

Islenair Historic District



Community Workshop

March 10, 2007

Overview of Today's Presentation

- Background information on the district effort
- History of Islenair
- Why Islenair is historically significant
- “How will a historic district affect my property?”
- The process of establishing a historic district
- Questions and Answers

Background

- ❑ 2001: Community members approached HRB staff with the idea of establishing a historical district.
- ❑ March 2002: HRB staff surveyed the neighborhood and a draft document was prepared.
- ❑ November 2002:
 - Community Workshop was held in November 2002 and the district received a favorable response.
 - Proposed district was reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee, who suggested that staff further develop the historical context and statement of significance.
- ❑ Due to staffing decreases and workload, HRB staff was unable to continue processing the district.
- ❑ July 2006: Mayor & City Council added 1 Senior Planner to the Historical Resources section with the purpose of processing historic district nominations.
- ❑ Staff has completely revamped and strengthened the historical context and statement of significance and are returning to Policy for additional input.

“What is Islenair?”

- ❑ Small, 114 lot subdivision
- ❑ Created in 1926
- ❑ Designed to be a self-contained mixed use subdivision with single-family, multi-family, semi-business and business uses.
- ❑ Middle and working class subdivision developed during the “small house movement”.
- ❑ Representative of the transition from Streetcar to Automobile Suburbs.
- ❑ Microcosm of architectural trends from the late 1920’s through the early 1950’s.

Historical Context and History of Islenair

□ Early Periods of Suburban Development

■ Railroad and Horsecar Suburbs (1830-1890)

- Early subdivisions developed along railroad routes and along the perimeter of cities that were accessible by horse-drawn car.
- Typically limited to upper and middle classes.
- Not generally characteristic of San Diego, which was still struggling to develop an urban center during this time.



■ Streetcar Suburbs (1888-1928)

- In the west, streetcar lines influenced the initial pattern of suburban development.
- Real estate development would closely follow the expansion of the streetcar, generally within a 5 to 10 minute walk of streetcar stops.
- Became the primary means of transportation for all income levels.
- In San Diego, first-ring subdivisions such as Hillcrest and University Heights became the City's first Streetcar Suburbs.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

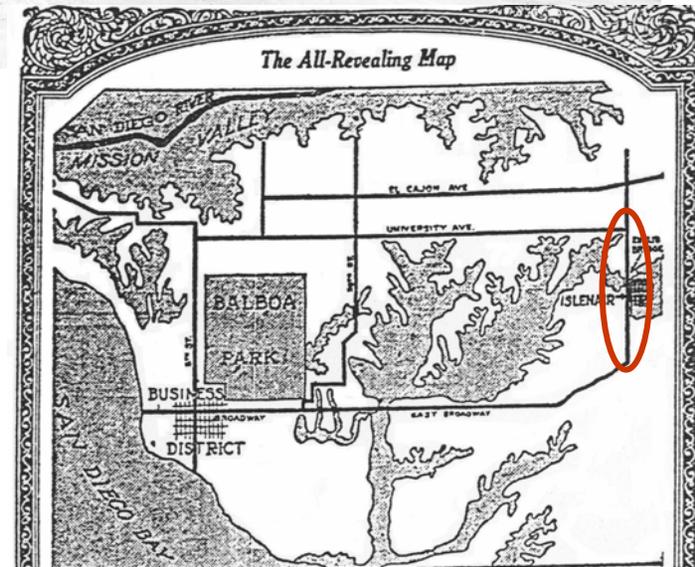
- ❑ Automobile Era: Suburban Expansion in the 1920's and Beyond
 - Early Automobile Suburbs (1908-1945)
 - ❑ Mass-production of the automobile made the car more affordable and auto-ownership jumped from 500,000 in 1910 to 9.25 million in 1920.
 - ❑ Allowed suburbanization to expand and grow at lower densities and stimulated the development of new infrastructure.
 - ❑ By the mid-1920's, one in four people in San Diego owned a car.
 - Post WWII and Early Freeway Suburbs (1945-1960)
 - ❑ Occurred as a result of increased car ownership, advances in building technology, and the Baby Boom.
 - ❑ Low-cost, long-term mortgages and use of the GI Bill.
 - ❑ Highway Act of 1944 resulted in increased Federal investment in infrastructure to connect cities.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

