

Garden Apartments of Los Angeles

Historic Context Statement



prepared by

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for the

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A boy rides his bike at Baldwin Hills Village (now Village Green), photographed by Julius Shulman, 1958 (Getty Research Institute)

INTRODUCTION

This Historic Context Statement, completed by Architectural Resources Group, Inc. (ARG) in collaboration with landscape historian Steven Keylon, is a study of garden apartments in Los Angeles. Its purpose is to provide a definition of the property type and a framework for future evaluation of significance. ARG was contracted by the Los Angeles Conservancy in 2011 to conduct this study as part of the L.A. Garden Apartments Network initiative.

Los Angeles has one of the largest and most notable collections of garden apartments in the nation. The abundance of the property type in Los Angeles can best be seen as the fusion of the following ingredients: Garden City planning principles, first espoused by Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin in England and later by the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA); a nationwide call for more humane housing

conditions during the adversity of the Great Depression; the availability of funding from a number of federal initiatives focused on housing the nation's growing population; the influx of defense workers during World War II and the need to house them; the genius and humanity of a number of local architects, planners and landscape architects and their investment in building a better city; and the landscape, climate and vastness of available land in Los Angeles before and during the boom of the post-World War II era. Los Angeles, with its benign climate, was perhaps the ideal place in the country for garden apartments to thrive. As the 20th century progressed, architects and landscape architects were opening up the relationship between indoors and out in the construction of single-family homes. Garden apartments offered apartment dwellers that same easy access to outdoor living that the modern residents of Los Angeles desired.



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Wyvernwood, the first garden apartment in Los Angeles, c. 1940 (from *Architectural Forum*, May 1940)

Scope and Methodology

The focus of this Historic Context Statement is the garden apartment property type in the city of Los Angeles. Although generally limited to city limits, a select number of significant examples in Los Angeles County are discussed. This study does not include all occurrences of the property type in the county or, for that matter, within Los Angeles city limits; it is likely that many examples are yet to be discovered. Rather, the purpose of this Historic Context Statement is to provide a framework for the future evaluation of garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles, both known and, as of yet, unknown.

The National Register Multiple Property Documentation approach to historic context development was used as a framework for this study.¹ Properties were not herein evaluated for eligibility against National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources criteria; the goal is to provide information regarding the historic contexts and themes under which examples of the garden apartment property type may be found significant and eligible upon further analysis. In addition, the Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context

Statement, under development for the SurveyLA citywide historic resources survey, was used as a guide for the structure of contexts and themes developed herein.²

For the purposes of this study, a focused reconnaissance survey was conducted for photographic documentation and in-person analysis of known garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles. Historic aerial imagery and primary source material provided information about the evolution of site plans over time. Numerous books, articles, civic reports and studies, photographs, maps, architectural plans and correspondence aided the development of this Historic Context Statement. The following repositories and archives were consulted:

- Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- Robert Evans Alexander papers, 1935-1993, Collection Number: 3087, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library
- Clarence Stein papers, 1905-83, Collection Number: 3600, Division of Rare and

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Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

- Los Angeles Public Library collections, including the Photo Collection, the California Index, and Proquest Newsstand (Historic Los Angeles Times collection)
- Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Permit Center
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles archives
- Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles archives

Garden Apartments: Definition of the Property Type

Planned and constructed in Los Angeles between 1937 and approximately 1955, garden apartment complexes generally consist of concentrations of similar multi-unit buildings situated on a large – and often irregularly shaped – property. Complexes range in size from just a few acres to more than a hundred. Though some of Los Angeles’s preeminent architects designed garden apartments at mid-century, the buildings themselves are typically (and deliberately) architecturally modest. Emphasis is placed, rather, on site plan and landscape; the designers relied on color, texture, planting plan, light and shadow to create visual interest. Building entrances face landscaped courtyards rather than the street, and parking and vehicular circulation is relegated to the perimeter of the site plan or within garage courts separate from pedestrian areas. Large, expansive green space is common; typically there are one or two large courtyards or greens at the nucleus of the complexes available to all residents. Garden apartments vary in appearance, size and plan; however, the following character defining features epitomize the property type in its purest expression:

- Superblock site plan, which deviates from the rectilinear urban grid by combining multiple city blocks or parcels into a single property
- Three acres in size or greater



A c. 1948 aerial photograph of Baldwin Hills Village, showing its superblock site plan in contrast to the speculative development which grew around it (from Stein, *Toward New Towns...*)



Low-slung buildings at Pueblo Del Rio, c. 1942 (from *Homes for Heroes*)



Garage court at Carmelitos, 1944 (from *A Review of the Activities of the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, 1938-1943*)



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Playground at Pueblo del Rio, adjacent to the nursery school, c. 1942 (from *Homes for Heroes*)



Buildings facing expansive, common green space at Wyvernwood, 1939 (USC Special Collections)



Variety of landscape at Baldwin Hills Village, 1958 (Getty Research Institute)

- Low-slung buildings, rarely exceeding two stories in height
- Elimination of common interior corridors
- Repetition of nearly identical building models throughout the plan
- Stylistic simplicity; buildings are usually minimal in appearance with a lack of stylistic details and ornament
- Primary building entrances face common courtyards rather than the street
- Parking at the perimeter of the site plan, typically in detached, enclosed garage buildings or garage courts
- One or more large open spaces, or greens, located at the interior of the site plan, around which buildings are arranged
- Recreational amenities planned to help foster community
- Variety of landscape, often native or drought tolerant; low shrubs used to delineate outdoor “rooms”; allées; mature trees and the use of climbing vines to add visual interest to buildings

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Summary of Historic Contexts and Themes

Although garden apartments are nationwide in occurrence, examples of the property type in Los Angeles outnumber nearly every other city in comparison.³ Therefore an understanding of the property type and its significance as a pivotal moment in the architectural and social history of the city is critical.

The contexts and themes explored in this study are as follows:

CONTEXT: Public and Private Institutional Development

THEME: Public Housing in Los Angeles, 1937-1955

THEME: Defense Housing in Los Angeles, 1942-1945

CONTEXT: Residential Development and Suburbanization

THEME: Community Planning and Development: Garden City Planning Principles, 1937-1955

THEME: Ethnic Heritage and Segregation, 1937-1955

CONTEXT: Architecture and Designed Landscapes

THEME: Important Architects, Designers and Planners, 1937-1955

THEME: Designed Landscapes, 1937-1955

THEME: Important Landscape Architects, 1937-1955



Tenants were often recruited to help maintain the landscape. William Mead Homes, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



