, Technical Assistance Series # 1, at p. 9.

## ANALYSIS

### **I. Fair and Effective Decision Making Can Only be Facilitated by Using a Consistent Point of Review for Designation Depending on the Origination of the Designation.**

An essential ingredient of the Land Development Code is to “facilitate fair and effective decision making” by establishing uniform procedures to apply land use regulations. SDMC § 111.0102 The Historical Resources Board operates under the Land Development Code. In exercising its duties pursuant to SDMC section 111.0206 (d), the Board plays an integral role in resource protection. For example, upon nomination by City staff during the permit review process, the Board advises the City as to whether such projects will potentially impact significant historic resources. Nominations may also originate from other sources as enumerated in SDMC section 123.0202 as follows:

Nominations of a historical resource to become a designated historical resource may originate from the Historical Resources Board, the City Manager, the City Council, or any member of the public including the property owner by submitting a research report or similar documentation, as identified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual, to the Board's administrative staff for consideration by the Board. Nominations from the City Manager may originate as a result of a site-specific survey required for the purpose of obtaining a construction or development permit consistent with Section 143.0212.

In the instant matter, 4004 Lark Street was nominated by the staff as a result of a site-specific survey pursuant to SDMC section 143.0212, which states (emphasis added):

The City Manager shall determine the need for a site-specific survey for the purposes of obtaining a construction permit or development permit for development proposed for any parcel containing a structure that is 45 or more years old and not located within any area identified as exempt in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual or for any parcel identified as sensitive on the Historical Resource Sensitivity Maps.

It would promote unfair decisions and eviscerate a core function of the Board if a permit applicant could avoid historic designation by altering or demolishing evidence supporting designation before the Board has had an opportunity to evaluate the property. To promote decisions that do not give unfair advantage to some applicants (and not to others) the Historical Resources Board must evaluate potential designations in a consistent manner. As the Land Development Manual, Historical Resources Guidelines, p. 1) (emphasis applied) states:

The intent of the guidelines is to ensure consistency in the management of the City's historical resources, including identification, evaluation, preservation/mitigation and development.

Accomplishing consistent evaluation of nominations will depend on the origin of the designation since not all designations originate with the City staff upon submission of an application for a permit under the Land Development Code (SDMC Chapters 11-14).

**II. When a Historical Designation Originates Under SDMC section 143.0212, Then "Current Condition" Means When an Application is Submitted Because That is When the Historical Designation Review Process Begins.**

When the Historical Resource Board evaluates a potential historic resource based on its "current condition," when that evaluation originates from the specific-survey requirement under SDMC section 143.0212, it refers to when a project application is submitted to the City. The Board evaluates and designates historic properties, as part of the land development review process, in reliance on the information provided to the City at the time of project submittal. The permit application process is built on the condition of potentially significant resources at the time an application is submitted. To wit, the Land Development Code at SDMC section 143.0211 requires an applicant, as a prerequisite, to submit certain documentation to obtain a project permit. The Land Development Manual, which spells out the "submittal requirements, review procedures, standards and guidelines" (SDMC section 111.0106 (a)) that implement the Land Development Code, explains to permit applicants, at Volume 1, Chapter 1, at page 3 (emphasis added):

City staff must determine if your proposed site contains one or more elements of a historical resource and then further, if a site-specific survey is required to properly evaluate the resource . . . If your project site . . . proposes demolition or external alteration of a structure that is 45 or more years old, then your project is subject to this review and additional submittal information will be requested . . . Determination of the need for a site-specific survey is made by staff based upon the Parcel Information Checklist submitted as part of the General Application Package.

At Volume 1, Chapter 1, at page 4, the Manual adds:

If potential historic resources are identified, then the proposed project is referred to the Historical Resources Board for possible designation.

The Historical Resources Board functions as an extension of the permit review process. So when evaluating a property undergoing City regulatory assessment, the Board must make the date of its examination congruent with the same date the City starts its review, which is the day an application is submitted.

