



**PALM BEACH COUNTY
HISTORIC RESOURCES REVIEW BOARD**

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 6, 2013 MEETING
(Minutes were constructed from audio recording.)

On May 6, 2013, at 2:30 p.m., the Palm Beach County Historic Resources Review Board (HRRB) met at the Hearing Chambers on the 1st Floor of the Vista Center 2300 N. Jog Road, West Palm Beach.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Roll Call

At 2:39 p.m. Friederike Mittner, chair called the meeting to order.

Members Present

Friederike Mittner
Dr. Arlene Fradkin
Dr. Clifford Brown
Helen Vogt Greene
Warren Adams

Members Absent

Amy Alvarez
Jeffrey Weeks
Everee Clarke

Palm Beach County Staff Present

Christian Davenport, County Historic Preservation Officer, PBC Planning Division
Bryan Davis, Urban Designer/ Principal Planner, PBC Planning Division
Nora Bolivar, Planning Technician, PBC Planning Division

II. Old Business

A. Approval of the Minutes from the May 6, 2013 Public Hearing

Mrs. Greene made a motion to approve the minutes of May 6, 2013. The motion was seconded by Mr. Adams and passed unanimously 5-0.

B. Comments by the Chair

No Comments.

III. Public Hearing

A. Updates and information on the Historical Homes, Context and Maps

Mr. Bryan Davis introduced himself and began his power point presentation regarding properties featuring post-WWII housing in Palm Beach County. He related with his research on the context by referencing a book called, "Crabgrass Frontier." This publication is a history exploring the causes and conditions leading to the suburbanization of the United States. The focus of Mr. Davis' presentation was on the latter half of the book, which covered the 1920s to present. The main thesis is that U.S. suburbanization was inevitable, and explored the social impacts, and urban history as affected by the suburbanization phenomenon.

Mr. Davis then stated that the author Kenneth Jackson determined that five discernable characteristics of post-war suburban housing were manifest:

- Location at the periphery of the cities
- Low population density
- Architectural similarity, not enough distinction
- Easy availability of suburban housing and reduced suggestions of wealth
- Economic and Racial homogeneity

This decentralization was driven by a nationalized distrust of urban life and communal living, coupled with a massive sustained urban population growth. The two fundamental underlying causes were race and economics, and Jackson ascribes a greater importance to economic causes, precisely the real (low) cost of shelter in the US.

Mr. Davis continued by describing six economic causes of suburbanization:

- Per capita wealth, notions of abundance
- Inexpensive land
- Inexpensive transportation
- Inexpensive construction (Balloon-frame house)
- Federal government's role
- Capitalism

In citing the Federal impact, Mr. Davis started with non-housing related information, beginning with a description of transportation and the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916. The structuring of hamlets, villages, towns, cities and the roadway systems begin to form through and around them, these become the first Federal highways and Federal roads. During the Eisenhower Administration the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 established the construction the US interstate highway system, one of super highways, limited access, and became the second national road system. These two actions create the infrastructure that enables suburbia to flourish on a national scale.

Mr. Davis briefly described the national defense spending and the role of the military as it spurred on and affected the expanse of suburbanization. Military bases that provided housing were primarily in major cities. After the first World War, and accelerated by World War II and the post war period, military bases and their housing spread to the countryside where land was inexpensive and vast.

The next item described in Mr. Jackson's book is the Internal Revenue code and the role of taxation. Tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes, amounts to a homeowner subsidy and encourages renters to become home

owners. Effectively, the tax code becomes an instrument for financing the growth of suburbia.

Federal Housing policy was the next revelation portion of Crabgrass Nation that Mr. Davis discussed. In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, the Congress passed several laws that systematically reformed and simplified the process of home ownership in the US. Loans for home purchasing became long term, low interest, and self amortizing, with uniform payments over the term of the loan. Systematized home appraisal methods were adopted. However these appraisal methods involved looking at a great deal of data including ethnicity, and led to the practice of "redlining." These reforms had a profound impact on suburban growth. However, with the signing into law of the National Housing Act in 1934, the prior efforts during the Depression were carried forward, and resulted in the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The intent was to stimulate building without government spending, instead relying on private enterprise to create jobs and alleviate unemployment. The mortgage industry was wholly reformed, and lending was "nationalized" with money effectively transferring from the northeastern US to the southern and western portions of the country. Housing in general, complies with the minimum home construction and building standards that meet the requirements of the FHA, the building codes are updated in order for home loans to pass approval. In the short term, foreclosure rates dropped as existing homeowners applied for the program. Other subsequent loan programs followed this model, including Sallie Mae, Ginnie Mae, and the "GI Bill" (1944), as their effective loan practices were favorable to many individuals.

