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Homes

SECTION H

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home-grown appeal.
PAGE 15

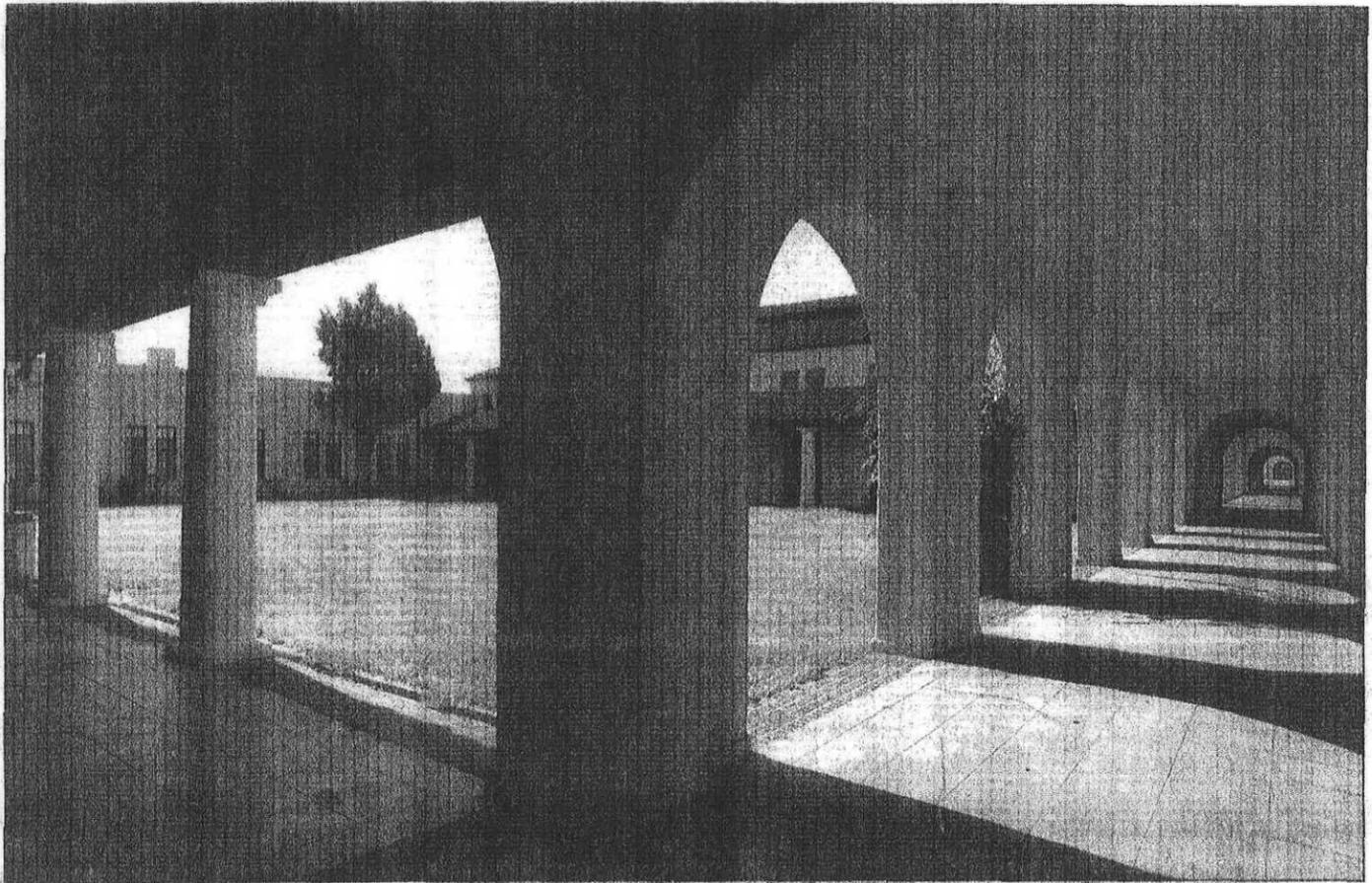
San Diego gardens in April
are a visual treat
PAGE 19

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE • SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 1995



Ship to shore

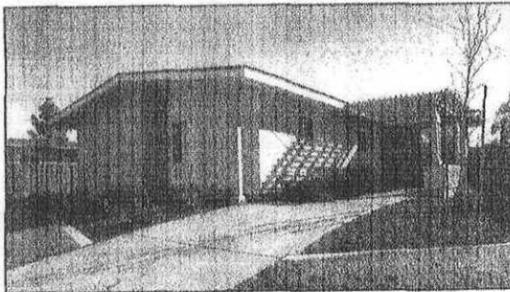
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NTC SAN DIEGO
SSIC # 5090.3



March on NTC: Graceful historic colonnades and quadrangles at the Naval Training Center may be empty now, but public suggestions could bring them back to life as a visual- and performing-arts center, affordable-housing units or a home for small start-up businesses.