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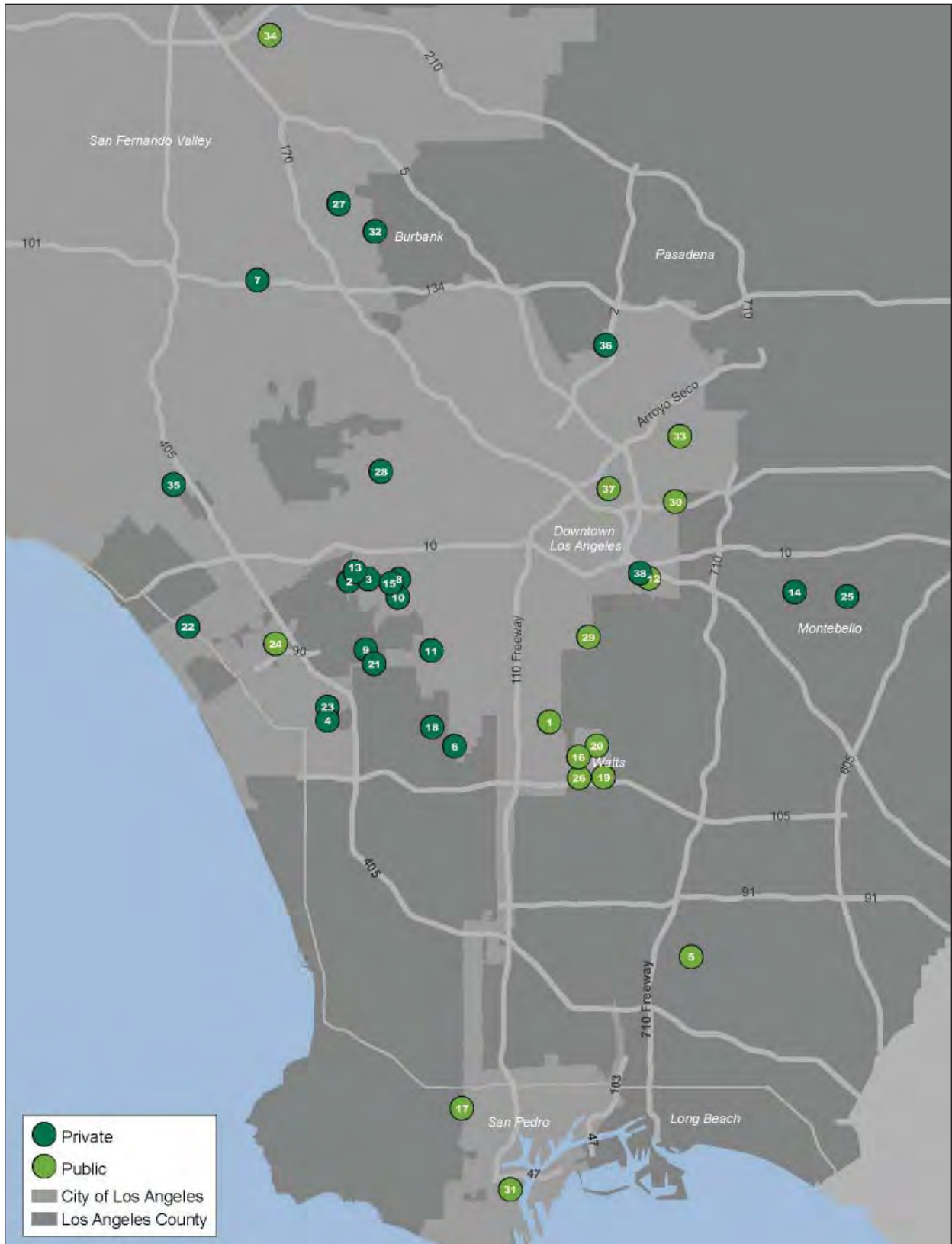
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Map of Known Garden Apartments, Los Angeles (City and County)

- 1 Avalon Gardens
- 2 Baldwin Gardens (now Cameo Woods)
- 3 Baldwin Hills Village (now Village Green)
- 4 Belford Park Apartments
- 5 Carmelitos
- 6 Century Square
- 7 Chase Knolls
- 8 Chesapeake Rodeo Apartments
- 9 Cienega Village
- 10 Crenshaw Village
- 11 Dorset Village
- 12 Estrada Courts
- 13 Fairfax Park Apartments
- 14 Garfield Gardens
- 15 Gloria Homes Apartments
- 16 Hacienda Village
- 17 Harbor Hills
- 18 Hollypark Knolls
- 19 Imperial Courts
- 20 Jordan Downs
- 21 Ladera Townhouse
- 22 Lincoln Place
- 23 Manchester Gardens
- 24 Mar Vista Gardens
- 25 Montebello Gardens Apartments
- 26 Nickerson Gardens
- 27 North Hollywood Manor
- 28 Park La Brea
- 29 Pueblo del Rio
- 30 Ramona Gardens
- 31 Rancho San Pedro
- 32 Rancho Vega
- 33 Rose Hills Courts
- 34 San Fernando Gardens
- 35 Sunset Barrington Apartments
- 36 Verdugo Mesa
- 37 William Mead Homes
- 38 Wyvernwood

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Aerial image of Baldwin Hills Village, looking northeast (from *California Arts & Architecture* magazine, May 1943)

GARDEN APARTMENTS IN LOS ANGELES: BACKGROUND

Multi-Family Housing in Los Angeles Before the Great Depression

Though founded in 1781, Los Angeles remained a relatively small village until the late 19th century when it entered a period of exponential growth. In the 20-year period between 1880 and 1900, the population of Los Angeles grew from approximately 11,000 to more than 100,000. Residential development during this period primarily centered in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, accessible to commuters by a growing network of streetcar lines. Subdivisions of single-family houses were developed in neighborhoods such as Boyle Heights to the east, Highland Park to the north, and University Heights to the southwest. Multi-family development at this time primarily accommodated a somewhat poorer segment of the population and was generally relegated to the city center. Multi-family property types largely mirrored those being constructed in other parts of the country, including hotels and apartment hotels, boarding houses, tenements,

flats, and larger homes that had been subdivided to accommodate multiple families.

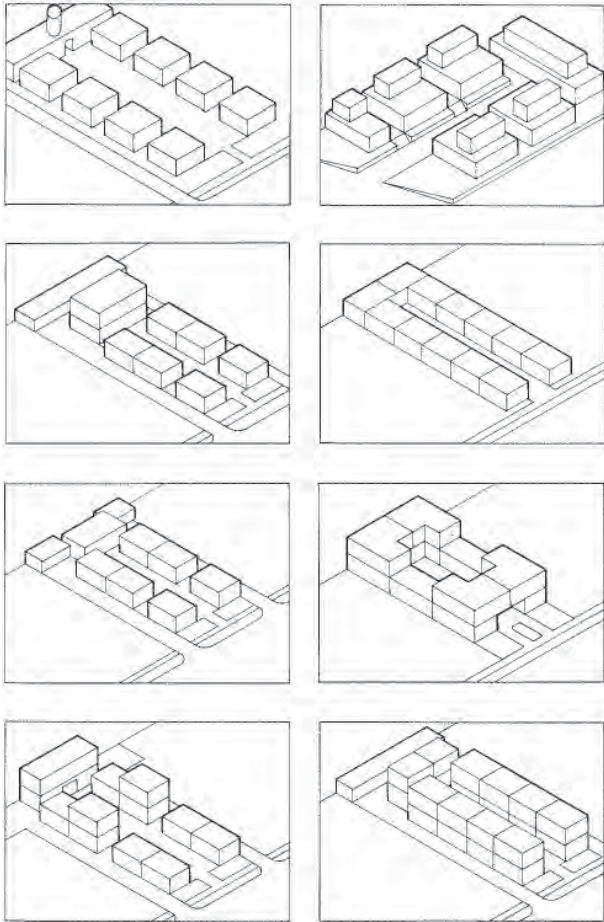
In the 1920s, however, the population of Los Angeles more than doubled and the need for higher density housing resulted in innovative multi-family property types that would assimilate into the low-density environment that predominantly characterized the city. During the decade of 1920 to 1930, more than two million people moved to California, the majority of which came to Southern California. According to Carey McWilliams, “the migration into Southern California in this decade has been characterized as the largest internal migration in the history of the American people.”⁴ To satiate the need for housing and capitalize on their investments, developers began to integrate low-scale, multi-family dwellings into the vast subdivisions that radiated from the city center.