On September 5, 2006, the owner of 4004 Lark Street submitted an application to the City for a construction permit. On October 5, 2006, City staff required a site-specific historic research report. This was because the application showed the property was over 45 years old. On November 28, 2006, the owner submitted such report. It concluded the property was not significant. This was based on the condition of the property after the non-permitted demolition work started but before the Historical Resources Board was able to review the property. On January 25, 2007, City staff recommended to the Board the property be designated consistent with the local Draft Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria," November 2006, p.11-13, under Criterion C, as a good example of Craftsman bungalow.<sup>2</sup> Staff properly made its determination based on the condition of the property at the time the project permit application was submitted.<sup>3</sup>

The San Diego Municipal Code does not define the term "current condition." Yet the property owner relies on a January 11, 2006, Historical Resources Board staff report, prepared for an entirely different property, to assert that this term refers to the condition of the property the day of the Board vote. In a power point presentation the owner cites the staff report:

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<sup>2</sup> Criterion C of the local draft guidelines is analogous to and modeled on both federal Criteria C for design/construction, as set forth in, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," U.S. Department of Interior, National Register Bulletin #15, at pp. 2, 17-20, as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and. . . C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction . . . "

and, on state criteria at Title 14 CCR 4852 (b)(3):

An historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following four criterion . . . (3) It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values . . .

<sup>3</sup> As stated earlier, under SDMC section 123.0202, nominations may also originate, not from a permit application under the Land Development Code SDMC Chapters 11-14 but from City Council, a member of the public, or the Board itself. Such nomination is, as the ordinance states, triggered by, ". . . submitting a research report or similar documentation, as identified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual, to the Board's administrative staff for consideration by the Board . . . " (SDMC section 123.0202(a)). When such research report is submitted to the Board, just like a project application submitted to the City for a construction or other type of permit, it is the submission of the report that triggers review by Board staff, for designation. Thus "current condition" refers to the date the research report is submitted to the Board.

The Board, as it is aware, may not condition designations to require restorations or modifications. All properties considered for designation must meet the criteria and be eligible for designation in their current condition.” (Slide 12, January 25, 2007, power point presentation by Scott Moomjian, entitled “4004 Lark Street,” citing to an October 12, 2006 Historical Resources Board Staff Report No. 06-046, Item # 7- 4374 Cleveland Avenue, p. 3) (emphasis applied by Moomjian not in original)

The property owner takes the meaning of the term “current condition” out of context. The October 12, 2006 staff report was to remind the Historical Resources Board that it may not designate a resource based on the potential or future promises to restore a property to the level of integrity required for designation. The property at 4374 Cleveland Avenue, at the time the project was submitted to the City for a project permit, had already been so modified it had lost its historical integrity. Pers. Comm., April 3, 2007, Kelly Saunders, Senior Planner, City of San Diego, Planning Department, Historical Resources Board.

. . . [T]he cumulative effects of multiple modifications to the house has substantially and adversely impacted the historical integrity of the property. . . Furthermore, despite the [historical survey] report’s contention that the modifications are ‘minimal alterations, which ‘can easily be changed to restore the home to its original appearance, the Board as it is aware, may not condition designations to require restorations or modifications. All properties must be considered in their current condition.” (October 12, 2006 Historical Resources Board Staff Report No. 06-046, Item # 7- 4374 Cleveland Avenue, p. 3) (emphasis applied)

By contrast, the property owner of 4004 Lark Street caused a substantial adverse change to the property *after* the project application was submitted and, significantly, *after* being notified by City staff that the house would be evaluated for historical significance. The San Diego Municipal Code nowhere specifies that the concept of integrity is restricted to the physical condition of a resource when the Historical Resources Board votes on a proposed designation. Thus the property owner’s reliance on the October 12, 2006, Historical Resources Board Staff Report No. 06-046, Item # 7- 4374 Cleveland Avenue is misplaced.