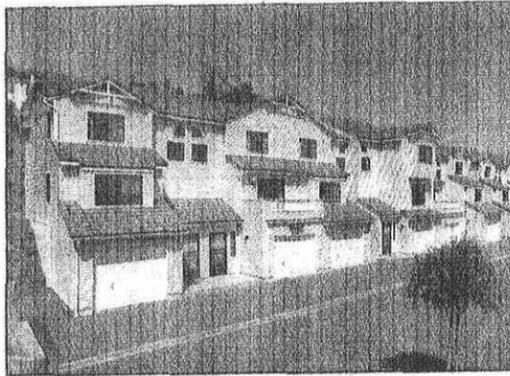
NAVY HOUSING

Opposition to development, high costs keep military need high



Union-Tribune / NELVIN CEPEDA

Navy update: Homes in the 35-year-old Chesterton complex in Linda Vista are being thoroughly rehabbed.



Union-Tribune / NELVIN CEPEDA

Blending in: Recently constructed Navy housing like this 244-unit townhouse complex in La Mesa is largely indistinguishable from privately built subdivisions.

By LORI WEISBERG
Staff Writer

Since his first visit 10 years ago, Navy petty officer Daylin Hargrove dreamed of the day he could bring his wife and children to San Diego to live. Last year, that dream came true, but it wasn't exactly paradise that awaited when the Hargroves embarked on a search for housing.

Accustomed to spending \$550 a month for a four-bedroom home in Athens, Ga., the Hargroves encountered severe sticker shock as they surveyed San Diego's pricey rental market.

"I was totally discouraged," recalled Darlene Hargrove, who fretted over finding a home in a safe neighborhood for her seven children. "I just said to my husband, 'You stay here, I'm going back home.'"

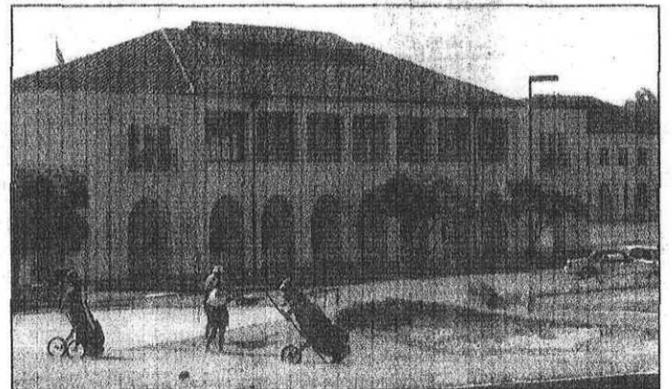
Ultimately, the military housing office intervened on an emergency basis and swiftly found the family a five-bedroom townhome in the Navy's sprawling Murphy Canyon complex in Tierrasanta, where waits for housing can be as long as 2½ years.

"It's like a flower; it's constantly blooming," enthused Darlene Hargrove, almost lyrical in her joy over making it into Navy housing. "When we got the call about the housing . . . I mean, I've been happy before but I had prayed for this."

For the Hargroves, this story has a happy ending, but it isn't always so for the thousands of largely low-income Navy families struggling to find affordable shelter in a region where such housing is in short supply. Compounding the problem is the Navy's acute shortage of on- and off-base housing, which numbers just 7,845 units, compared with the nearly 45,000 military households in San Diego.

Faced with a current housing deficit of some 4,300 units, the Navy is eager to seize any op-

See Navy on Page H-4



Union-Tribune / DON KOHLBAUER

Navy greens: The NTC base includes a surprising amount of landscape, including a nine-hole golf course that could become a community park.

NAVAL TRAINING CENTER

Amateur design teams want nature to move in when the Navy moves out

When about 200 San Diegans and one spotted dog got together to help plan the Naval Training Center's rebirth, they produced 16 potential land-use maps with one obvious thing in common: The dominant colors were blue and green.

This is great news for San Diego, because all that blue on the maps underscored a craving for more waterways and waterfront access. Green, naturally, stood for parks and open space, which residents want and need in many neighborhoods, including Point Loma, where the base is located.

Furthermore, nearly all of the 16 teams at last Saturday's city-sponsored NTC reuse charrette, or design workshop, favored launching the proposed Bay-to-Bay Link, a potential regional asset, with NTC's boat channel. Aware of a navigable waterway's potential to transform San Diego, they also wanted to develop other parts of the base to complement it.

As proposed by Mayor Susan Golding and validated by an exploratory design team, the Bay-to-Bay Link would connect San Diego Bay and Mission Bay with a canal, park-like greenbelt or series of ponds and linear parks and open space. Winding through

Surroundings

ANN JARMUSCH

See NTC on Page H-6

Make plans to visit our Home Buyers & Sellers Fair on April 8. See H-2.



Navy

Communities often fight to keep sailors out

Continued from H-1

portunity it has to add to the housing stock. Most recently, it has vigorously pursued plans to develop 500 townhomes on an 87-acre site at the Naval Training Center after it closes sometime in 1997. It also is exploring an as-yet untried partnership with private developers to build 2,000 units of housing on the eastern fringe of downtown.

"There's an urgent need," said Karen Ringel, the Navy's housing development manager. "Sometimes it's been 10,000 units; sometimes it's been 5,000 units, but to us it's a humongous need. That's why we're trying to build or buy as much as we can."

That is also the conclusion reached by the San Diego Association of Governments, which periodically assists the Navy in combing the county for vacant land, as well as existing housing complexes suitable for military housing.