Turning away from the lessons of Jackson's Crabgrass Frontier, Mr. Davis then presented his own research on state-level activities that affected settlement and growth within the State of Florida from the 1920s forward. In 1924, the State of Florida abolished the income and inheritance tax. The poll tax was abolished in 1930s. In the late 1930s, state taxes on land were abolished. The state then further reduced taxes by introducing homestead exemptions for the first time in 1937. In the 1950s, the first statewide sales tax was instituted. All the changes in taxation made Florida a very favorable place to settle, this in turn promoted growth. However, as the population grew, agriculture and growth were at odds. State roads were required to be fenced in 1949. This was to ensure that both the burgeoning population, tourists and open range livestock did not come into conflict on the growing road network. Furthermore in 1952, County roads were required to be fenced, resulting in "a domestication of the countryside." In 1963, the State's condominium act became law, and Florida is the second place in the US with this type of act (the first being Puerto Rico). In response, an explosion of high-rise condominiums occurred in Florida's coastal population centers.

Turning to the County itself, Mr. Davis continued with information about overland transportation systems in Palm Beach County. Only two main rail lines for people to travel into Florida, one is the Flagler railroad (on the East Coast) and the other Plant system (which opened up the West Coast after traversing the northern portion of the state from Jacksonville). Subsequent rail line expansion helped to extend rail service down the center of the state and brought rail into the County from Okeechobee. The most popular road was Federal Highway road system. In 1957, the Florida Turnpike opened connecting Fort Pierce to Miami. The construction of the Turnpike opens up the central and western part of the county. The Beeline highway was built in 1958, in response to Pratt Whitney, and

the need to facilitate transportation along the now CSX lines. Finally, the last piece of the puzzle was the advent of the Interstate Highway System, and the County's portion of I-95 was begun in 1966, as part of a development requirement for infrastructure. By 1976, the County was connected from Miami up to PGA Boulevard, and by 1987, the "missing link" between Fort Pierce and PGA was completed.

Mr. Davis then proceeded to list developers identified thusfar, who shaped the development landscape in Palm Beach County. Notables included as Arthur Vining Davis who purchases land in the Boca Raton area in 1956 and in turn sold it to the Arvida Corporation. In 1957, Pratt Whitney brings employment to the north portion of the County. In the late 1950s, the Perinni Corporation develops a large amount of infrastructure in the location known today as Palm Beach Lakes within and around West Palm Beach. The first Planned Unit Development was Arvida in the Boca Raton area. The first shopping mall Palm Coast Plaza and first Publix shopping center were built in the County in 1959.

Mr. Davis then listed and gave descriptions of the plan-types of single-family homes shown in his slides before concluding his presentation and opening the floor to questions.

- Minimal Traditional cottage
- Shotgun home
- "Box" home
- "Proto-ranch"
- Ranch House (and its many sub-varieties)
- Other Flavors: Biomorphic, A-Frame, Domes, and "Modern"

Mrs. Greene commented on the excellent job Mr. Davis did on the presentation.

Mr. Adams commented that recently a new district was added to the National Historic Register places, the old counts historic district in the Northwestern US, where the period of significance is from 1965 to 1974. The majority of houses in this area are ranch houses, and because it didn't meet the "fifty year criteria," the various consideration criteria that were used. The master planned community applied planning principles such as cluster development, the integration of large usable open spaces, and the establishment of homeowner associations (of which this was the second HOA organization in the state of Oregon). He continued by stating that there were only five hundred in the Country at the time, due to the HOA's management, 81% of the properties were classified as contributing resources. This is one of the earliest examples of FHA approved town houses in the state of Oregon. It was the cohesive integration of owner occupied multi-family housing into a larger single family residential development. It was important piece of design, marketing, and amenities for future master plan suburban properties. PUD's are the response of alienation and isolation fostered by post-WWII and the surrounding cities deterioration. Mr. Adams found the timing of the district being added to the national register two years shy of meeting the criteria and the information in the presentation interesting.

Dr. Brown commented that of all the information that was presented, the board should be thinking about the fact that in most cases to effectively preserve what is important and to document the culture of suburbia is by preserving its landscapes and not individual structures. The board needs to be thinking in those terms.

Ms. Mittner agreed with Dr. Brown, that the board should look at the context, not just the individual home because the locations may not have an upscale architectural characteristic.

Mr. Davis responds that as part of the research, the resource forms would still need to be completed. The presentation was made to be more informative for the individuals that may not know of the requirements and styles of the structures, this information will enable them in turn to be able to fill out the necessary forms. The identification of these homes will be summed up in the volume each district may have in order to determine potential district boundaries.

Ms. Mittner clarified that the context of the landscape surrounding the homes, the acres of land adjacent to the sites, and the types and proximity of commercial growth, land planning around the area was what she intended to include in her prior statements.

Dr. Brown added to Ms. Mittner's comment by saying that fundamentally we are looking at preserving and understanding suburbia. By looking at the existing properties and districts that are listed in the register we could have a better understanding of the classic iconic subdivisions.

Ms. Mittner commented that it was a great presentation. She also said that the City of West Palm Beach has placed a post-WWII neighborhood on the National Register by the airport. The two pieces of research information that came from this was air conditioning that revolutionized Florida, and gender roles, as far as how women entering the workplace more, and how that influenced floor plans and changed the art of living.