Indeed, the property owner not only misplaces reliance on a staff report irrelevant to 4004 Lark Street but also incorrectly equates “current condition” with the concept of “integrity” as it is applied under state law to the designation of historical resources:

Integrity is the authenticity of an historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. Historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register must meet one of the criteria of significance . . . and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources

and to convey the reasons for their significance. Historical resources that have been rehabilitated or restored may be evaluated for listing. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It must also be judged with reference to the particular criteria under which a resource is proposed for eligibility. Alterations over time to a resource or historic changes in its use may themselves have historical, cultural, or architectural significance. It is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register if it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data. See "California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historical Resources," California Office of Historic Preservation, Technical Assistance Series # 1, Appendix C, at p. 31. See also Title 14 CCR 4852 (c). (emphasis added)

### CONCLUSION

The "current condition" of a potential historic resource, where its nomination arises from SDMC section 143.0212, refers to the date a project application is submitted to the City. The local permit review process is predicated on the information provided by an applicant when it submits a project to the City. The application submittal date, in essence, tolls and locks the condition of a property, for purposes of fair and equitable review, thus avoiding the situation, as in the instant case of 4004 Lark Street, whereby an applicant could avoid designation by demolishing a resource before it can be evaluated by the Historical Resources Board pursuant to SDMC section 111.0206 (d).

MICHAEL J. AGUIRRE, City Attorney

By

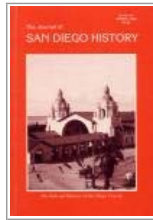
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## BUNGALOW COURTS IN SAN DIEGO

### Monitoring a Sense of Place

by James R. Curtis and Larry Ford

*Both professors of Geography at San Diego State University*

[Images from this article](#)

In the years immediately following World War I, revolutionary social changes were occurring in American cities. Many of these changes would soon affect the housing market as new types of people located so as to do new types of things. For example, large numbers of young, single women entered the labor force as office workers in the new downtown skyscrapers. Large numbers of young men returned from service in the military and, having been uprooted from family and tradition, sought new opportunities in the cities. Mass transit lines sprang up everywhere enabling people to move en masse to the edges of the metropolis. The old housing stock, consisting largely of single family homes and subdivided (tenement-ized) buildings was ill-suited to this new demand. Boarding houses were out and the apartment was in.

In Southern California, a utopian new type of housing evolved to provide dwellings for those who dreamed of a house and garden but who could either not afford one or were too busy to be bothered with the upkeep -- a new type of housing for those who longed for an independent lifestyle but one with a strong sense of community and security. This type of housing was the bungalow court. Although the bungalow court ceased to be built after World War II, we argue that it is a housing form ideally suited to the social and environmental concerns of the present day and should be revived. We attempt to develop this argument by first monitoring the "staying power" of bungalow courts over time in San Diego, demonstrating a long and continuous record of providing highly attractive housing for several segments of the population. And, second, demonstrating through a survey of residents that bungalow courts conform to ideal housing environments described by experts on architecture and community.

Many of the concerns of the eighties, from providing attractive and affordable housing for non-traditional families (singles, mingles, women-headed households, retirees, students, gays, etc.) to densifying older residential neighborhoods without destroying their character, as well as developing new types of suburbs with greater housing variety and afford-ability, call out for a closer examination of such things as the bungalow court. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

#### Defining the Bungalow Court: Aesthetics and Ideology

In order to monitor the staying power of the bungalow court, we must first define our terms. The key words, of course, are bungalow and court. While there were many examples of multi-house lots in Southern California in the early years of the twentieth century, sometimes referred to as "cholo courts," these were usually not bungalow courts. They were sometimes little more than instant slums as shanties were strewn almost randomly around city lots in order to create cheap horizontal tenements. Bungalow courts, on the other hand, featured well-designed, small houses carefully arranged around a planned open space. Although the shape of this space varied, as we will discuss later, the sense of focus and enclosure were always present.