The predominant multi-family property types of the pre-Depression era include duplexes, fourplexes,



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Varying detached and attached-unit courts, based on examples in Los Angeles (from Polyzoides, et al., *Courtyard Housing...*)



A typical 1920s bungalow court in Los Angeles (*Los Angeles Times*, 2010)

bungalow courts and courtyard apartments. Duplexes and fourplexes were popular in 1910s and 20s Los Angeles as they maintained the appearance of a single-family residence while accommodating two or four families. These types of dwellings could be integrated into neighborhoods consisting of predominantly single-family residences without disrupting the overall scale and architectural vocabulary of the area. Duplexes of this era were typically one story in height, detectable as multi-family only by the presence of two entrances at the main façade. Fourplexes, however, were nearly always two stories in height, with a symmetrical façade and two identical flats on each floor. Stylistically, duplexes and fourplexes nearly always assimilated into the overall character of their neighborhoods, executed in the Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival and Mediterranean styles.

The bungalow court emerged in Pasadena in the 1910s and was the first multi-family property type to integrate common garden or courtyard space into the site plan. The property type consists of multiple detached bungalows situated in a U-shaped site plan; rather than facing the street, entrances face inward toward a common courtyard or driveway. The bungalow court brought the Craftsman bungalow, a distinctly Southern Californian dwelling that proliferated in the 1910s and 20s, to the middle class without compromising the privacy, comfort and openness of its single-family counterpart. Although early bungalow courts were often constructed by builders rather than architects and intended for residents of modest means, their evolution represented a major shift from preceding idioms of American dwelling types. Bungalow courts were the first multi-family prototype to focus more on space than object, providing residents with the advantages of parks and shared spaces for communal interaction within a densely urban setting.

As multi-family housing became a more prevalent option for wealthier clients, the bungalow court matured into a new prototype of apartment dwelling: the courtyard apartment. While bungalow courts were modest and restrained, garden courts tended to be a type of high-style architecture. They were often designed by architects inspired by various types of courtyards in the Mediterranean region, including patio

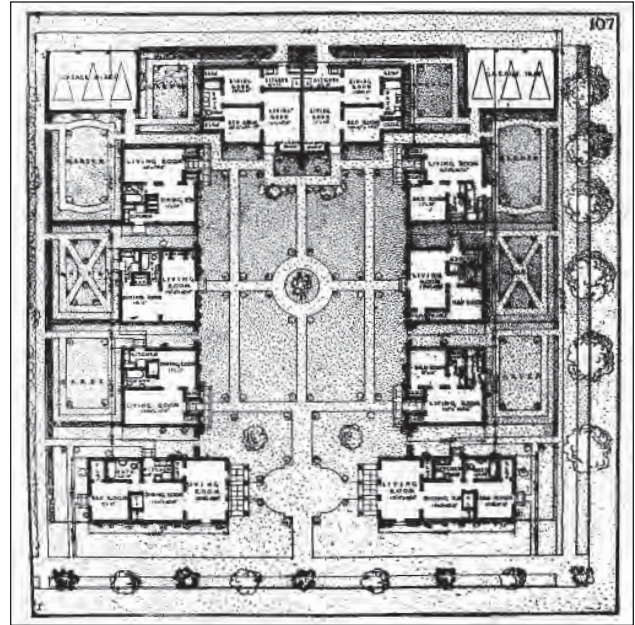
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houses, palaces, markets, and inns. The temperate California climate inspired architects to design spacious patios, verandas and balconies opening into a central courtyard, which was almost always lushly landscaped with spaces designed for both rest and meditation as well as pedestrian circulation. Hallways and corridors were effectively placed out of doors, encouraging interaction among residents.

The courtyard apartment property type is perhaps the clearest predecessor to the garden apartment complex. With its dedicated common outdoor space, the courtyard apartment “can be seen as a significant alternative to the illusory American dream of the freestanding house (or apartment house) in the landscaped park.”⁵ While courtyard apartments were generally relegated to a single city parcel, the superblock site planning of Garden City-inspired complexes brought park-like living to its greatest fruition.



Site plan from Walter S. Davis, et al., *Ideal Homes in Garden Communities* (from Polyzoides, et al., *Courtyard Housing...*)

Early History of the Garden City Movement

The garden apartments of Los Angeles, though a uniquely 20th century American concept, have their origins in the Garden City Movement of late 19th century Europe. The early beginnings of this movement are attributed to Sir Ebenezer Howard of England and his 1898 book, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. Deeply troubled by the deterioration of the quality of life within city boundaries, Howard’s writings emphasized the necessity of a migratory movement out of the overcrowded urban core and into carefully planned new towns in the rural districts outside of (but near to) the city. Believing that people should not have to make a choice between living in a “culturally-isolated rural area” and “giving up nature to live in a city,” Howard’s prevailing goal was to combine the traditional countryside with the traditional town, creating a town and country marriage.⁶

Howard was not a designer; rather, he was the visionary and indefatigable salesman for his Garden City concept. For the practical application of his ideas, Howard worked with Raymond Unwin and Barry Shaw to create Letchworth (1903), the first Garden City

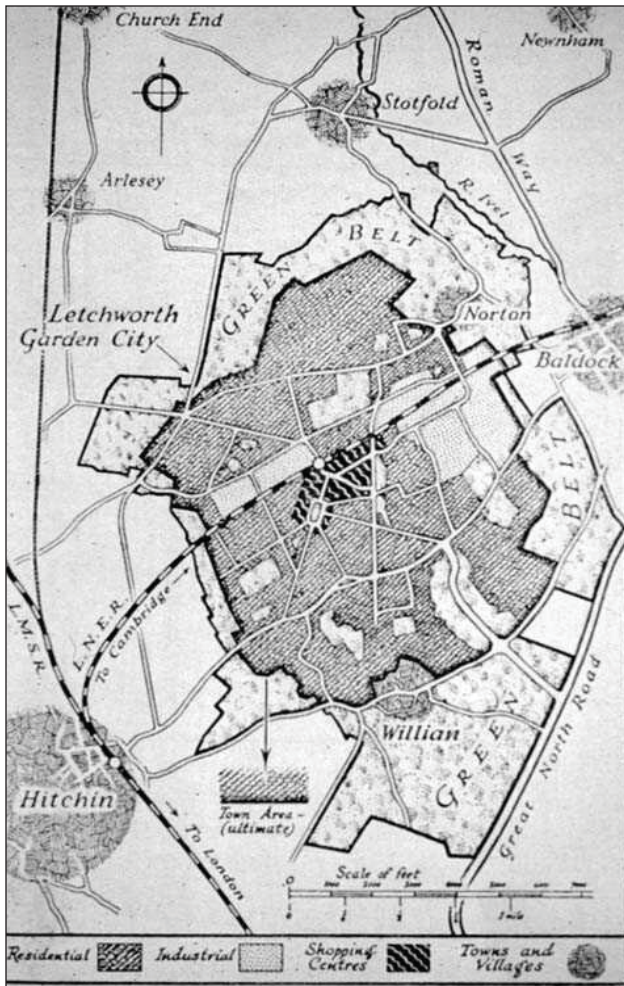


El Greco Apartments, built in 1929. Example of a 1920s courtyard apartment in Westwood (from Polyzoides, et al., *Courtyard Housing...*)