Mr. Davenport briefly updated the board on the draft report that was going to be handed out at this meeting is incomplete. The research information on air conditioning, passive cooling is addressed. The role of the carport is explained in the report on its changes and modifications throughout time, which turns to be a good indicator. Currently the report is at sixty five pages, but not finished for today's meeting.

Mr. Davenport then gave his presentation portion regarding the historical homes. He explained that some of the map locations and information will be in the report. He showed the board the effect development had on the areas beginning with Military Trail and the changes that have happened throughout time. He had broken down each section by year and square footage showing the homes and where they are clustering in the areas of Palm Beach County.

Dr. Fradkin asked a question about the time frame, whether it was around the 1925 and 1929 if it was part of the land boom before the depression. Mr. Davenport responded that it was.

He then explains that in 1991 there was a survey that was partially done by Ms. Vicki Silver, who was the staff for the HRRB in the past, and had researched that the Westgate area was a potential historic district. The Westgate area had circumstances that needed to be addressed and never was designated as a historic district. The other areas that were also considered were Westgate, Lake

Harbor, and Canal Point. Lake Harbor is almost non-existent, and there are only seven homes left after Hurricane Wilma.

Mr. Davenport continued pointing at clusters of built homes constructed during 1940-1944 through war time and the depression the rest of the Country was not building at that time, however South Florida was. Between 1945-1949, the population grows, and becomes denser along Military Trail. The period between 1955-1959, the community of Lake Osborne develops in unincorporated Palm Beach County. The neighboring municipality is Palm Springs which also starts to develop. In 1953, more growth south of Palm Springs that expands to the municipality of Lake Worth, and by 1968, the area was built out. He then covered Lake Osborne, Lantana Road and Boynton Beach, describing the development clusters ranch houses and split-level homes, starting in 1953, and the construction of the Lantana airport which was built before WWII. The Town of Atlantis, developed nearby. Finally, the neighboring area called Florida Gardens where the Turnpike interchange with Lake Worth Road begins in 1958, along with subsequent further development of the surrounding community.

Mrs. Greene then asked if there was research done on what age groups living in the area, or what are the demographics and how they have changed. Mr. Davis responded that the original owners may have bought the homes very young and passed them down from generation to generation, and younger families move into the communities.

Mr. Davenport explains the changes in types of homes built in the 1960 ranch style communities begin to start have '70s "stylized" residences, as well as extremely large homes that do not fit in to their surroundings. Some of these residences can be found around the area of Congress Ave and Atlantic Ave. At times the property owners purchase adjacent lots to expand the square footage of their homes. Mr. Davenport then concluded that staff is making progress, but the research is a huge undertaking in dealing with the context project.

Dr. Fradkin comments on the changes and patterns near her community by the coast along A-1-A by the intercostals waterway, there are many homes that are split level and have become called castles by the sea.

Dr. Brown commented on the cultural aspect of the styles of homes being built, different cultures may either buy larger homes or progressively expand on the ones owned based on their needs; this is prevalent in Latin communities.

Mr. Davenport then stated that the field work that staff has done was productive and that there is significance. With the fourteen thousand examples of homes, to evaluate and conclude what is significant, with the addition of the landscapes, and context of the neighborhood are in, then the context may be limited potentially to a street, should a certain type of home exist in some concentration. Mr. Davenport then listed the steps that staff has applied in the research to reach the numbers and to arrive at the context information for the project.

Mr. Davenport then updated the board regarding the letter received from the Advisory Council, regarding the McFadden house in Canal Point. The letter was sent to the owner of the property. He then gave a sealed letter sent to the County and addressed to Dr. Brown. Dr. Brown received the letter and read it before sharing the information with the rest of the board.

B. Discussion of Elections for New Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr. Davenport asked the board to postpone the elections until all members could be present.

C. Comments of the Public

No public comments were made.

IV. Comments of Board Members

Mrs. Greene shared with the board that she recently found a home in the Lake Worth area that was started in 1919 and can be documented with pictures from when it was a vacant lot to today.

Dr. Fradkin commented on how well both presentations were made. The categories, chronology and the descriptions of the types of homes were excellent.

Mr. Adams then gave a brief update to the board that the City of Boynton Beach received grant from the state to create a downtown Heritage trail, with approximately thirty sites from homes, schools and mangrove walks. There will be boards with smart phone codes that will download historical information. In the future, there will be more locations within the city and in different languages.

Dr. Brown thanked staff on the research that has been done on the context project. He then gave a brief on the response on the Advisory Council's letter regarding the McFadden house, indicating they declined to participate in the consultation process. Mr. Brown then requested that staff please receive and distribute copies of the letter to the rest of the board.

Ms. Mittner then thanked Chris for all his help with the City of West Palm Beach Grassy Waters and for going forward with the research with the historic context. Then Ms. Mittner said that she would like to bring in a DVD called, "Green Buildings and Preservation to share with the rest of the board.

V. Schedule and upcoming meeting and agenda topics

Mr. Davenport will contact the Board to notify them of the next meeting.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

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NEXT MEETING: TBA
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