The literature on the origin and evolution of both the bungalow and the bungalow court is good if not extensive and so suffice it to say that both the word and the form derived from Bengal. There the British attempted to design the ideal tropical dwelling which they felt should be a casual, garden-oriented, one-story house designed for a suburban setting, as opposed to the earlier (Georgian and Victorian) formal, vertical, and rather larger urban houses. The bungalow was introduced by the British into the American South, most typically as a pyramidal-roofed cottage with a large verandah. In the North, the word bungalow was most often applied to small houses in resort settings until well into the twentieth century. By the early 1900s, however, the bungalow was becoming increasingly popular throughout the United States as the Craftsman/Progressive



Movements argued for simpler houses as a reaction to the excesses of the Victorian Era. Formal, stuffy Victorians were seen as hard to clean and divorced from nature.

It was in Southern California in the early 1900s that these two ideologies came together to produce the California Bungalow, i.e. the simple, garden-oriented house ideal for the resort-like setting of lotus land. The California Bungalow retained its essential character but quickly came to be "Cecil B. deMilled" into an eclectic Japo-Swiss-Tudor or Egypto-Polynesian suitable for life in an exotic land. (Things cannot stay simple for long it seems.) A bungalow in the garden became the image of the suburban ideal and quickly diffused throughout the country. Yet not everyone could afford this ideal.

It was in 1909 that the first bungalow court appeared, reportedly an innovation of architect Sylvanus Marston who built eleven full-sized bungalows in a court arrangement in Pasadena. Derived in all likelihood from Eastern resort communities, the typical bungalow court came to feature a group of six to ten small, individual houses placed around a communal garden. Usually two standard lots were enough.

Bungalow courts were seen as a compromise between expensive and demanding single-family homes on the one hand, and the "indecent propinquities" of apartment life on the other. They could offer settings with sufficient density for a sense of community and shared responsibility while still allowing the space for greenery and even private gardens. Much of the early literature on courts suggested that in them, a great deal of daily living could be communal with people taking turns cooking, washing, gardening, etc. with social life centered in a sort of dining hall/social center. Although these Utopian ideals did not work out, in part because self-contained household appliances came on the market at the same time such as small stoves, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, electric irons, and radios, courts continued to be seen as an ideal setting for community involvement. In fact, some were referred to as "community courts." Thus, bungalow courts featured the aesthetics of the bungalow in the garden coupled with the ideology of semi-communal living in a friendly place.

### Bungalow Courts in the 1920s: Segmenting the Housing Market

Life in a down-sized, individual house located within the womb-like protection of the court was seen as ideal for certain growing segments of the urban population, especially single women. As office employment and other professional opportunities attracted increasing numbers of young, single women to the city (independent women who would no longer accept the dorm-like housing solutions of the industrial revolution), bungalow courts were advertised as an ideal place for women who were unable or unwilling to invest in a single-family home but who might not like a large, impersonal apartment building either. In 1913, an article in *Ladies Home Journal* concluded that "Very few persons, particularly women, can be happy outside of a pleasant home. An apartment in a great boxlike building is frequently the solution, as a house to one's self is apt to be not only lonely, but expensive as well. In California, the court apartment has solved the problem in a practical and economical way." Six years later, the same journal ran another piece that identified some of the advantages bungalow courts had to offer working women, noting that they are: " . . . located on the edge of town where air and sunlight are abundant and land is cheap; where the distance to and from business or to and from transportation is within the limits of a short walk; where, amidst the congenial surroundings of delightful country life and inspired by interesting companions in one's own walk of life, business women may have homes for themselves." In addition to providing greater privacy and seclusion than apartments, it was frequently noted in female-oriented articles that courts were "uncommonly safe" places to live.