Development of Islenair

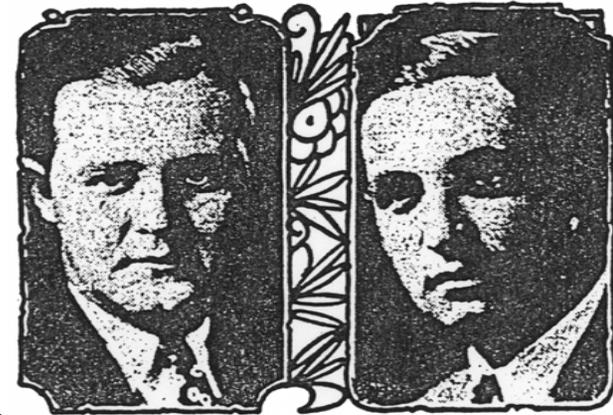
- East San Diego and City Heights
 - Developed as a Streetcar Suburb after the streetcar line was extended east along University Ave to Euclid Ave.
 - Incorporated into the County in 1912.
 - Annexed by City of San Diego in 1923.
 - Characterized by smaller, modest subdivisions.
 - Development was limited by the lack of infrastructure, which would be necessitated by the popularity of the car.
- Euclid Avenue Extension
 - Would provide the only north/south connection east of 30th Street
 - Included 3.5 miles of road and the construction of four bridges to traverse the many canyons that dotted the area.
 - Would provide access to areas previously undevelopable, including the area which would become Islenair.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

□ Development of Islenair

- Developers James Love and William Touhey filed the subdivision maps for Islenair Units 1 and 2 in March and July of 1926.
- Selected a location high above Chollas Valley surrounded on three sides by canyon space, providing the inspiration for the name Islenair, or “Island-in-the-air”
- Geared to middle and working classes, with affordable lots and reasonable minimum construction costs.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

Development of Islenair

- Transitional “Hub-Division”, located within walking distance of the streetcar and along a new major thoroughfare built in response to the popularity of the car.
- Self-contained mixed use subdivision with
 - business and
 - semi-business uses along Euclid Avenue;
 - multi-family uses along Euclid Avenue and corner lots; and
 - single-family uses allowed throughout.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

□ Development of Islenair

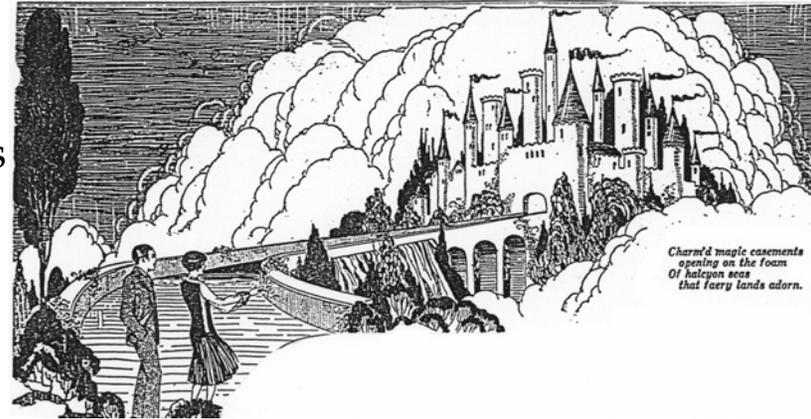
- Designed in keeping with the suburban design philosophies of small moderately priced homes on curving tree-lined streets.
- Borrowed design influences from other subdivisions such as Kensington, with its canyon orientation, curving streets, and palm-tree lined parkways.