"They provide you with such large numbers that even if they were off by a couple hundred, there still is such a need," said SANDAG special projects director Jack Koerper, the agency's liaison with the military. "Because we can provide only a small number of units each year, you're never going to solve the problem."

Each year the Navy has an authorization to build or purchase anywhere from 100 to 400 units in the San Diego region, which translates into an average annual budget of \$25 million to \$30 million. But over the next two years, the Navy will be spending a good chunk of its money razing and rebuilding 712 units of existing housing in Paradise Hills, which will improve, but not add to, the current stock of housing.

To buy or to build

Although the bulk of Navy housing has been constructed by the military, the trend in recent years has been toward acquisition, which generally is a less-expensive and, clearly, less-contentious process.

"Purchasing housing is a better use of their limited dollars. They can get the families in quicker, the projects have already gone through the communities for approval and the schools are already anticipating the kids," points out Koerper.

Complicating matters, however, are the Navy's special needs, key among them, larger housing units capable of accommodating families, which rules out many of San Diego's one- and two-bedroom apartment complexes. Also a consideration is commute time, which can be no longer than 60 minutes to and from the 32nd Street Naval Station.

Add to that requirements for interior sprinkler systems and a minimum one bedroom per child, and it quickly becomes clear the Navy faces some daunting challenges in its hunt for housing.

When SANDAG launched its search in late 1993 for housing sites, it accumulated an inventory of 213 locations. By the time the Navy completed its review, the list was whittled down to 110, more than half of which are existing structures. Three-quarters of those, however, did not meet the Navy's standards, and since then, the inventory of sites has been narrowed to 10.

And while the Navy is assured of getting what it wants when it builds from the ground up, communities don't exactly extend a hearty welcome when the military comes calling. Often, communities engage the Navy in emotionally pitched battles that can drag on for years.

So riled was one East County community that it filed suit against the Navy earlier this year, claiming that a planned 290-unit housing development would overwhelm the semirural area, overcrowding its schools, taxing its roads and degrading the environment.

Many of the same arguments were raised three years ago in upscale Carmel Valley, where the Navy contemplated building 300 units of Navy housing. Particularly disturbing to the military were undercurrents of anti-Navy sentiment that filtered through the debate.

Navy officials insist that they diligently work with neighborhoods, trying to allay fears and to design housing projects that cater to neighborhood needs and wants.

"It's been a challenge to work with these community groups," acknowledges Ringel. "Their impact is valuable, but it's difficult because you get a lot of emotion. People like to see open space, and any change is difficult."

When pressed, she concedes that there clearly "is that bias against Navy housing."

"We've taken people out to Navy housing sites and they didn't even know it was Navy housing. And we point out to them that at least one person in a Navy household has a job, and that's not necessarily true for all apartment complexes."

"We'll continue to look for raw land, and we certainly won't allow a community to stop us. We have to do what's best for the Navy."

Never say die

If there is a community with a mission to stop the Navy, it's Eucalyptus Hills, population 3,500, a village committed for the last 44 years to retaining its rural charm and keeping urbanization out. It is not uncommon to see horseback riders traversing the tree-shaded two-lane roads that meander through the Lakeside-area enclave.

"This is the wrong project in the wrong place at the wrong time," insists Bruce Robertson, president of

the Eucalyptus Hills Landowners Association. He points with a sweep of his hand to the 41-acre, boulder-studded site off Highway 67, destined for 290 units of Navy housing. The project's density, Robertson points out, exceeds the maximum 4.3 units per acre called for in the Lakeside Community Plan.

"Look at what's going to be in this project's front yard," Robertson says, pointing to the cars whizzing by along Highway 67. "You would have to cross what is the most dangerous strip of highway in San Diego County."

"We are going to do whatever we can to stop this project, and if it means national press, we'll do it."

In response to a lawsuit filed by the landowners association, a U.S. District judge last month threw out several of the group's claims but ordered the Navy to further investigate issues relating to potential fire hazards, sewage disposal and an elementary-school septic system. The Navy insists, however, that the legal action will not prove fatal to the \$28 million project.

"I'm not sure I'd like to go and construct in Lakeside again, but I hope they won't take it out on the sailors," Ringel said. "These are the people who go out and serve their community. It's a shame we can't go out and find homes for them."

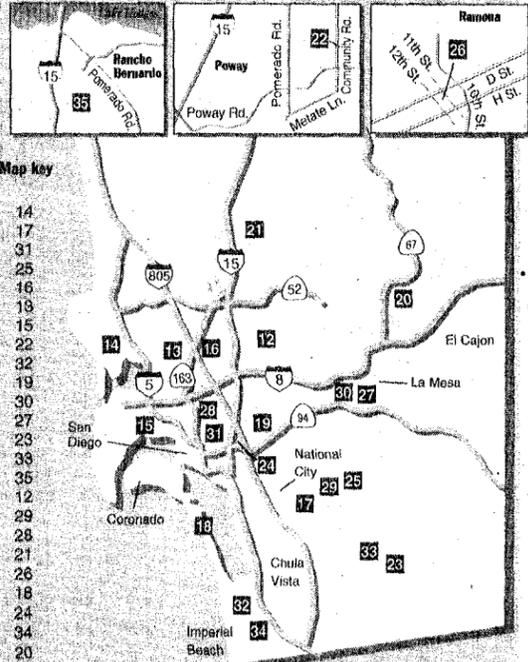
For Jonathan Light and his wife, Maria, the search for affordable housing was a discouraging, demoralizing process that left both soured on San Diego. Currently living in a Navy housing complex off Home Avenue, the Lights nearly went broke trying to pay for a \$600-a-month apartment in Chula Vista on his meager salary of \$1,050 a month and monthly housing allowance of \$540.