The bungalows themselves were promoted as being full, albeit small, houses built like the inside of a yacht to maximize convenience in a minimum of space and furnished with the latest and most serviceable array of built-in features, including, according to *Sunset Magazine* in 1917, "buffet, cooler, cabinet kitchen, linen closet, laundry tray on the screen porch, first-class plumbing, electric lights, gas for cooking or heating and most with disappearing beds, open fireplaces, hardwood floors in the living rooms and ample closet space." All these features, coupled with "the glorious outdoors, the mild winters, and the riot of gay colored flowers," led the *Sunset* author to ask: "Who wants a big house in California anyway?" So convenient and free from labor were these cozy houselets thought to be that in 1919 *Ladies Home Journal* opined that "even women employed eight hours a day in business life have time and strength to do their own housework," which, it was suggested, might "help to solve the servant problem." It was also often insinuated (probably by men) that women could learn a sense of domesticity in these bungalows which they could not get in an apartment.

Perhaps because it was associated with outdoor living in a resort-like setting, the bungalow court was slow to diffuse beyond the California hearth. Using Sanborn fire insurance maps to locate courts, we found that, outside the state, the only significant concentrations were in south Florida and southern Arizona. While hundreds (perhaps thousands) of bungalow courts were built in California during the 1920s and 1930s, other parts of the nation made do with garden apartments, row houses, and doubles (semidetached). In Southern California, the bungalow court became an important element in the region's sense of place. Most courts were built in some variation of the Mediterranean/Mission style and covered with bougainvillea. The emphasis on small, efficient houses with outdoor communal space conformed to the popular image of life in California.

Although both the ideology and the aesthetics of the early courts represent ideals which were rarely fulfilled completely, bungalow courts have exhibited exceptional "staying power" both architecturally and socially. While perhaps not Utopian in all respects, they have, at least in San Diego, provided remarkably good places to live over the past seventy years.

### Bungalow Courts in San Diego

Even a cursory drive through the older residential areas of San Diego, where more bungalow courts were built than in any city except Los Angeles, confirms that the bungalow court has survived and that it is continuing to play an important role in the social geography of the city. Yet to actually monitor the staying power of the bungalow court is a somewhat more complicated task as we needed to know how many have not survived as well as the condition (socially and architecturally) of the survivors.

Using Sanborn fire insurance maps for the interwar years, we were able to locate all of the courts built in San Diego on a street by street basis. Before mapping the courts, we classified them into four categories based on variations in spatial arrangement. They are: (1) detached, full court - the "classic" court consisting of individual cottages arranged around a spacious central garden (2) detached, narrow court - individual cottages arranged around a long, narrow, garden-like walkway (3) attached, full court - when two or more of the bungalows share a common wall, and (4) attached, narrow court. Since the term "court" implies an enclosed, designed space, in all cases the building arrangement included an end structure and a proper garden. All other multi-house lot arrangements were eliminated.

In central San Diego (that is all of San Diego in 1940 with the exception of the then remote beach communities), we found a total of 278 proper bungalow courts had been constructed prior to World War II (In addition, there were 158 half courts - designed to accept a second half if and when the neighboring lot became available.) Of these, 155 (or 56%) were classic, detached, full courts with the remaining 44% split roughly evenly among the other three types. Most of the courts were located along or very near the streetcar lines north of Balboa Park - suburban settings with excellent access to downtown. Very few of the courts were located more than three blocks from a streetcar line, a fact that has made for continuing good access even with today's bus service.

During the summer of 1986, we conducted a field check to determine precisely how many of the 278 full courts had survived and to assess, in a general way, how the remaining courts were being maintained. Considering the magnitude of growth and change in San Diego over the past fifty years, and nowhere more so than in the older neighborhoods where land values and condominium construction have soared together, the survival rate was impressive. Nearly 80% (217) of the courts were still intact and the vast majority of these appeared to be in excellent condition with only a handful in disrepair. Most of the losses were attributable to locations along major commercial (streetcar) streets with nearly one-third being redeveloped for retail centers. Nearly half of the 61 redeveloped sites now had large apartment/condominium projects with the remaining losses due to freeway construction and downtown expansion. If indeed the staying power of a particular kind of housing is one measure of the success of that housing, then these results would seem to confirm that bungalow courts work; their persistence alone is a testament to their success.