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Letchworth Garden City, England, site plan (from Professor Simon Atkinson's *Urban Design Theory Seminar Web Page*, University of Texas)

development in England. Located approximately 30 miles north of London, Letchworth was the pioneering venture of what Howard hoped would become an international movement. Encompassing approximately 1,200 acres of land with additional acreage set aside for a rural belt, Letchworth was intended to have no more than 30,000 residents and be completely self-sufficient in terms of public utilities and food and agricultural production. The restrictions of the urban grid were avoided altogether, with roads following the natural grades and curves of the land. Residences were positioned to overlook natural greens and ample recreation grounds were within easy access of all residents. The careful planning of the town included not only housing but also educational facilities, shopping centers, and recreation areas, with parks and plantings throughout.

The purpose of Letchworth was not to create an "artistic town"; rather, the primary goal of Howard, Unwin and Shaw was to see that all citizens were, first and foremost, decently housed. Unwin believed that "every house should have its garden and should be so placed and planned that all its rooms should be flooded with light and sunshine, unblocked by other houses or by its own projections... It was necessary to break away from the customary type of street with its endless rows of houses, cramped in frontage, hideous in appearance from the street, and squalid in the congestion of its back projections and its yards."⁷ This emphasis on quality of life derived from spatial planning and access to green space, fresh air and natural light rather than high architectural style resulted in a prevailing architectural vocabulary derived from local vernacular styles and distinctly humble.

Also in the late 19th century, a different variety of the Garden City Movement, the Zeilenbau, was being developed in Germany. Similar to Howard's Garden Cities, the Zeilenbau's ideals abandoned the urban grid in favor of the development of the superblock. The superblock was designed to ensure that all dwellings would be located off major traffic streets, allowing each unit to have an "open vista in at least two major directions for every window and balcony, taking as much advantage as possible of light, sun and cross ventilation."⁸ Along with Howard's Garden



City principles, the concept of the superblock had a profound impact on garden apartments in the United States beginning in the 1920s.

The Garden City Movement in the United States

Perfected in the United States by a small group of visionary planners in the first half of the 20th century, the designers working on garden apartment communities believed that they could use new concepts in housing as a medium to express – and even shape – the values and well-being of the community. These forward-thinking city planners, architects and landscape architects began working collaboratively to create a new idea of urban community, as they had seen in modern housing “the chance of creating...brave new communities – uncluttered, throbbing with new life and vigor, beacons of urbane living.”⁹

Leading this revolution in modern housing were renowned urban planners Clarence S. Stein and Henry Wright. In 1923, at Stein’s initiative, the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) was formed, in collaboration with Henry Wright and other members including Lewis Mumford, Catherine Bauer, Benton MacKaye, and Alexander Bing. The diverse group met periodically to discuss and share ideas, examining the concept of better city planning. The problem they were trying to solve was that of an America ill housed at the end of the Industrial Revolution. Henry Wright explained:

Of one thing we can be certain, America’s housing plant is relatively at the lowest point of any part of the national economic structure. Scarcely half of our existing dwellings have even the barest minimum of sanitary or comfort appliances. Fully a third of our urban populations and most of our farm residents live in dwellings at least fifty to seventy-five years old, most of them built long before our present household comforts and standards were even thought of. Whatever we do, wherever we do it, the great problem ahead is literally that of “rehousing America.”¹⁰

The RPAA had a profound influence on urban development through the prolific and effective writing of its members. Together, Stein and Wright spearheaded new and innovative ideas in community planning, starting with some private developments on the East Coast. These were largely inspired by Ebenezer Howard and his work at Letchworth and, later, Welwyn (1919-1920), also outside London. Stein and Wright travelled to England in 1924 in order to carefully study these communities and meet with Howard and Unwin. Unwin explained, “We must work on the principle of grouping our buildings and combining our open spaces, having areas fairly closely built upon, surrounded by others of open space, rather than that of scattering and indefinitely mixing our buildings and our spaces.”¹¹ The time they spent with Unwin would have a profound and lasting influence over their future philosophy about the economics of site planning.

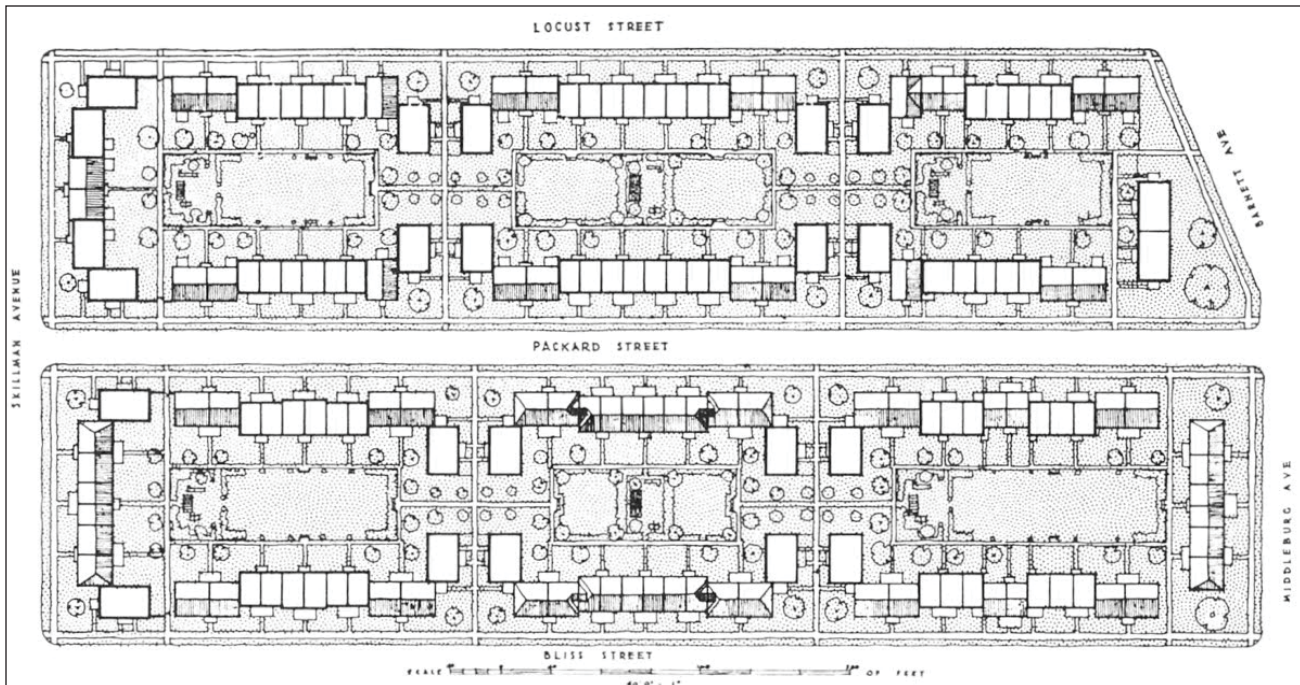
The first of Stein and Wright’s experimental projects was Sunnyside Gardens, a 77-acre, low-rise development constructed in 1924-29 in Queens, New York. Here they were forced to work within the confines of the gridiron street system, which they considered a handicap. Even though they had to maintain the traditional rectangular block, Stein and Wright were able to find cost-savings in the construction of the attached one, two and three-family row houses by the use of continuous foundations, shared walls, and mass production construction techniques.¹² The row house groups ran along the perimeter of each city block, enclosing a large central shared garden, with recreational amenities included.

