Abstract

PRESERVING THE BEACHSIDE BUNGALOWS IN FAR ROCKAWAY

This thesis demonstrates that the beachside bungalow, defined as a purpose-built seasonal one- to one-and-a-half-story summer vacation home situated on the beach or by the ocean, is a significant cultural, historical and architectural resource. As a popular building type around the turn of the twentieth century in the Mid-Atlantic States, the beachside bungalow has become an endangered resource that warrants preservation to ensure that future generations can learn and understand a period of New York’s history.

The primary case study is an intact group of beachside bungalows located in the Wavecrest section of Far Rockaway, Queens, New York. Built in the 1920s as speculative development, this intact group of bungalows provides a sense of place and is a testament to Rockaways’ heyday as a popular seaside resort where working- and middle-class people spent their summer months away from the hot, crowded and congested city during the early twentieth century.

Communities in the Mid-Atlantic States are examined to show how efforts were made to save the beachside bungalow. These case studies in Rockaway Park, Queens, Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, West Meadow Beach, Long Island, Annadale, Staten Island, and Ocean City, New Jersey reveal the difficulty in preserving this once-predominant type of beachside architecture. As discovered through these communities, the beachside bungalow has been underappreciated and ignored as a significant resource. Through local, state and national designation, zoning and easements, this architectural type can be recognized for its contribution to the culture, history and architecture in Far Rockaway and can serve as a model for other bungalow communities. The preservation of this type of vernacular beachside architecture is critical to our understanding of the beachside bungalow communities within the context of New York City’s history. This thesis should serve as an academic and practical resource vital in saving Far Rockaway’s and other bungalow communities threatened by real estate development pressures.