"We had no idea what it was going to be like, and I'm from Chicago, and it's worse here than Chicago," said Light, who is 22. "I've seen two attitudes (toward Navy personnel) here — either they

HOUSING THE NAVY

The Navy has an inventory of more than 7,800 units of both on-base and off-base housing dispersed throughout the county. The map identifies the various off-station housing sites.

Off-station housing sites	Number of units	Map key
Admiral Hartman	438	14
Bayview Hills	812	17
Beech Street Knolls	72	31
Bonita Bluffs Court	75	25
Cabrillo Heights	812	16
Chesterton	434	18
Gateway Village	545	15
Hilleary Park	37	22
Holly Square Apartments	13	32
Home Terrace	85	19
Howard Gilmore Terrace	244	30
La Mesa Park	56	27
Lotgren Terrace	200	23
Marbrissae	10	33
Morada Condominiums	35	35
Murphy Canyon Heights	2,321	12
Paradise Gardens	46	29
Park Summit	30	28
Pomerado Terrace	120	21
Ramona Vista Apartments	88	26
Silver Strand (Phases I and II)	390	18
Terrace View Villas	236	24
Wintergreen Village Apartments	30	34
Woodlake Housing	48	20



SOURCE: Military Family Housing Office

Union-Tribune / PENNY LINGO

don't like us at all or they can see what they can get out of us."

"I would not come back to San Diego because of the price of housing here. The only bright spots I've found in San Diego are the places they fix up for the tourists."

Shocking prices

No doubt about it, shock is frequently the initial reaction when Navy families are confronted with San Diego's housing costs, said Navy Capt. Judy Gaze, assistant chief

of staff for military family housing.

Her office maintains a frequently updated database of 6,000 rentals throughout the region, sorted by ZIP code, price and size. Landlords are encouraged to call in with affordable rentals, she said.

"If you're brand new to the Navy and have a family, it's really tough," she acknowledged. "We have some families who live way out of town and commute so that their money can go farther."

Enlisted personnel also are asked

sign up on a waiting list for the nearly 8,000 on- and off-base housing sites scattered throughout the county. Waiting periods, not surprisingly, are generally longest for the newer housing complexes located in desirable areas like Coronado. The average wait overall, say Navy officials, is 1½ years.

Older complexes — some built as long as 40 and 50 years ago —

See Navy on Page H-5

PAYING THE BILLS

How housing allowance works

Navy personnel are paid according to rank and years of service. Additionally, they receive a monthly stipend for housing costs, which is tied to rank. The following are three examples of the variation in salary and housing allowances. For those living in Navy housing, there is no housing allowance.

Rank/years of service	Monthly pay	Monthly housing allowance
E-3 (roughly 3 years)	\$1,091.40	\$540.38
E-5 (average six years)	\$1,437.30	\$676.98
E-7 (more than 14 years)	\$2,062.50	\$851.27

SOURCE: Military Family Housing Office

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Union-Tribune / NELVIN CEPEDA

Home sweet home: The Hargroves say their dreams were answered when they learned they were moving into Navy housing in Murphy Canyon. From left are: father Daylin, mother Darlene, Christina, Ebony, Isaac, Demetrius, Laron, Lyvonne and Danielle.

Navy

New housing looks like civilian development

Continued from H-4

are seen as less desirable and for some, reinforce images of Navy housing as bulky, cheerless compounds devoid of imaginative design.

But take a look at more recently constructed Navy housing, from contemporary stucco townhomes to Cape Cod to Mediterranean, and it is difficult to distinguish it from the suburban subdivisions that define San Diego's landscape.

Navy wife Deborah Nelson said she was pleasantly surprised when she discovered that a La Mesa townhome complex with its red-tiled roofs and tangerine and green-tiled accents was indeed Navy housing.

"We went next door when we came to look at the housing because we couldn't believe this was it," said Nelson, looking in the direction of a drab-looking commercial and residential building adjacent to the housing complex. "We thought that next door looked more like Navy housing."

Despite the often predictable community opposition that new Na-

Communities don't exactly extend a hearty welcome when the military comes calling.

vy housing projects engender, many communities say they've grown accustomed to having Navy families as neighbors and welcome their presence.

Community leaders in Tierrasanta and Scripps Ranch say the Navy housing complexes in their neighborhoods have never posed any problems for them, nor have they given rise to crime, an issue sometimes raised by communities when new projects are proposed.

The more than 20-year-old Murphy Canyon complex in Tierrasanta and the 11-year-old Pomerado Terrace development in Scripps Ranch, however, are relatively isolated from their respective communities.

For instance, at the entrance to the 2,321-unit Murphy Canyon, a prominently placed stucco sign with its own tiled roof announces you have arrived at Navy housing and are in a sense leaving Tierrasanta proper behind.

