

The rooftop sign will celebrate

The Brand Called Englewood

Sure, Englewood has its own charming history as the final stop of a once-upon-a-time, story-book streetcar line, a sweet side note to the larger pageant of Independence, a city with a truly significant role in national, even international, history.

But history is the story of the past – written by the winners, they say. Of much more concern to we the living is the present, which is unfortunately gone the moment we start to think about it, and the future, which is always out there just in front of us.

The Past is a jumble of hard facts, poorly recorded half-truths, disjointed and dimly-remembered lore. And The Present is, well, elusively momentary, to say the least. Frankly, it's The Future where our hopes and dreams lie, why we do what we do (the only reason Scrooge had to keep on living.) It's where our hearts reside.

And that promise of becoming is really what the promise of Englewood is all about. Independence has more than enough history for writing books about and paying homage to – clearly, plenty to think about.

What it needs now (at this time in history) is a future to pin hopes on. It has a brain, it needs a heart. A heart of feelings and passions, hopes and dreams, the what-ifs and why-nots that make being human such a fascinating preoccupation. The future is something that's being created every moment. And everyone has a hand in it. We are all present at the creation.

Creation is the essence of art and that's the essence of Englewood. It's the promise of creativity, the ability of art to lead, to inspire, to capture feelings, to give life meaning, to give us something to celebrate.

What else but art can take us out of our worldliness and into our imagination? Art belongs to humanity from its earliest stirrings. Art lifts and leads and pulls us all together. From the caves of Lascaux to the wondrous temples we call museums today, art is something to gather around, marvel at, argue about and make an integral part of every thinking person's living space. Humanity and art are simply inseparable.

The power of art is to fuse a soul that gives a voice to our innermost human feelings and continues the search for common purpose in the ever-confusing jumble of human striving.

A living community needs a beating heart. Englewood promises to fulfill that role for Independence. Englewood is a *place*, first of all, where real people can gather to both fulfill their own creative impulses and celebrate in the joy and achievements of others. It's a place that is of the community, for the community and by the community. It welcomes all to participate. It's a magnet for outside artists and art lovers too, pointing to an egalitarian future of unlimited creative potential and participation by all.

And Englewood is a *brand*, a collective idea, a shared myth if you will. It's a communal thought that soars above its real estate and calls everyone to be a part. Independence has its history, its thriving businesses, its courts, schools, libraries and governing assemblages: its brains. It needs a heart. It needs an Englewood.

And we're here to shout it from the very rooftop.

Just as Hollywood is the creative heart of a mega city by the sea, marked by a sign in its hills, so will Englewood be the beating heart of this heartland city, with a pulse that calls out far and wide connecting us all. Because dreams happen.