### Who Lives in Bungalow Courts?

Having satisfied ourselves that the vast majority of bungalow courts built in San Diego have not only survived but are in immaculate condition, we endeavored to find out why this is so. In order to identify the social, economic, and aesthetic dimensions underlying court survival and to gain some perspective on who lives there and why, we decided to solicit the views of the residents themselves. First we conducted a series of drop-in discussions with court residents - open-ended interviews aimed at identifying key issues. We then constructed a questionnaire which we hand-delivered to 120 residents in 20 randomly-selected courts in a variety of San Diego neighborhoods. Sixty of the questionnaires were completed and returned in the self-addressed, stamped envelopes we provided for a response rate of exactly fifty percent.

We were somewhat surprised to find that bungalow courts appear to attract a much higher socio-economic level clientele than would be expected on the basis of census tract characteristics. Indeed, the average court resident could almost be called a "yuppie." Most of the respondents were between 20 and 39 years of age (70%), were Anglo (93%), single or divorced (92%), and well-educated (42% were college graduates and another 43% had "some college"). A surprising number worked in a profession or skilled trade. Most of the residents (78%) lived alone and just over half (55%) were women. Over one-fourth (27%) had lived in a court before and were committed court seekers.

The yuppie profile, however, masks significant diversity. Indeed, when individual court populations were examined, we discovered a greater depth of diversity, especially with respect to age, gender, and ethnicity. While the majority of courts were fairly evenly divided between men and women, it is not unusual to find courts occupied overwhelmingly or even exclusively by people of the same gender. Courts made up of elderly women, many of whom have lived there for decades, and gay courts are examples of important micro-communities focusing on court life. Of the fourteen respondents who were over sixty years of age, ten were women and six had lived in the court for more than ten years (three for more than 25 years). In addition, while most court residents are Anglo, there appear to be a few which are predominantly Asian or Hispanic -- again, garden-centered micro communities. Once we knew the kinds of court populations that gave the places identity, we could expand our data by using City Directories for various years. We found that, over time, some courts remained stable, female-dominated settings while others were more diverse and transient. In nearly all cases and over sixty years, the typical bungalow housed one Anglo person, most often female.

It would seem on the basis of the resident profiles that bungalow courts are attractive places to live especially for females, since they appeal to people of above-average socio-economic status and education despite the small size of the residences and relatively low rents. In order to determine why the courts are attractive, we asked people to rate the importance of various court features (such as the central garden) and to describe the ways in which they used them. We also asked them to rate the courts as places to live and to describe the things they especially liked or disliked.

### Bungalow Courts as Seen by the Residents

People like living in bungalow courts. Fully 60% of the respondents indicated that they enjoy living in their court "very much" while an additional 35% find it "satisfactory" with only 5% "dissatisfied." Both aesthetic and social factors play roles in this positive response.

Since one distinguishing feature of the bungalow court is the court space, we asked residents to rate how important the space is to them and to describe the ways in which they use it. Clearly, the perceptual value of the court space is high with 83% of the residents indicating that it is "very important" (52%) or "important" (31%) to them. Such a positive response is significant given that wide variations occur from court to court. While many are attractively landscaped and may even include fountains or gazebos and permanent lawn furniture, an equal number have little more than a walkway through a small, grassy area. Still, people emphasize the sense of separation that even a small lawn provides -- a few feet of lawn between houses seems to play an important role in the American psyche.

In describing the aesthetics of the court space, residents wrote: "It is personally important to me to look out on it and see an intimate space that looks attractive"; "I enjoy the quietness and beauty of the courtyard and the relaxing sound of the water fountain"; and "I take my friends through a garden setting to my front door, rather than down a long hallway" (as one would in an apartment building).

