

90th Anniversary of the Country Club Addition

Spruce Park Neighborhood, formerly the Country Club Addition, turned 90 years old in 2014



Albuquerque's original Country Club, shown here in 1925, is where the Newman Center now stands on Las Lomas. The fancy homes west of University were once considered the Country Club Addition.

The Country Club Addition was platted in 1922 and the first homes were built in 1924. Advertised as Albuquerque's only exclusive district, the Country Club Addition offered such amenities as "water, sewers, paving, electric lights and telephones." Few parts of Albuquerque had all of these conveniences, or even some of them.

Fine and sometimes fanciful homes were built in the Country Club Addition during the Roaring 20s, a time of sustained economic prosperity, when new technologies, especially automobiles, moving pictures, and radio, proliferated.

After the Great Depression, the Country Club moved to the valley and the Country Club Addition was renamed as Spruce Park.

Today, the Spruce Park Historic District is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* and the *State Register of Cultural Properties*. In the District there are homes with towers and balconies designed to conjure up visions of Spain. There are homes with sleeping porches, and pueblo-style homes. Scattered throughout the neighborhood are the most fantastic houses of all--especially in New Mexico--the English cottages. The building styles were often highlighted through the use of authentic materials and the finest windows available.

Approved rehabilitations of homes which are classified as Contributing in the District qualify for state income tax credits.



Simple building materials and fine windows help define this beautiful Mediterranean –style home, 2014

LISTING ON THE HISTORIC REGISTER - WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE OWNER OF AN HISTORIC PROPERTY

Mary Pietsch Davis,* former - Preservation Planner, City of Albuquerque

I hope that most of the homeowners in the Spruce Park Neighborhood know that much of their neighborhood is in the Spruce Park Historic District. It features Southwestern and Spanish Revival styles, and also includes some rare Cottage-style houses, Bungalows and Southwest Vernacular-style houses.

Approved rehabilitations of buildings which are classified as Contributing in the District qualify for state income tax credits. Contributing buildings and the District as a whole also receive some protection from publicly funded projects which may adversely affect the distinguishing historic characteristics of the area or individual structures.

*Maryellen Hennessy is now the Preservation Planner. The City’s Landmarks and Urban Conservation Commission will soon be publishing a new handbook entitled *Albuquerque’s Early Automobile Oriented Suburbs* that will feature home styles found in the City’s 1920’s – 1950’s neighborhoods.

Listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* and the *State Register of Cultural Properties*, the District contains the most intact and varied collection of picturesque building styles prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s in Albuquerque.



Priest and White Dove on a Tower, 2014
[Light bulb above priest was Photoshopped out]



Open yards and young trees were once the norm, as show in this 1935 (?) photo of the Chester French house
(Photo from the Albuquerque Museum)

LISTING ON THE HISTORIC REGISTER, cont.

CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS: *Most of the houses in the Spruce Park Historic District “contribute” to the historic and architectural character of the district;* to determine which properties are so classified an owner can call the City or State historic preservation staff (contact information in article on page 4). A building is termed “contributing” if it has architectural integrity and was built during the period of significance identified for the district (in this case 1924-1945). Changes made to a building during the period of significance, for example, a porch enclosure done in 1935 or a second story added in 1943, are considered to be historic alterations and do not disqualify a building for classification as Contributing. Homes built after 1945 and homes that have been unsympathetically remodeled are classified as “non- contributing.” Non-contributing buildings do not qualify for any financial benefits and are not protected.



and cut wood shingles simulating a thatched roof in the English Cottage style. Photograph from ~1981.



Mexico. The original roof on this 1930 home is of fanciful undulating wood shingles with rolled edges.

NO HISTORIC APPROVALS REQUIRED, BUT: It is important to understand that an owner of a building listed on the historic registers can change the historic building, even demolish it, without notification or approval from an historic board or official. Of course, as with any construction or demolition work anywhere in the city, the owner must still obtain standard City demolition permits or any applicable building permits. Listing on the historic registers does not formally affect the granting or withholding of these permits.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS: Anyone considering remodeling a house listed on the historic registers should know, however, that if a house is significantly altered it can be removed from the registers. The property will be re-evaluated by staff from the State Historic Preservation Division and, if the changes have removed or obscured significant character-defining features, the building will be reclassified as non-contributing, and no longer be eligible for the benefits available to registered properties.

