

Historic Kenwood

Painting an Artistic Picture

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By Waveney Ann Moore, Times Staff Writer

If St. Petersburg is the City of the Arts, Historic Kenwood, a neighborhood proud of its meticulously restored craftsman bungalows and residency of the creative set, wants to be recognized as the principal hub. That goal is at the heart of Historic Kenwood's upcoming weekend of art-related events: tours of restored cottages, an exhibit and sale of works by local artists and an invitation to visit a designer show home.



(The downstairs unit in the old 25th Street Market Building has been converted into a single, modern rental unit.)

Organizers hope the weekend, billed as A Celebration of Art and Architecture, will develop into an annual happening, much like Atlanta's popular Inman Park Festival. With that in mind they combined two events normally scheduled at different times of the year - BungalowFest and Art in the Park - and added a new attraction in the form of the designer show home.

"We just decided to make a single celebration," neighborhood president Bill Heyen said. "We're trying to find something for everybody and make it a destination."

And ultimately, become known as the Neighborhood of the Arts.

The weekend will kick off with a Friday night gala under a canopy of twinkling lights stretched across the street in front of the show home at 2460 Burlington Ave. N.

Technically, the show home is four homes. Two buildings, with a courtyard in between, have two apartments each. It took five months of frenzied work, but the once neglected two-story structures now gleam with modern kitchens and bathrooms, while showcasing much of the original trim, floors, doors and windows.



The show home at 2460 Burlington Ave. in Historic Kenwood was built in 1925 as apartments. The building has been renovated inside and out by siblings Bob and Lynn Jeffrey and now contains two rental units.

"We had one person assigned over the course of five months just stripping the woodwork," said Historic Kenwood resident Bob Jeffrey, who, with his sister, Lynn, bought the 1925 property in March.

Jeffrey said neighborhood leaders asked to incorporate the buildings into their plans just as work was beginning on the property, which had been vacant for at least two years. Frederick Dion of American Custom Builders & Roofing was the general contractor responsible for pulling the project together.

"The main thing was the coordination of getting it done," he said. "I had to basically do it from the inside out. I got the roof fixed and then I skipped over the siding and then I did the interior walls."

This week, designers and gallery owners worked to furnish the rooms. Gary DesMarais and Stephen Farkas, owners of Asian Willow Antique Gallery on Central Avenue, had begun transforming a master bedroom into a meditation and office space late last week. Most of the 11 designers are from St. Petersburg, with one from Indian Rocks Beach and two from Tampa, said Stephen LeBlanc, who coordinated the project that will benefit the Children's Cancer Center.



A cozy niche fits well in one unit of the designer show home that is part of Historic Kenwood's festival.

"The charity was very attractive to them and because we are trying to promote small businesses directly related to the arts, it only took about a moment to gather everybody I needed," he said.

BungalowFest will feature a tour of nine restored homes. Two city trolleys will give rides to those who would prefer not to walk the approximately 1.4-mile area in which the houses are located, John Seibert, co-chairman of BungalowFest said.

The trolleys will begin their run from the neighborhood's Seminole Park, which also is the venue of Art in the Park. Cash prizes will be awarded to artists in several categories. Dianne Caton, a potter and head of the art show committee, said the event will feature about 30 artists, half of whom live in Historic Kenwood.

"We just want to make more people aware of the number of artists that we actually have in Kenwood," she said.



Neighborhood watch coordinator Paul Dickens points out some of the improvements to the Historic Kenwood neighborhood from the second floor of the designer show home at 2460 Burlington Ave. N.

The neighborhood is working toward being designated an artist enclave overlay district, which means artists would be allowed to create and sell their work from home. Two-thirds of Historic Kenwood's homeowners would have to give their approval.

"We are a little above 50 percent," said Heyen, the neighborhood president.

"We're still working on it. We have high hopes of accomplishing it."

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