Court space seems to be very important for fostering a sense of community and interaction among the residents. Many residents said that the garden was used for barbeques and potlucks and various kinds of planned and unplanned "court parties." Less intensive interaction also results from people using the space to "read," "sunbathe," "relax," and "wash the dog." In addition, the court space, especially the space around the front door and porch, was often intensively personalized with people using it for "growing strawberries," "making sun tea," "gardening," and putting up various kinds of decorations including hanging plants and wind chimes. Over 40% of the residents claimed to do some gardening or landscaping while 60% personalized their porch and entryway. In field checking the courts, we were impressed by the degree of "lived-inness" as the individual bungalows reflected the tender loving care of their residents in ways rarely seen in apartment complexes. This combination of turf personalization around the houses and communal concern for the common area would appear to be essential factors in the appeal of the courts.

In any multi-family housing arrangement, there is a social dynamic at work with the perception of fellow residents being a key factor in how well the housing works. We asked the residents to rate and describe their neighbors compared to other places they had lived. A substantial majority said that court residents were "more friendly" (72%), "helpful" (70%), "considerate" (68%), and "sociable" (62%). It is difficult to say whether the courts attract people who are simply nicer than average or whether living in a court requires a certain attentiveness to the needs of other people. The latter explanation seems more likely. The space encourages people to interact and socialize.

Apart from the court space, there were ten features that stood out as major factors in the appeal of bungalow courts. We list them in order of decreasing importance. First there is the bungalow itself. This was particularly true for people living in detached courts where each unit was a separate house. In addition to the psychological feeling of having your own place, people mentioned that such units were exceptionally quiet with no one "above and below me or knocking on the walls next door." People also appreciated four-sided light as most bungalows had windows on all sides. One resident summed up the consensus feeling by saying "My little house is not a sterile, modern city apartment." Second, the feeling of security which goes along with the bungalow community was commonly noted. One wrote, "I like the security that my neighbors are usually here when I'm not." Another added, "There is a companionship, safety and privacy in a self-contained, neighborhood atmosphere."

The third most important factor seemed to be an appreciation of the fact that similar types of people, or at least soul-mates, tended to congregate in any one court. People tend to like people who are more or less like them. One resident wrote that "You can conserve your independence and yet find close to you people more or less in your own circumstance." Another said, "We are all very close and friendly, like one big family." Location was the fourth most important factor, especially location with regard to public transit and local stores. A large minority of the residents do not own cars, particularly the elderly women. "It's near Safeway and the bus line" said one. Fifth in importance was the fact that most of the complexes are quite small having from six to ten units and are located in single-family neighborhoods and so "there is not a horde of people around me."

The sixth and seventh factors could be grouped into one called "lots of greenery and landscaping with no chores." "I have a small house without the worry of upkeep and yard work" said more than one resident. The eighth factor was an ability to keep small pets, especially cats, and a yard for them to romp and lurk in safely.

The final two factors were a perception of low rent (the rents do tend to be a bit lower than the average nice apartment since all of the courts are over fifty years old and many have not changed hands recently), and an appreciation of architecture. Noted one man, "I've always wanted to live in a Spanish-style house" (but I couldn't afford to).

While most of the positive features put forth by the residents were directly related to bungalow court design, most of the complaints elicited were more general in nature. Complaints about street noise, lack of parking, crime, and antiquated plumbing tend to be common in older, central city areas. Some of the complaints were more focused upon the character of the bungalow courts themselves such as the small size of the (usually one bedroom) units, the lack of storage space, and even "too much interaction." The complaints, however, were few and far-between compared to the positive comments. Although we cannot tell from the anonymous responses, there is reason to believe that many of the complaints came from one or two problem courts. All in all, bungalow courts in San Diego are remarkably good places to live for those seeking a neighborhood-centered lifestyle.

#### **If They Are so Good, Why Did They Stop Building Them?**

The construction of bungalow courts ceased by about 1940. During the war years, very little was built apart from military bases and associated housing. When housing recovered in the late 1940s, builders concentrated on constructing single-family homes in newly-developing suburbs, especially in San Diego. Central city neighborhoods were ignored for more than a decade as few multi-unit projects of any kind were built. When central city apartment construction resumed in about 1960, the "economics" had changed. Due to the development and unfathomable popularity of the two-story "dingbat" apartment complex, eight units could now be crammed onto one city lot complete with off-street parking. Bungalow courts could not compete as new investments. It is probably also true that apartment seekers in the 1960s (like everyone else) wanted modern dwellings with gleaming kitchens and green shag carpeting. The escalating land values and condo boom of the 1970s brought even larger, often highrise, projects to the older neighborhoods and many existing courts were destroyed for "higher and better uses."