Lewis Mumford, who lived at Sunnyside for eleven years, believed that the “Sunnyside buildings were better planned and were architecturally more comely, and had usable open space that the ordinary builder either swallowed up or wasted; but they weren’t cheaper, and in some respects, they lacked conveniences that the speculator supplied.”¹³ Sunnyside was followed by Radburn, a much larger community in New Jersey begun in 1929 and not fully realized due to the Stock Market Crash. It was said that with these two projects, Stein, Wright and the RPAA “rethought the basic social and environmental needs, as well as the financing and physical layout, of the American urban residential



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A site plan showing two blocks in Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, New York (from Stein, *Toward New Towns...*)

community; in so doing, they created new urban forms."¹⁴

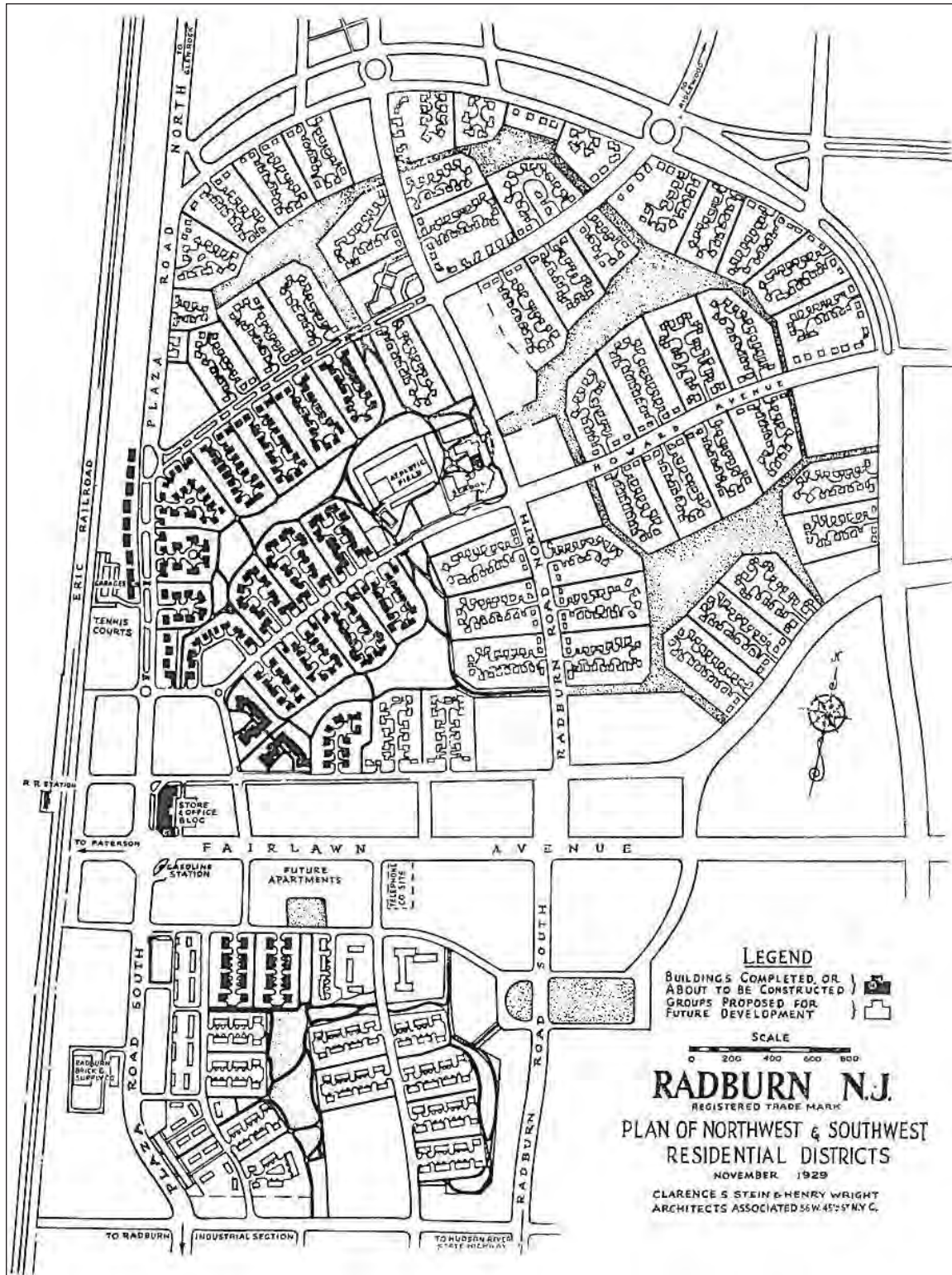
Particularly at Radburn, Stein and Wright created a revolution in planning, which would truly deal for the first time with the problem and dangers of the automobile. Stein had written that what he hoped his communities would offer was "a beautiful environment, a home for children, an opportunity to enjoy the day's leisure and the ability to ride on the Juggernaut of industry, instead of being prostrated under its wheels."¹⁵ At Radburn, "a community within a community," automobile traffic was separated from pedestrian traffic, and for the first time a largely residential superblock concept of planning was used. Radburn was followed in the 1930's by more "towns for the motor age": Chatham Village (Pittsburgh), Phipps Garden Apartments (Queens) and Hillside Homes (the Bronx), and the Greenbelt towns of the Resettlement Administration.

In addition to their beauty and their promotion of social life for their inhabitants, the basic Garden City principles developed by Stein and Wright, and perfected at Radburn (and known as the "Radburn Plan"), were:

- **Superblock:** large parcel with few or no through streets, which consolidated open green spaces for use by the residents;
- **Specialized roads:** all auto circulation on the perimeter, with Garage Courts for storage of cars;
- **Complete separation of pedestrian and automobile:** "taming the automobile," promoting an environment safer for children;
- **Houses turned toward gardens and parks:** creation of an arrangement that turned the buildings from outside in, placing the living room windows towards the green spaces rather than the street; and
- **The park as the backbone:** allowing large green spaces to dominate, rather than streets.

