Finding Aid of the California Historical Society collection of the California Department of Natural Resources' Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan records 0245.3

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Title: California Historical Society collection of the California Department of Natural Resources' Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan records
Collection number: 0245.3
Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Storage Unit: 1
Physical Description: 0.42 linear ft. 1 letter-size document box
Date: 1946-1947
Abstract: In 1947 a property appraisal was conducted along Santa Monica Bay for the purpose of estimating the fair market value of various shoreline parcels selected by the Regional Planning Commission of Los Angeles County for purchase by the State of California. The report, accompanied by tract maps and photographs, recommended the purchase of the selected parcels of land to the California State Park Commission. The records in this collection consist of a detailed appraisal report, a set of parcel maps, and a book of black and white photographs with typed descriptions of the properties.
creator: California. Department of Natural Resources.
creator: Curzon, Eugene C.
creator: Hennessey, John A.
creator: Mason, Thomas F.
creator: Schmutz, George L., (George Le Roy), 1893-1958
Conditions Governing Access
Advance notice required for access.
Conditions Governing Use
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Scope and Content
The collection is comprised of appraisal reports of properties considered for additions to or creation of new state beaches or parks or with respect to the Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan created in 1947. Reports contain market value estimates, physical and legal descriptions of properties, maps and photographs.
Preferred Citation
[Box/folder# or item name], California Historical Society collection of the California Department of Natural Resources' Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan records, Collection no. 0245.3, Regional History Collections, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Acquisition
The collection is on long-term loan from the California Historical Society.
Historical Note
Southern California, in particular the greater Santa Monica Bay area, has long been renowned for its year-round pleasant climate and recreational beaches. As far back as the end of the nineteenth century, residents and visitors were already discovering the pleasures of beach-going, including natural and man-made amusements, camping, fishing, picnicking, etc. After World War II, the population of greater Los Angeles boomed, fueled in part by the entertainment industry and--for the Santa Monica area especially--the aerospace industry. The promise of employment coupled with the sunny climate brought new home seekers to the west coast, where thousands of new homes and businesses were built to accommodate the burgeoning population. By the mid-1940s, the impact to lands along the coast led activist citizens and lawmakers to discuss and formulate a plan to preserve California's most valuable lands for future generations.
According to T.H. Abell's A Shoreline Master Plan for Los Angeles (1946, published online in 2007 by the Journal of the American Institute of Planners), the ocean shoreline of Los Angeles County consisted of 65.4 miles, not including the Los Angeles Harbor frontage. 11.66 of those miles belonged to the City of Los Angeles, and 10.2 miles of the city were in Santa Monica Bay--part being north of the City of Santa Monica and part being on the south side.
Since the late 1800s, residents and tourists had enjoyed the wide sandy beaches of the Santa Monica Bay, including the many piers and amusement zones created by Abbott Kinney and other enterprising developers. Gradually private development along the beaches--hotels, restaurants, homes, etc.--closed much of the beach to public access and use. In addition, off-shore structures and breakwaters had affected wave and current action, causing erosion to the point where...
shoreside buildings were undermined or destroyed. And though Santa Monica once boasted a thriving fishing industry, continuous development and increased population of the Los Angeles area contributed to a drastic decline in water quality as trash and sewage run-off ended up in the Santa Monica Bay. Though clean-water legislation and restoration projects improved the quality of the Bay's waters over the years, the Shoreline Master Plan for Los Angeles (1947) was one of the first formal attempts to address the issues confronting the area's shores and beaches.

Back in the 1940s, so much of the beach properties were privately owned that the public was being relegated to smaller and smaller strips of it and would eventually be excluded from the beaches altogether. To prevent this from happening, Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, and the State of California began acquiring parcels of beach frontage for public use. The three agencies worked together to develop shoreline master plans which became the basis for future development.

The proposed plan was to transfer City and County beaches to State ownership, so that the State could then purchase adjacent frontage of equal value—and eventually the entire beach frontage would be State owned. The State would then lease the beaches to City, County, or other local governmental bodies to develop and administer.