"One of the things that makes it work so well is a number of Tierrasanta residents are also military or work in some line associated with the military," noted Bill Reschke, president of the Tierrasanta Community Council. "But the single biggest factor is that they've been there forever."

Residents in eastern San Diego living near Chollas Heights, the site of three Navy radio transmission towers, are not nearly so sanguine about the prospect of the now obsolete transmission facility giving way to more than 400 units of Navy housing.

What particularly irks the surrounding communities is that the Navy is able to escape paying the normal development fees required of builders to cover the impacts on municipal services and facilities, such as roads and parks.

"Like the Navy told us, 'It's our land and we can do what we want.'"

so the community is resigned to the fact that this is going to happen," said Steve Boeh, chairman of the Eastern Area Planning Committee. "The community itself never envisioned Navy housing on this site. They thought it would be incorporated into Chollas Lake."

Standing on a hill with the 600-foot-tall towers looming overhead, Boeh rhapsodizes about the sweeping view from Mexico to La Jolla.

"This (project) has become such a headache," Boeh groaned. "I wish I could just close my eyes and make it go away."

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?

How would you feel about Navy housing in your community?

Readers are welcome and encouraged to send us their views on this or any other story that appears in Homes. Our mailing address is Homes, P.O. Box 191, San Diego, CA 92112; our fax number is 619-293-2432; and our e-mail address through the Internet is UTHomes@aol.com.



REAL ESTATE

Benefits of installment sales

Eleventh in a series

You want to sell your home or other real estate quickly for top dollar, avoid paying income tax on your sale profit and earn an excellent return on the sales price. It's not impossible.

Apparently you have never heard of an installment sale. It not only defers paying profit tax, but it is an excellent way to provide high income. And there is no need to be over age 55, make a property exchange or buy a replacement property.

For example, recently I had lunch with my insurance agent. His elderly mother is entering a convalescent home because she needs 24-hour care. The

monthly cost will be about \$3,000. However, her Social Security and other income is far less.

Real Estate Notebook

ROBERT J. BRUSS

The solution: Sell a rental house she has owned for many years on an installment sale with "interest only" monthly mortgage payments. By carrying back a first mortgage, she will have the income she needs to receive good care for the rest of her life and avoid paying tax on her large profit, and the house should sell quickly for top dollar due to easy financing.

A real estate installment sale means the property seller receives payments in two or more tax years. Principal payments can be spread out over any number of years the buyer and seller agree on.

However, if no principal payments are received, such as when the seller carries back a first or second "interest only" mortgage, then only the interest received is taxable.

Benefits

By financing the sale for the buyer, the seller spreads out receipt of the sale profit over several years. Or, it can be deferred indefinitely by carrying

back an "interest only" mortgage with only the interest income taxable.

Buyer benefits include (1) easy financing with no red tape delays, (2) fast sale closing within a few days, (3) an affordable mortgage at or below market rates, and (4) the buyer can write the terms of the installment sale carry-back mortgage, subject to the seller's approval.

Installment-sale seller benefits include (1) a fast, easy realty sale for top dollar, (2) excellent interest income, (3) a safe investment secured by the property being sold, and (4) deferral of profit tax over the years of the buyer's installment payments to the seller.

Automatic tax election

A few years ago, Congress amended the tax code to provide for automatic installment sale election when the seller finances the property sale. However, the sales price must be more than \$150,000 and less than \$5 million.

Only principal payments received by the seller are taxable, as is interest income. But some property sellers "unselect" the automatic installment sale benefits if it is their tax advantage, such as in a tax year where the seller has offsetting losses.

Smart realty sellers who want to keep their investment dollars earning excellent income can agree to carry back "interest only" first or second mortgages. The tax result is the profit tax is deferred indefinitely. Only the interest income is taxable.

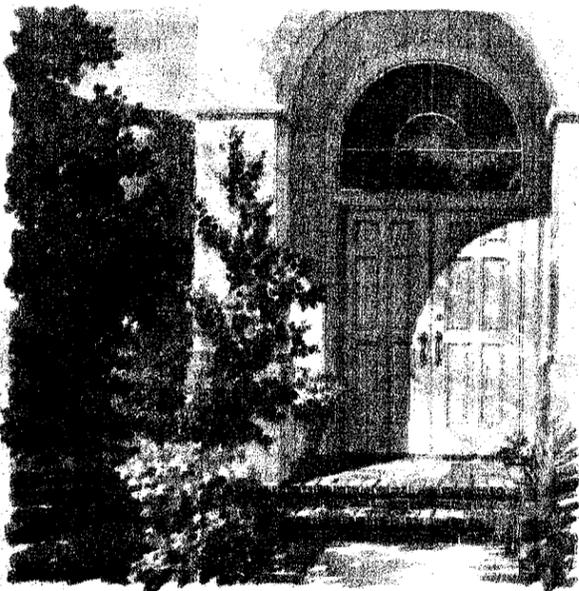
Reprints of this entire 12-week 1995 Realty Tax Tips series are available for \$4 from Tribune Media Services, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1408, Chicago, IL 60611.

Next: Realty tax deductions.

■ ROBERT J. BRUSS is a San Francisco lawyer, broker and nationally syndicated real estate writer.
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Pardee Homes

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NTC

Teams found their design options limited

Continued from H-1

three miles of mostly public property, the link would become the sparkling jewel in plans to redevelop NTC and the adjacent Midway area, a hodgepodge of commercial strips and traffic-choked streets.