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Site plan for Raddburn, New Jersey (from Stein, *Toward New Towns...*)



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Federal Housing Initiatives

Drawing from the success of privately-funded garden apartments geared toward the middle- and upper-middle classes, the philosophies of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright and the RPAA were embraced by the government during the early years of the Great Depression and served as the design standard for the Public Housing programs that followed. Acting as a consultant on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Greenbelt Towns program, Stein hoped that these initial steps would pave the way for ideal community planning at a much larger scale.

The impacts of the Great Depression on America's population became increasingly apparent in the 1930s, as economic collapse devastated home-ownership and the residential construction industry. Housing construction in the United States fell 90 percent between 1925, the record high, and 1933.¹⁶ Fourteen million Americans were unemployed and nearly 275,000 families lost their homes to mortgage foreclosure in 1933 alone.¹⁷ The nation's poor were relegated to abject housing conditions as existing housing stock became more and more decrepit and migrants from farms and small towns crowded into cities in search of employment and public relief. The gradual focus of government attention on alleviating the growing housing tragedy resulted in a number of federal housing initiatives and funding programs.

1934 National Housing Act

A product of President Roosevelt's first term in office and his "New Deal," the National Housing Act of 1934 established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). For those who qualified, the FHA policies made homes more affordable by lowering the down payment needed to qualify for a mortgage and lowering interest rates. The Act was intended to help privately funded construction projects, making it easier for Americans to obtain financing for mortgages by insuring loans from private lenders, minimizing their risk almost completely.

Though intended for the single-family home, the FHA did insure some multiple housing units after 1934. Between 1935 and 1940, and using Stein and Wright's

Radburn Plan principles as their guiding inspiration, the FHA insured mortgages on over 200 garden apartment complexes, both large and small. The first of these was Colonial Village in Alexandria, Virginia. Conceived by developer Gustave Ring and designed by architect Harvey H. Warwick, Sr., with a landscape attributed to James K. Wright, Colonial Village served as the prototype for the FHA insured garden apartment projects that followed. Its innovative site plan and low-density layout would be widely admired and used as a model for garden apartments around the United States. An immediate success when it opened in 1935, the 276 apartments at Colonial Village were quickly and fully occupied, with a waiting list of 10,000 people.

These FHA-insured garden apartments were later defined as being "composed of individual buildings forming a group of at least three buildings designed and constructed specifically to function as a multiple dwelling. These small buildings were designed to contain at least four self-sufficient dwelling units. The group is designed and sited to relate to the surrounding landscape."¹⁸ *Architectural Forum* observed in 1940 that garden apartments "offered renters the nearest thing to 'home' that can be found in apartment buildings: private entrances, front yards, few overhead neighbors."¹⁹

The success and proliferation of garden apartments proved that the FHA rental housing program had provided ample evidence of the high-grade investment possibilities of rental projects where the qualities of good planning and good management were present, substantiated by how quickly they were able to attain full occupancy.²⁰ In its September 1939 issue, *The Architectural Record* argued that "any high rent apartment project is a comparatively risky undertaking for the investor and, in turn, for FHA. Tenants who can afford to spend \$15 and more per room on rent are by nature transitory tenants. They will move down to lower rent quarters during economic depression, will move up into new buildings as they are completed, and eventually will probably move out to buy or build a house."

Because FHA standards were set up to protect mortgage money, FHA housing was intended to accommodate

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Slum housing in Los Angeles, which had some of the worst slums in the nation, c. 1939 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

the comparatively financially stable, middle-income group.²¹ Because this market hadn't truly been exploited by builders and developers, who regularly "aim at the highest possible rents in hope of making a quick financial killing, overlooking the cold forbidding facts revealed by rental experience," it left a very large and under-supplied – yet stable – market for private enterprise rental housing.²² The article continues, "The low rent housing market will be tapped as soon as [the building industry] realizes that the net profit – not the rent scale – is the yard stick for measuring a project's success. Well planned low rent projects, economically constructed and operated, offer unlimited opportunities for investors seeking a steady, long term net income." It was pointed out that the FHA's Large Scale Rental Housing Division was "interested in seeing this low rent housing market cracked wide open."²³

United States Housing Act of 1937 (Wagner-Steagall Act)

During President Roosevelt's second term, the United States Housing Act of 1937 (also known as the Wagner-Steagall Act) was passed, creating the United States Housing Authority (USHA). The Act authorized USHA to make loans to local public housing agencies, so the Housing Authorities for both the City and County of Los Angeles were established in 1938. Under the 1937 Housing Act, for every affordable unit built, one unit of slum housing had to be demolished. Housing activists appealed for improved housing conditions using economics as evidence: "Slums cost money. They are the most expensive form of housing known, and it is the community that pays for them... However great the cost of wiping out slums, it is not so great as the cost of maintaining them."²⁴



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Slum housing in Los Angeles, c. 1939 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



Slum housing in Los Angeles, c. 1939 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

In 1938, Langdon Post, a Federal public housing administrator believed that new concepts in modern communities would ensure that “streets will be closed, rerouted or widened, parks and playgrounds will be properly distributed, and new health centers and schools strategically located. Large courts with vistas of green grass and trees will gradually replace the miles and miles of dirty narrow shafts and unsightly backyards. Health will improve, crime will decrease, and morals will rise. In short, we will eventually build cities for people to live in with surroundings that create contentment.”²⁵

The Housing Act of 1937 enabled the construction of nineteen public housing developments, all of them in the garden apartment mode, in Los Angeles County by 1942.²⁶