Some of the features of the Master Plan included:
Continuous sandy beach, 250 feet wide
Continuous boardwalk, connecting all parts
Pedestrian underpasses to eliminate surface crossing of Scenic Drive
Public bathhouses and concessions at frequent intervals along beach
Picnic areas and play areas back of the boardwalk
Fishing piers for public use
Trailer and cabin parks for visitors' use
Yacht harbor
Bird sanctuary in marsh area south of Ballona Creek

The survey that was conducted before the details of the Plan were created provided data that was essential in calculating the needs of the existing and anticipated population. They included statistics such as 75 sq. ft. sand area per person, 3.3 persons per car in parking lots, and 50 per cent of visitors in private automobiles, the rest using mass transit facilities.

More detailed information on both the Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan and the Santa Monica Bay Shoreline Development Plans is available here:

Subjects and Indexing Terms
California State Park Commission. -- Correspondence
California. Department of Natural Resources. -- Archives
Knowland, Joseph R., (Joseph Russell), 1873-1966 -- Correspondence
Beaches--California, Southern--Maps
Beaches--California--Santa Monica--History--Archival resources
Environmental protection--California--Archival resources
Los Angeles County (Calif.)--Maps
Santa Monica Bay (Calif.)--History--Archival resources
Santa Monica Bay (Calif.)--Maps
Shorelines--California--Archival resources
Appraisals

Scope and Content
The assembled notebook consists of appraisals submitted on two different dates-- Section 1 submitted on February 7, 1947, and Section 2 submitted on March 7, 1947. Letters of transmittal are included with both sections-- letters to John A. Hennessey, Supervising Park Lands Officer, signed by appraisers George L. Schmutz, Thomas F. Mason, and Eugene C. Curzon. A letter from John A. Hennessey to Joseph R. Knowland, Chairman of the California State Park Commission (loosely inserted into the report) contains the recommendation that all parcels included in the first report be approved for acquisition. There is not another similar letter for the second section of parcels.

The appraisal for each parcel of land consists of the owner's name, the location of the property, the valuation, and a breakdown of "elements of value" such as highway frontage, width of beach, cleanliness of beach and water, public utilities (domestic water, sewer, electricity, gas, telephone), freedom from hazards (erosion, on-shore and off-shore rocks), mean high tide line, and "others"-- scenic upland, private road, etc. Each element of value is assigned a number of "value units" out of a certain number of "maximum" units. Some parcels which contain cabins for rent, such as Castlerock Beach, also include the rent per month for each cabin site and the name of the lessee. For example, Castlerock Beach was home to 114 cabins, almost all of which were rented for $15.00 a month. Some of the parcel appraisals, such as the aforementioned Castlerock Beach area, also include a detailed map of the parcel showing roads, beaches, cabin numbers, etc.

Part of the total report includes a discussion of the methodology used to appraise the properties and how value units were assigned for each element of value.

Parcel Maps

Scope and Content
The tract maps in this hand-bound volume are folded and arranged from "most northern" to "most southern"-- showing strips of land and shoreline properties from Malibu to Manhattan Beach. They include road and street names, individual lot numbers, trolley and railway lines, and annotated comments such as "Out, too costly. Near Marion Davies" or "City of L.A. matching, ok." A section of the beach along one of the Santa Monica tract maps was annotated "colored use" referring to an area south of the Santa Monica Pier known as Inkwell Beach (until the early 1960s).

Photographs

Scope and Content
Hand-assembled scrapbook of photographs of private and public properties along the southern California coast from Malibu to Redondo Beach, the bulk of them depicting residences and beach parcels in Santa Monica. Each photograph is labelled with a description of the parcel number and the direction of the view such as "17-105. Looking SEly. from beach, showing NWy. corner of new house located approximately 250 ft. NWly. of house No. 18250. 1-29-47 Jones-Farnsworth." Photographs of structures directly on the beach also have mention of "low tide," "high tide," "receding tide," etc. The Pacific Coast Highway is referred to by its earlier designation as Roosevelt Highway. Many private homes and public establishments are depicted, as well as many of the piers and amusement areas that existed in Santa Monica, Ocean Park, and Venice. Approximately 400 photos.