Historical Context and History of Islenair

□ Advertising Islenair

- Aggressive advertising campaigns lead by Love and Touhey depicted Islenair as an oasis in the clouds, offering “the best of San Diego’s four climates.”
- Published cross-word puzzles in the Union Tribune with a \$25 credit toward the purchase of a lot to anyone who successfully completed it.
- Held luncheon lectures at Islenair with transportation provided.
- The final climactic scene of the 1926 Our Kids film, “Fire” was filmed Islenair, during which a two-story frame house was burned to the ground. The public was encouraged to attend with the promise of “Three Great Thrills Today: See a Comedy Filmed, a Spectacular Fire, and the Homesite of Your Dreams!”
- Islenair Unit 1 sold out in 90 days and Unit 2 sold out in just 45 days.

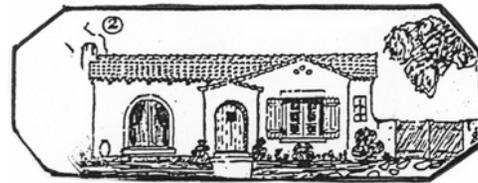


Historical Context and History of Islenair

- First Period of Development (1927-1931)
 - Reflective of the small house movement of the 1920's, which focused on quality design and construction in a compact, efficient layout containing no more than six rooms.
 - Reflective of the popularity of Spanish Eclectic architecture following the 1915 Panama-California Exposition.
 - 20 homes were constructed during this period before the full effects of the Depression were felt and construction came to halt.

Historical Context and History of Islenair

□ First Period of Development (1927-1931)



Historical Context and History of Islenair

- Second Period of Development (1935-1941)
 - Reflective of the renewed national focus following the Depression to improve the design and efficiency of the American home while lowering its cost.
 - Reflective of the increasing popularity of the FHA's "minimum house" in the form of the Minimal Traditional style, and the decreasing popularity of Spanish Eclectic architecture .
 - 47 lots were developed during this period before the onset of World War II when construction again stopped.

Historical Context and History of Islenair

▣ Second Period of Development (1935-1941)



Historical Context and History of Islenair

- Third Period of Development (1945-1952)
 - Reflective of the Post-World War II boom in housing in response to the housing shortage, returning veterans, and increased housing affordability through the FHA and the GI Bill.
 - Reflective of the continued popularity of the “minimum house” in the form of the Minimal Traditional style, and newly emerging Ranch style.
 - By 1952, 37 additional lots had been developed and Islenair was nearly built-out.

Historical Context and History of Islenair

▣ Third Period of Development (1945-1952)



Historical Context and History of Islenair

- Remaining Development (1957-1979)
 - Remaining development consisted almost exclusively of multi-family and commercial buildings along Euclid Avenue.
 - Not reflective of the character and quality of development in Islenair and occurred outside of the three main periods of development.

“Why is Islenair Significant?”

- ❑ Developed as demand for a semi-rural, community-centered way of life grew and advances in transportation technology made development in outlying communities both affordable and practical.
- ❑ Its location marks a new stage in the City of San Diego’s expansion away from the city core and beyond the limits of natural topography as increases in mobility and population forced the creation of new infrastructure and the use of previously unreachable and underutilized land to the east.
- ❑ Development in Islenair reflects the small house movement which began in the 1920’s and evolved through the Great Depression and World War II.
- ❑ The neighborhood serves as a microcosm of architectural trends from Spanish Eclectic to Minimal Traditional and Ranch styles, visually illustrating and encapsulating the booms, busts, and trends in working-class suburban development in San Diego from 1927 through 1952.

“How will a historic district affect my property?”

- ❑ Islenair is proposed as a Geographic Historic District
 - Defined geographic boundary
 - Contributing resources
 - Non-contributing resources



“How will a historic district affect my property?”

□ Contributing Resource

- Built within the period of significance.
- Reflective of and contributes to the significance of the district.
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey that significance (not too many changes or modifications).
- All resources identified as contributing at the time the district is designated will be designated as contributing resources.
- Eligible for the benefits of designation, which includes the Mills Act agreement and property tax reduction.
- Contributing resources will be required to comply with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Islenair Development and Design Guidelines.

“How will a historic district affect my property?”