INFORMATION ON THE STATE PROGRAM FOR REHABILITATION OF CONTRIBUTING HOMES

Harvey Kaplan - Architectural Review Staff & Tax Credit Programs, New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

State income tax credits are available to fund rehabilitation work on state-listed homes that “contribute” to the historic significance of the Spruce Park Historic District. Home owners may earn a credit against their New Mexico State Income Tax equal to 50% of pre-approved eligible rehabilitation expenses, up to a tax credit limit of \$25,000.

Rehabilitation and repair of historic features or replacement of utility services to keep the building safe may earn credit. Such rehabilitation work might include re-roofing, sewer line repairs and window restoration. Many trees (primarily Elms) that form “*allées*” or green canopies along the streets in Spruce Park are eligible as they are called out as significant historic features in the State Register of Cultural Properties nomination. While routine maintenance like annual pruning would not by itself be eligible, removal of dead and dangerous limbs or trees, and street tree replacement may be considered eligible.

Prior to beginning work, a Part 1 application must be submitted to the NM Historic Preservation Division (HPD) with photos, a description of the work, and contractor’s estimates. All decisions on Part 1 applications are made by the state’s Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC), which meets every even-numbered month. All work must conform to the program’s preservation guidelines as interpreted by the CPRC. After the restoration work is completed, a Part 2 must be submitted for approval by the CPRC, documenting completion of work and the final cost.

Use of the State income tax credit program does not give the State of New Mexico any special control of the home. A fact sheet and answers to questions about the program are available from



The original undulating and rolled wood shingles were replaced with financial assistance from the state income tax credit program

Historic Preservation Division staff via email at: harvey.kaplan@state.nm.us and questions will be answered by phone at (505) 827-3971 and (505) 827-6320. More information and application forms are available on HPD’s website: <http://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/programs/tax-credits.html>

NOTE: Over the years, we have submitted three Part 1 applications for several different restoration projects at 1300 Las Lomas. These projects ranged from re-roofing, to removal of dead and dangerous limbs, to window restoration, to sewer line rehabilitation. Yes, paperwork is required – but our financial return on the time invested in the paperwork is tremendous – and slowly we are returning our home to its original historic beauty.

BORN WITH STYLE

Our homes and our neighborhood were born with style. Inadvertently, some homeowners are taking homes with style and making them into homes without style. Nowhere is this more prevalent than with widows. Windows are character-defining, and should be restored when possible. If restoration is not possible, consider high-quality windows that reinforce the historic character of the home.

KEEPING THE NEIGHBORHOOD GREEN

Spruce Park Neighborhood is graced with people who have planted and maintained beautiful flowers, shrubs and trees. As one walks from Spruce Park into the neighborhood there are no dramatic boundaries – most of the neighborhood is park-like. Individually, and together, we have maintained a beautiful niche in the heart of the city.

For most of us – we inherited the landscaping at our homes. Even with a boat-load of money, you cannot buy a 50-year old elm or cottonwood or sycamore tree. You can buy a fine car for your garage, but you can't buy a fine, mature tree for your yard.

The State Register nomination for Spruce Park notes that “An important and highly-visible aspect of the historic district is its landscaping. Street trees, many of them tall and well maintained, line most of the major streets.”

TREES REQUIRE WATER: Our trees thrive with deep weekly watering in the summer and deep monthly watering in the winter (the trees are alive in the winter and require winter water). Mature trees hold a water savings, which they draw-down when they are not watered. But, in the long-term, trees must receive regular water, or they will die and have to be removed.

XERISCAPING SHOULDN'T BE ZERO: Xeriscaping means “wise use,” with plants like low water buffalo grass and low water trees – like elms and locust trees. A front yard of gravel and a few plants will reduce the water bill by 10's of dollars per month – and in two years, the mature trees will be dead and require thousands of dollars to remove.

Help us maintain our park-like setting with regular, deep watering of your trees and landscaping.

It pays to care for trees

Landscape trees provide benefits that far exceed the costs of planting and care over their lifetime.

Environmental and esthetic benefits, such as energy savings, stormwater runoff reduction, cleaner air, and higher property values, are worth several times the amount of tree care costs.

The greatest benefits are energy savings from cooling and higher property values.



Higher property values

Trees increase the resale value of houses

- ✦ Each large front yard tree adds 1 percent to the sales price of a house
- ✦ Large specimen trees can add 10 percent to property value

These facts about trees in Albuquerque are from “Trees Pay Us Back, In the Interior West Region” a US Forest Service brochure: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/uesd/uep/search.php?Topic>