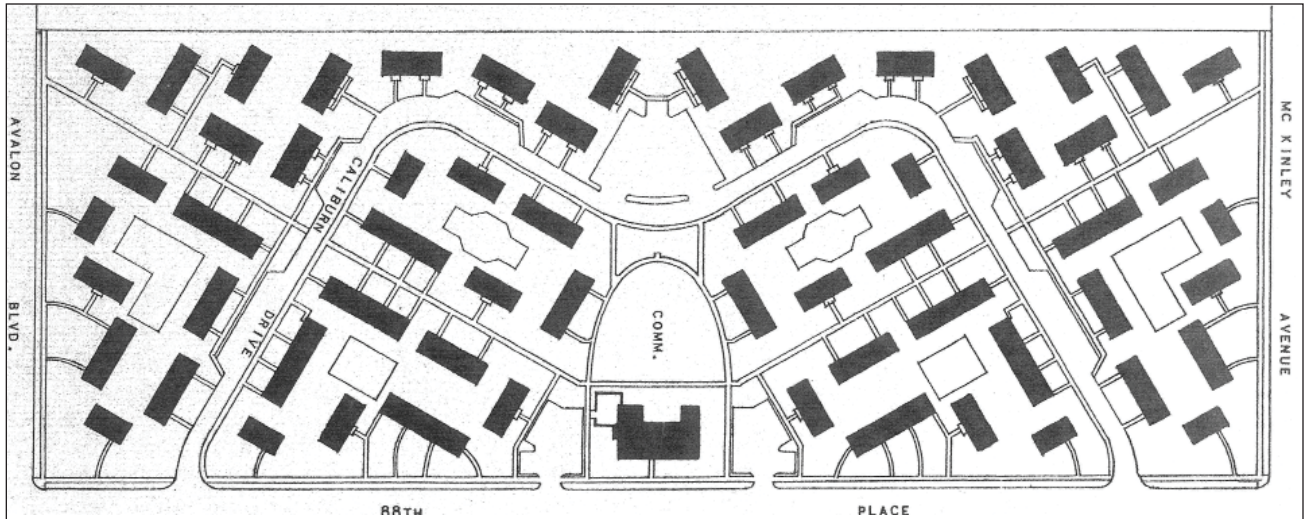
American Housing Act of 1949

The onset of World War II stalled nearly all residential development until after 1945, when a new housing crisis plagued the country: inadequate housing stock available to accommodate the large population of returning war veterans. Veterans returned to good conditions for homebuyers, including lending initiatives and vast suburban development, and “housing construction jumped from about 300,000 units per year in the 1930s to one million in 1945, to two million in 1950.”²⁷ However, slum conditions in the nation’s cities worsened with the influx in population and the increase of desperately poor areas of makeshift housing. Housing advocates of the postwar era focused on slum clearance to make way for new public housing; slum tours, data about disease rates and crime, and photographs depicting squalor were used in defense of public housing initiatives. However, it was not until much later that “it became obvious to the housing movement’s progressives that slum clearance was a form of racial discrimination that had the opposite effect of its intentions: it actually made affordable housing more scarce.”²⁸

Because slum clearance meant the displacement of large populations of the city’s poorest citizens, the need for new public housing was a large component of postwar housing initiatives. The Community Redevelopment Act of 1945 enabled the establishment of a Community Redevelopment Agency in Los Angeles

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Site plan for Avalon Gardens, a Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles housing development in Southeast Los Angeles dating to 1942 (from "Public Housing, Los Angeles Area: Analysis and Report," Housing Research Council of Southern California, 1950)



A young boy in the large, open courtyards of Avalon Gardens, c. 1948 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



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Elysian Park Heights, planned (and not built) for Chavez Ravine, c. 1950 (Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research)



Bulldozers tear through houses at Chavez Ravine, 1959 (from the *Los Angeles Times*)

in 1948. The primary intent of the agency was to clear the city's slums and redevelop the vacant land with private commercial and/or residential construction. It was required that "any and all people displaced in the process be offered safe, sanitary housing at a price within their means."²⁹ With the passage of the American Housing Act of 1949, President Harry S. Truman called for an increase of public housing units by 810,000 units by 1955 to help alleviate the housing shortage.

The Housing Act of 1949 differed from its Depression-era predecessors in that the call for more public housing was linked to massive redevelopment efforts, many of which were plagued with social inequality and, at times, corruption. In many cases, slums with predominantly minority populations were replaced with more expensive housing that was out of financial reach of previous inhabitants. In Los Angeles, the proposed redevelopment of Chavez Ravine resulted in the destruction of somewhere between 970 and 1,800 households to make way for 3,360 new units of housing called "Elysian Park Heights," planned and designed by Robert Alexander, Richard Neutra and Garrett Eckbo. In contrast to earlier housing developments, Elysian Park Heights was higher density to meet federal unit count goals and included 24 thirteen-story towers in addition to low-rise residential buildings. The towers drew criticism from Clarence Stein and Catherine Bauer; Stein asked Simon Eisner, planning consultant to the City on the Elysian Park Heights project, how he could justify "a project which was going to take people who are accustomed to living on the ground, having their gardens, having chickens and their little animals in their yards, having space around them, having flowers, to have these people living in these twenty-four thirteen-story-high buildings."³⁰

A number of factors, including public outcry at the treatment of Chavez Ravine's inhabitants, government discord regarding federal control over local redevelopment decisions, and the growing association of public housing with socialism in the political rhetoric of the McCarthy era, killed the Elysian Park project and, ultimately, contributed to the eventual decline in the construction of new public housing developments in Los Angeles for several decades. In 1953, the housing authority sold 170 acres of Chavez Ravine to the City of

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Los Angeles, who in 1957 transferred the land to Walter O'Malley for construction of a new stadium for his Brooklyn Dodgers.³¹

Garden Apartments After 1949

Whereas public housing before World War II focused on the social benefits of Garden City planning principles, such as fostering a sense of community through landscape design and recreational facilities, the initiatives that drove public housing after the war focused on the creation of large quantities of much-needed housing at a controlled cost. As such, the postwar era saw a gradual evolution of garden apartments as a paradigm of the planning principles of the RPAA and proponents of humane housing conditions to higher density housing complexes with comparatively less in the way of green space or social and recreational offerings. Public housing developments constructed in Los Angeles in the early 1950s, while still representing an important phase of housing in Los Angeles, began to lose the expression of the Garden City Movement while giving preference to unit count and density.

At the same time, to promote new construction as a means of easing housing shortages, the FHA temporarily extended mortgage insurance (Title 608), encouraging private developers to build large-scale multiple housing with FHA backed mortgages of 90%. As such, private multi-family development in Los Angeles in the postwar era largely mirrored that of public programs, with higher unit counts trumping recreational amenities in order to maximize investments.

By the early 1950s, Title 608 had expired, making it more difficult to obtain funding for private garden apartments. In addition to the scarcity of FHA-backed funding, there were other factors contributing to the demise of privately funded garden apartments by the mid 1950s. As FHA funding for multi-family housing waned, developers focused on single-family homes, which the middle class could afford to purchase more easily than in the past. Also, in 1954 the "windfall scandals" erupted, leading to investigations into alleged corruption by private developers of garden apartments



Carmelitos (1940), which has large expanses dedicated to open space (Google maps, c. 2012)



Imperial Courts (redeveloped in 1955), which shows increased density compared to pre-war examples (Google maps, c. 2012)



Jordan Downs (redeveloped in 1955) (Google maps, c. 2012)



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and FHA officials, which was followed by congressional hearings. Developers were accused of inflating the cost figures for land and padding construction costs, taking mortgage loans in excess of the reported costs of projects and pocketing the difference as unearned cash, “aided and guided” by FHA officials. Of 70 projects under national scrutiny (with \$39,500,000 in question), five Los Angeles garden apartments projects were part of the investigation.³²

Even though the public was urged that “current hearings into alleged Federal Housing Administration malpractices should not cast a shadow over the fact that the FHA and the building industry worked together to break the ‘worst housing shortage in American history,’” the die was cast, the political climate had changed, and garden apartments were infrequently built after 1955.³³ After a period of hiatus in the late 1950s and early 60s, Garden City planning principles experienced a growing resurgence in popularity as urban planners, architects and developers once again began to look to the RPAA and the Garden City Movement in the development of cities, institutional campuses and private housing developments. Without FHA funding available, these new garden apartment communities were often built with innovative ways of financing, such as “own-your-own” apartments or condominiums. The late 20th century iterations of garden apartments have much in common with their Depression and World War II era counterparts, while adopting the architectural vernacular and prevailing planning trends of their own era. Although not explored in this study, post-1955 garden apartments will deserve their own analysis as their contributions to the history of housing in Los Angeles become clearer with time.