□ Non-Contributing Resource

- Either built outside of the period of significance and are therefore not eligible for designation as part of the district; or
- Were built within the period of significance but have been altered to such an extent that they no longer retain sufficient integrity to convey the significance of the district (too many changes or modifications).
- It may be possible for some non-contributing properties to become eligible for designation as contributing resources if the modifications impairing their integrity were reversed through a restoration plan prior to designation. Such a restoration plan and designation would be at the discretion of the Board.
- All resources identified as non-contributing at the time the district is designated will not be eligible for the direct benefits of designation, such as the Mills Act property tax reduction.
- Non-contributing resources will only be required to comply with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the Islenair Development and Design Guidelines as they relate to appropriate redevelopment of non-contributing resources.

“How will a historic district affect my property?”

- “Is my property a contributing or non-contributing resource?”
 - Properties with a NRHP Status code of **5B** or **5D3** have been identified by staff as contributing resources
 - Properties with a NRHP Status code of **6L** or **6Z** have been identified by staff as non-contributing resources
 - 6L: Could be reclassified as contributing structures if restored, at the discretion of the Board.
 - 6Z: Could not be reclassified, either due to substantial alterations or because the property falls outside of the period of significance.

“How will a historic district affect my property?”

□ Responsibilities:

- Maintain the property consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Islenair Development and Design Guidelines.
 - Common sense guidelines for adding to and improving historic resources while maintaining their significance.
 - Provided in your folder.
- Projects within the boundary of the District must be reviewed and approved by City staff.

“How will a historic district affect my property?”

□ Benefits:

■ Benefits for Contributing Resources:

- Mills Act Agreement: property tax reduction which provides a 15% - 75% savings in property taxes, with an average savings of 50%
- California State Historic Building Code: provides some relief from current building code requirements as needed to protect the historical significance of the resource
- Conditional Use Permits: available to allow adaptive reuse of historic resources.

■ Benefits for all Properties:

- Increased property values
- Preservation of community character

Process of Establishing a Historic District

- ❑ The area to be surveyed and considered is thoroughly researched. (DONE)
- ❑ The area is surveyed and an inventory of all resources in the area is prepared. (DONE)
- ❑ A historical context and statement of significance is developed for the district which provides evidence as to why the district is historically significant. (DONE)
- ❑ Resources are classified as either contributing to the significance of the district or not contributing to the significance of the district. (DONE)
- ❑ Staff presents the historic district nomination to the Historical Resources Board's Policy Subcommittee for feedback and direction. (DONE)
- ❑ Staff hosts a community workshop to present the district to the community, provide information, and answer any questions. (DONE)

Process of Establishing a Historic District

- ❑ March 10th-20th: Staff polls the community to determine the level of support and provides that information to the Historical Resources Board.
- ❑ March 12th: Staff returns to the Policy Subcommittee for final feedback.
- ❑ March 12th: Notices are sent to property owners informing them of the first hearing date.
- ❑ March 22nd: The Islenair Historic District nomination is heard by the HRB, who reviews the nomination, takes public testimony, discusses the nomination, and provides direction to staff regarding the completeness of the nomination and any changes which should be made prior to the second hearing.

**THE DISTRICT WILL NOT BE DESIGNATED DURING THIS
FIRST HEARING!**

Process of Establishing a Historic District

- ❑ April 10th: Notices are sent to property owners informing them of the second hearing date, at which time the Board will consider whether or not to designate the district.
- ❑ April 26th: The Islenair Historic District nomination is heard by the HRB, who reviews the nomination, takes public testimony, discusses the nomination, and determines whether or not the district should be designated. *If it is designated, the Board will also designate properties as contributing resources and classify the remaining properties as non-contributing resources.*
- ❑ April 26th–May 10th: If the District is designated, the designation of the district and/or any contributing resource may be appealed by a person who was present at the second public hearing and filed a speaker slip or expressed an interest in the decision in writing to the Board before the close of the public hearing. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the City Clerk no later than 10 business days following the designation. (SDMC 123.0203a)

Questions and Comment



Thank You