Add water

Many teams added lagoons and small bays to their maps to enlarge the boat channel's sphere of influence and reinforce public access to the Bay-to-Bay Link and NTC. Most opted to soften and restore the channel's rocky edges and barren side lawns to the area's wetland origins and to surround the base with green perimeter plantings. One imaginative group carved out a small island for the channel. The island could become a haven for least terns, endangered birds now nesting at NTC and the airport and a recreation site for the public between nesting seasons, they explained.

Another team named its plan Loma Venita, in honor of a proposed network of Venice-like canals lined with landscaped pedestrian walkways for a portion of the base. Water taxis, not vehicles, would transport people through this neighborhood.

Thinking along similar lines, the boldest team transformed a different chunk of NTC's streets into canals for an upscale housing development connected by water to the boat channel. Comparing this concept to the Coronado Cays, team members envisioned the development as a lucrative and necessary revenue generator for NTC's transformation.

The third team's proposal stood out for one big reason: its flagrant rebellion against the City Council's controversial approval of a Navy housing proposal for NTC's prime land. Navy officials want to build up to 500 military family housing units and a waterfront park on an approximately 87-acre parcel roughly bounded by Rosecrans Street, Nimitz Boulevard, Harbor Drive and the boat channel. Empowered by unanimity found at few other charrette tables, this rebel team reclaimed the parcel for the city and gave it their best charrette shot.

Before the recent council vote in support of the Navy housing development, opponents argued in vain that the city was surrendering the base's most valuable, livable land and disrupting a democratic planning process. The council's approval, they argued, undermined the city's potential revenue-generating options for NTC to support rede-

A number of teams suggested that the complex house nonprofit museums and cultural attractions

velopment and retrofitting. As the charrette neared its end, a man asked all 200 in the room for a show of hands from those in support of Navy housing. Opponents won by a wide majority.

Jam session

Citizens, many of them from the lovely and desirable Point Loma neighborhood, volunteered for the all-day charrette in preparation for NTC's scheduled closing in 1999, if not sooner.

Working with Navy officers and planning and design consultants for more than a year, city officials and community representatives expect to complete the reuse plan by summer 1996. They also plan to circulate a draft plan for public review this summer.

Joining residents for the charrette, which one man amiably described as "a final jam session to get things done," were special-interest advocates seeking a piece of NTC for their favorite cause and a smattering of architects and landscape architects, who definitely jazzed up their team's results.

Throughout the day, Axe, a bouncy Dalmatian who is the San Diego Fire Department mascot, jingled the gold-toned department badge hanging from his red harness. The happy sound stopped only when Dominick Cribari, a retired firefighter and the dog's best friend, escorted Axe outside for breaks.

The charrette participants divided into groups around 16 tables equipped with maps, reports and modest art supplies. Predominantly first-time planners, the teams wrangled separately for about four hours over concepts and specific base uses they could agree on.

Page after page of 16 priority lists fluttered in the cavernous new NTC Support Center, which may become a public community center by 1999. Those representing special interests made sure to include their proposed project in the team's map.

Native Americans, the U.S. Forest Service, archaeologists and the Red Cross found their way into prime spots. So did a maritime heritage center, a college, an auto museum and a shopping mall inspired

by Minneapolis' Mall of America to be dubbed Mall of the Pacific. A Port District representative lobbied hard for an airport expansion that, in the short run, would park cars and airplanes on part of what is now Camp Nimitz.

Tough test

Even more difficult for the fledgling planners was the main task of molding ideal scenarios and compromise proposals to a nearly 550-acre site fraught with constraints.

After city officials briefed the group on myriad land-use restrictions that apply to NTC, one participant became frustrated. "We were told to come with open minds, but every time we propose a new idea, we're told why it can't be done," he complained to his team.

It's true that NTC is no blank canvas to go wild with blue-sky imagining. Encumbering NTC redevelopment are factors such as extreme noise levels from airplanes at Lindbergh Field next door, hazards associated with a former landfill, a federal preserve for the endangered least tern and strict guidelines for the state tidelands that make up part of the base.

Another challenge is to identify compatible revenue-producing uses that would help the city pay for the base's redevelopment, infrastructure and likely nonprofit uses.

Eying a cluster of historic NTC buildings, a number of teams suggested that the complex house nonprofit museums and cultural attrac-

See NTC on Page H-7

PROCESSING THE PROCESS: Closing a base opens many possibilities

The federal government's process for closing military bases and approving locally generated new uses for them is no snap.

Working with the Navy and federal agencies, San Diego city officials estimate they will complete the reuse plan for the Naval Training Center at Point Loma in the summer of 1996, 18 months to two years after the planning began. Public comment and community outreach are built into the process.

Results of the March 18 public charrette on NTC's future will be synthesized and refined in a draft plan that consultants will present to the mayor's NTC Reuse Planning Committee within several months, and later to the City Council, according to city officials.

Tim Johnson, the city manager's NTC reuse project director and a veteran of two Northern California base closings, is coordinating the citywide process of military base disposal and reuse. The process is running on four tracks: military property disposal, community input, environmental-impact studies and environmental cleanup.

