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NEIGHBORLY ADVICE | COLFAX MEADOWS

A place born when the stars were silent

The entertainment industry has been a mainstay of this San Fernando Valley neighborhood.

By Dinah Eng
Special to The Times

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SOME things just don't change. Colfax Meadows was one of Studio City's original neighborhoods.

People bought here for the large lots and the recognition that this was a great place for multi-generational families -- much the same reasons they buy here today.

Beginnings

Colfax Meadows, a large parcel of rural land, was first developed in the 1920s and named for Schuyler Colfax, vice president under President Ulysses S. Grant from 1869 to 1873. In the 1930s, Republic Pictures (now the CBS Studio Center) moved in, attracting Hollywood stars to the area.

"The silent-film star Mary Brian, who was the first Wendy in [the 1924 film] 'Peter Pan,' lived in the house next to me until she was in her 90s and had a fall," said Judy Bush, who moved to Colfax Meadows 17 years ago.

"Her husband was George Tomasini, the famous film editor for Alfred Hitchcock. This area is all about stories like theirs. The families of old studio folks are still here, along with younger folk."

In the late '40s and early '50s, homeowners still kept horses on the land so they could go riding in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Drawing card

Patty Ray, who moved here in 1960 and is an agent with California Prudential Realty in Studio City, said the area is so popular that real estate agents 10 years ago began marketing homes north and east of the original Colfax Meadows as being in the neighborhood to extend the cachet of the community brand.

Today, the northern boundary of Colfax Meadows is touted as Moorpark Street, and the eastern border is considered Tujunga Avenue.

But the original borders are defined by Acama Street on the north, the Los Angeles River on the

south, Beck Avenue on the east and Colfax Avenue on the west.

There is one discernible difference, however, between homes in the original Colfax Meadows and the extended neighborhood: The original neighborhood still has no sidewalks along the streets, which are bordered by abundant sycamore, palm and orange trees.

The sprawling ranch-style homes built in the 1930s dominate the older section, but the lots, which run as large as 24,000 square feet, have been gradually pared down.

In both the old and new Colfax Meadows, streets are a hodgepodge of small 1930s bungalows and traditional homes, side by side with large, starkly contemporary or pseudo-Mediterranean-style mansions.

Housing stock

Recently, the least expensive single-family offering was a 1,300-square-foot, three-bedroom, one-bathroom house on a 5,244-square-foot lot for \$650,000.

The most expensive property was a 6,700-square-foot, five-bedroom, 5 1/2 -bathroom house on a 6,700-square-foot lot for \$3,995,000.

"A home I sold two years ago for \$900,000 is now getting offers for \$930,000," Ray said, "so the prices on the smaller homes are not going down." About 20 to 30 Colfax Meadows homes come on the market each year. In 2007, just three sold, for a median price of \$982,500, reported DataQuick Information Systems.

Insider's view

"I'm living in my dream house," said George Mooradian, director of photography for the TV sitcom "According to Jim." "I walk to work, and walk my children to school. My universe is within a half-mile radius."

And Colfax Meadows is "ground zero" on Halloween, he added.

There are no through streets to the river, which limits traffic, and pockets of greenery off the river make walking pleasant, Mooradian said.

Report card

Children attend schools in the L.A. Unified district. On the 2007 Academic Performance Index Growth Report, Carpenter Avenue Elementary scored 904 out of a possible 1,000. Students may matriculate to Walter Reed Middle School and North Hollywood High School, which scored 749 and 674, respectively.

Sources: cde.ca.gov; www.studiocitychamber.com; www.pattyray.com/; DataQuick Information Systems.

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