In spite of the unfeasibility of bungalow court construction in most of the neighborhoods where they now exist, these courts might still provide important insights for future housing types. Bungalow courts were usually not built in central city locations even during the teens and twenties but rather were built out on the new streetcar lines in what was essentially suburbia. During the 1950s through the early 1970s, many suburbs were "single-family only" but that is increasingly not the case today. Some variation on the bungalow court would seem to be the ideal compromise for neighborhoods on the border between apartment complexes and single-family homes. In central San Diego, bungalow courts, houses, and apartments have coexisted together serenely for seventy years. The new bungalow court would probably have to contain larger units (and so perhaps fewer units) and off-street parking but there are existing models which could be transferred to suburbia and satellite cities.

In addition to simply building new bungalow courts in suburbia, bungalow courts should be studied intensively so as to allow developers of a variety of new projects to include a few of their quintessential attributes. Many of the new types of apartment complex spaces simply do not work very well. In a pluralistic society, why not housing diversity?

In today's segmented society, hobbies and products abound which aim to please only one type of person or one special interest group yet the housing stock remains remarkably undifferentiated. In a society where an increasing number of households have rejected, at least temporarily, the traditional model of family life in a single-family house, why not attempt to provide attractive alternatives? The bungalow courts of San Diego, in light of their almost non-existent vacancies, appear to do just that. We often give lip-service to the need for a greater sense of community and belonging yet we rarely build environments that encourage such things as well as those of the past. Just as in the 1920s, the need for a house and a garden with a minimum of capital and labor investment and a strong sense of group identity and involvement cannot be a bad thing. Bungalow courts could provide microchip neighborhoods for the sprawling cities of the future.

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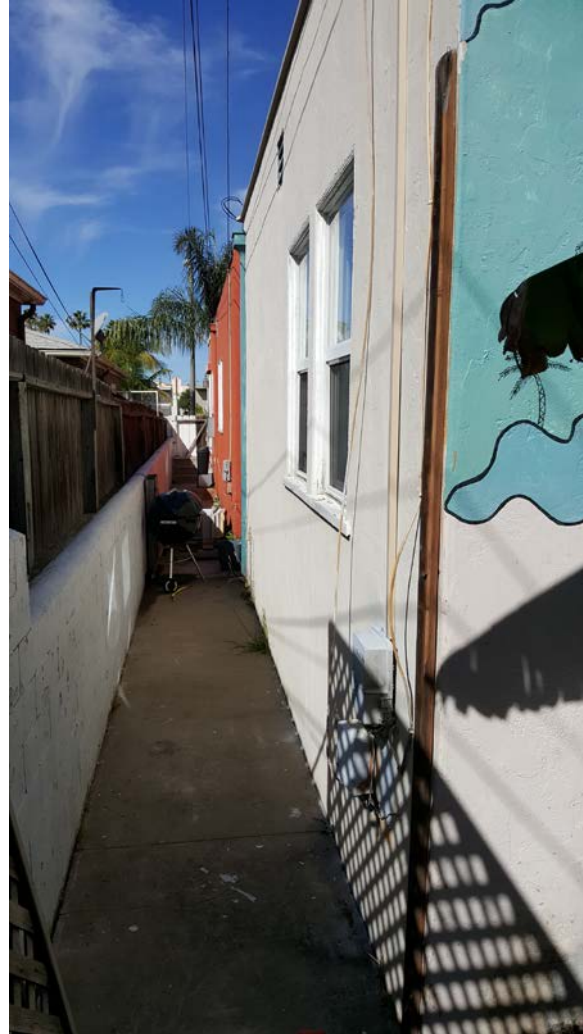
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