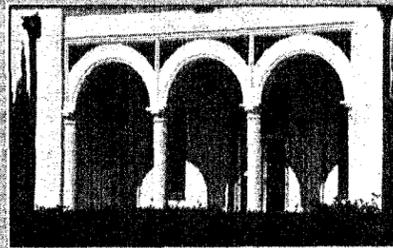
Here are some milestones yet to come:

■ Any day now, the secretary of the Navy is expected to tell the city what NTC land and facilities will become available for public use by 1999, if not sooner.

■ At Mayor Susan Golding's invitation, children's perspectives on NTC reuse will come from Point Loma Elementary School sixth-graders, who toured NTC and studied its planning opportunities and constraints.

■ Within several months, the NTC reuse committee will consider the community's reuse plan, devised with public input and refined by planning consultants. They will also hear requests from potential users at public meetings. Any committee vote is advisory to the City Council.

SOURCE: Tim Johnson, City of San Diego



Union-Tribune / Don Kohlbauer

Italian-style: NTC's historic blue-tiled medical building could take on a new life.

■ The secretaries of the Department of Defense and Department of Housing and Urban Development will approve the community plan or ask that deficiencies be corrected and the plan resubmitted.

■ Consultants hired by the Navy will circulate a draft environmental-impact report for public comment, then prepare final reports for local, state and federal approval. The report will recommend a preferred reuse plan.

■ Department of Defense officials will consider the community plan and create the final base-disposal plan. They are required to consider the community's plan for the homeless, on or off the base, and to negotiate property sales first with state, local and tribal governments. Public sales to the private sector follow.

■ The Navy will be responsible for all toxic cleanup required and provide certification before any NTC property is transferred.

■ Implementation of the plan will begin soon after the City Council approves it.

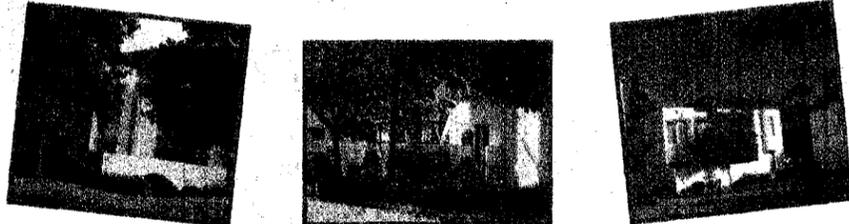
—Ann Jarmusch

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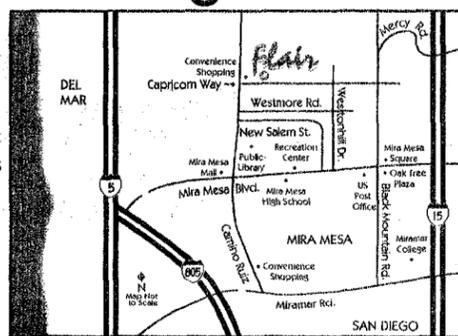


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HOW IT CAME TO BE CALLED . . .

char-rette (shar' ret) [French n.] Cart. *Charrette à bras*, handcart, barrow.

Architects have built a more colorful meaning into the French word "charrette."

About a century ago, at the renowned Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, architecture students worked feverishly, day and night, to solve an assigned design problem.

When the clock struck midnight, time was up.

"A man would come around with a cart to pick up their drawings" for the faculty, explained Adele Naudé Santos, dean of the now-inactive UCSD School of Architecture and an experienced charrette organizer.

"Charrette" then became a word used in architecture parlance for an intense work session" by students and design professionals alike.

To be "en charrette" means to be in the midst of a focused design push, Santos added.

The term's meaning — and a one-"r" misspelling in city reports and fliers — was discussed at the March 18 public charrette. Peter Calthorpe, an NTC reuse planning consultant based in San Francisco, added to the language lore.

Sometimes Beaux Arts students not quite finished with their drawings would jump onto the cart and continue working until the last possible moment, Calthorpe said.

American architecture students still "charrette" their way through school, sometimes working all night, since the midnight man with the cart did not emigrate with the term.

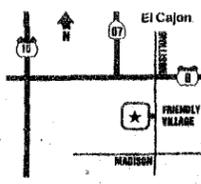
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NTC

Instant planners good at seeing big picture

Continued from H-6

tions, as San Francisco's popular Fort Mason does.

To the point

Some Point Loma residents who turned out for the charrette acknowledged that they came to help ward off proposals to use some NTC buildings for transitional housing, education and vocational training for homeless adults and children. Two days before, a Point Loma community meeting regarding NTC's reuse attracted a worried crowd.

At the charrette, a woman asked her teammates if the city's hidden agenda might be to "clean up downtown" by providing another nucleus of services for the homeless, who would be required to be drug-free and sober. Most social services and shelters are concentrated in Centre City East, an imbalance that community leaders and city officials are attempting to change.

One Point Loma man arrived late in the day, soon after he heard about the charrette at his yacht club. He wanted more information about how the homeless might be included among NTC's future residents.

Recently amended federal law requires cities taking over federal land to accommodate the homeless on site, or elsewhere within a reasonable distance. A group of Point Loma residents is pushing for an

More than one team wanted to see a new central library rise from NTC.

off-site solution.

But not everyone at the charrette felt that way. Many teams faced the quandary of integrating homeless people into a potentially affordable-to-middle-class neighborhood by mixing up the players, as in a real city. Some maps showed senior housing next to transitional housing for the homeless, with community gardens and single-family homes nearby.

The message? It seems more San Diegans than supposed would be willing to live in a polyglot neighborhood, as long as it was safe. They recognize the potential rewards of dense, urban living amid people of different ages, races and ideals.

Creative streak

The teams generally supported a framework that would divide NTC into residential, educational, retail office and mixed-use areas, as outlined during a November charrette, then refined by the city's planning consultants. One wonders if a couple of hundred planning neophytes could do otherwise, especially since a charrette leader urged teams to pick among established options, rather than brainstorm anew.

Nevertheless, many teams got

creative within the framework they were given. Although most went along with earlier suggestions to build a resort hotel on Camp Nim-itz, where drab, empty barracks now stand, others suggested building a new civic center there. More than one team wanted to see a new central library rise from NTC.

A strong preference for naturalism and environmental protectionism ran through the room like a refreshing stream. The base would become greener and cleaner, with a proposed university extension program monitoring environmental quality and natural habitats. The least term would get a larger preserve, if half the teams had their way.

Several global-minded teams proposed a Pacific Rim trade and cultural center, possibly augmented by an international business school.

One woman playfully proposed piping methane gas escaping from the old landfill to a new war memorial's eternal flame at NTC.

Like veteran planners, the teams showed remarkable sensitivity to the big picture — NTC's potential for the city and the region — as well as to what urban planners call fine-grained detail.

They considered how the previously fenced-off base could blend into the Point Loma and Midway neighborhoods, for example. They focused instantly on the boat channel and historic buildings as major public assets and attractions. And they saw the wisdom of keeping the base's pedestrian-friendly arcades, gardens and paths.

Who says San Diegans don't know what they want the city to be when it grows up?

ANN JARMUSCH is the architecture critic for The San Diego Union-Tribune.

LETTERS

Weekend run would be a pleasant ride

I would like to make a suggestion to the heads of the new Coaster commuter train (Homes, Feb. 26) that runs daily between Oceanside and downtown San Diego.

Since there are a lot of us, who for one reason or another, are unable to take the Coaster to work every day, I think it would be wise for the Coaster to at least run one weekend a month so the rest of us in North County could enjoy it also.

Not only would it be good PR and advertising for the Coaster, but the public would benefit by not having to worry about the increasing traffic on the weekends and finding parking at their destinations.

Janet Carter-O'Donnell
Solana Beach

Coaster rider offers enthusiastic support

As an enthusiastic Coaster rider, I offer a counterpoint to the two anti-Coaster letters of March 5.

First, if the Coaster is, as reader Warner wrote, "19th-century technology running wild in the 21st-century urban environment," then so is the automobile, which shortens more than 30,000 American lives per year, pollutes our air and guzzles our money and our dwindling petroleum supply.

Second, the maligned Sorrento Valley station, located "where no one even needs to go," is already used by hundreds of Golden Triangle employees who work five to 10 minutes away by bicycle or shuttle.

Third, given the growing traffic congestion on I-5 and the number of high-quality new friends I've met Coasting, I dispute reader Dooley's contentions that "at least in your own car, you have some control over the quality of the ride and the company you keep."

The Coaster has just eliminated the worst part of my job: sitting 30 minutes each evening in a cloud of carbon monoxide on I-5.

John A. Eldon
Encinitas

Incentives needed to get people out of cars

After living and working in San Diego for more than 30 years, my view of alternative transportation is quite different from the City Council or the mayor's.

Ever since gridlock started appearing on Interstate 8, San Diego has been trying to force people from their cars by attempting to pass laws making businesses charge their employees to park in company-owned parking lots, by increasing gasoline taxes and other methods that have not worked.

In my opinion, in order to get people onto public transportation, you must provide incentives and not make it a hardship on them.

The new Coaster does not go far enough. I contend that a lane should be taken out of each direction of each freeway in San Diego County and replaced with rapid transit having connecting routes on major roadways such as Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, El Cajon Boulevard and to the airport. Business,

shopping centers and the city should provide shuttle service from the major stations to other points in the city. The downtown district should have people-movers and a ban on most cars. All transit should run as long as patronage demands, not just during rush hours.

Paul M. McGee
Temecula

In transportation, rail wins every time

In response to your query on rail vs. private cars — there is no comparison for ordinary citizens, especially workers. Rail transportation is faster, safer and cheaper once installed.

No one should be obliged to buy a car in order to get to work conveniently. Cars are expensive, dangerous and air-polluting — and there will never be enough free-ways to accommodate them all.

Dorothy Crowley
San Diego

LETTERS TO HOMES

All readers are welcome and encouraged to send us their views on this or any other story that appears in Homes. Please include your phone number and address for our records only. Our mailing address is Homes, P.O. Box 191, San Diego, CA 92112; our fax number is 619-293-2432; and our e-mail address through the Internet is UTHomes@aol.com.

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PUBLICATION: Friday, April 21, 1995
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Source: 1994 Demographics USA — Market Statistics: 1994 San Diego Scarborough Study.

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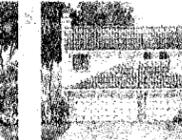
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