A mother and son look over the newly-constructed Aliso Village, c. 1942 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

CONTEXT: Public and Private Institutional Development

THEME: Public Housing in Los Angeles, 1937-1955

But here is the challenge to our democracy: In this nation I see tens of millions of its citizens—a substantial part of its whole population—who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of today call the necessities of life.

I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children.

I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.

But it is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope—because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern; and we will never regard any faithful law-abiding group within our borders as superfluous. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.³⁴

-Excerpted from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's second inaugural address, January 20, 1937



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A streetcar converted to housing at the notorious Beaudry slums, c. 1939 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



Aerial view of Ramona Gardens, which replaced the Beaudry slums, 1941 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



Ramona Gardens, c. 1941 (Architectural Forum, May 1942)

Like most of the United States, housing conditions in Los Angeles ran a wide gamut of conditions and were reflective of the economic and social inequality of the city's population. According to writer and architectural critic Esther McCoy, 30 percent of all dwellings in Los Angeles had no inside toilet, 50 percent had no bathtub, and 20 percent were unfit for human habitation.³⁵

Several years before the Housing Act of 1937 made possible the County and City Housing Authorities of the City of Los Angeles, two small, separate groups of architects were busy planning slum clearance projects, anticipating the day when there would be Federal support for these types of developments. For the first of these, Reginald D. Johnson and Lewis E. Wilson began planning a project which would clear out the Beaudry Street slums, replacing it with a new community based on their friend Clarence Stein's Radburn Plan principles. The second group, led by Lloyd Wright, sought to replace the notorious Utah Street slums with another garden city development for low-rent apartments. Wright even began searching for a landscape architect with whom the group would collaborate in these earliest stages.³⁶ Though it would be several years before the two groups would see progress, after the 1938 formation of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), the Beaudry project ultimately became Ramona Gardens, while the Utah project was built as Aliso Village.³⁷

In 1938, the newly formed County Housing Authority called upon the nation's preeminent urban planner, Clarence Stein, to consult on its first two projects: Carmelitos and Harbor Hills. In August and September 1938, Stein travelled to California to meet with Housing Authority officials and the architects with whom he would work. The first of these projects, Carmelitos in Long Beach (Kenneth S. Wing and Cecil A. Schilling, architects; Ralph D. Cornell, landscape architect), would provide 607 homes for families whose annual incomes ranged from \$900 to \$1,200 annually.³⁸ The 50-acre site had 87 buildings arranged in such a way that ample parking was provided, but automobile and pedestrian traffic were kept as separate as possible. A private, enclosed backyard garden was provided for every family and provisions were made for playgrounds,

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Harbor Hills, a 1941 complex developed by the Los Angeles County Housing Authority (from *Pencil Points*, Nov. 1941)

an outdoor nursery school, and other recreation areas for both children and adults. The landscaping by Ralph D. Cornell was described as “simple but effective, with familiar California flowering shrubs and trees lending color to the scheme.”

Stein’s next community, Harbor Hills (Reginald D. Johnson, Chief Architect; Donald B. Parkinson, Eugene Weston, Jr., Lewis E. Wilson, A.C. Zimmerman, architects; Katherine Bashford and Fred Barlow, Jr., landscape architects), was built on a site overlooking the San Pedro Bay. Only 27 acres of the 102-acre site was developed because of several deep canyons and gullies. Buildings were grouped around large parking areas 54 feet wide, with room also provided for off-street parking for all tenants, a distinctly Southern California concept. The complex followed the contours of the site, utilizing a chevron pattern to break up the repetition of the parallel rows. This arrangement gave the site a unique character.

Though comparatively small, with just 300 units in 52 buildings on the 27-acre site, at Harbor Hills provisions were still made for community amenities. Stein believed that creating larger developments in the future would “have the advantage of being able to afford more adequate and varied community space and service. Therefore, wherever it is practical, it would seem advisable to organize public housing in developments large enough to supply community equipment that

can be administered with maximum economy.” Larger developments would be able to support schools, shopping, and entertainment, making them more self-contained.

Stein returned to California in October, 1941, and said “I visited both Carmelitos and Harbor Hills. I was delighted with the appearance of both of them. Harbor Hills in detail is, I think, one of the best projects in the country. Carmelitos is very attractive.”³⁹ Writing about Harbor Hills, Stein said: “the project is designed to provide living space with a measure of charm and informality for families who previously lived in substandard quarters. The buildings have the appearance of well-planned private residences. Seen from a distance, they become a part of the terraced hillside on which they stand. There are gardens in the rear of the buildings, play areas with benches, tree-bordered walks, a spray pool and nursery, and a community building with a special hall and hobby room. The architecture is distinctly western in treatment.”⁴⁰

After Carmelitos and Harbor Hills, construction of public housing in Los Angeles continued on a large scale, all of which in the garden apartment mode. In 1941 and 42 alone, 16 such complexes were constructed by the City and County Housing Authorities of Los Angeles, creating approximately 9,000 units of housing.⁴¹ Complexes were constructed on multiple-



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A bicycle messenger at Carmelitos, c. 1941 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



Residents at William Mead homes assist with landscape maintenance (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

acre sites, using superblock site planning when possible to deviate from the rectilinear urban grid. Nearly all had a community building, recreational facilities, laundry rooms and drying yards, and in some cases, adjacent educational and child care facilities.⁴²

The construction of these idealized garden apartment communities was designed to fit into a proposed Master Plan for Los Angeles. By 1941 the County Planning Division and the Board of Supervisors had approved several components of a Master Plan, including a Land Use Plan, Community Design Plan, Shoreline Development Plan, and Civic Center Plan. Arguably the most important component was the Major Highway Plan, “the first attempt in the United States to develop a comprehensive system of safe, attractive, high-speed motorways in a metropolitan community”⁴³ The City and County’s major housing developments were designed to fit harmoniously into the Highway Plan, and in some cases, help to accomplish it. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles reported in 1942 that “coordination between various governmental agencies is the answer to many a vexing stumbling block in the housing field. When Aliso Village was first conceived, it was one of a number of slum clearance developments in a long-range program. But it soon became apparent that it was located adjacent to two proposed super highways designed to eliminate congestion and speed up traffic. The result was that the City Housing Authority joined hands with many other agencies in locating and designing the Santa Ana and Ramona freeways, as well as developing the site plan for Aliso. In buying land for Aliso Village, [HACLA] also purchased the land needed for the adjacent freeway and then resold it to the freeway without profit.”⁴⁴ By 1942, planner Mel Scott reported optimistically “indeed, the beginnings of the community of tomorrow are already before us. Two links of a great parkway system that someday will unite all parts of the region have been built, the Arroyo Seco Parkway and the Cahuenga Parkway. The need now is to relate all further improvements to broad, regional plans so that every street, home, park, and public building may form part of a completely harmonious community.”⁴⁵

After World War II, the Federal Housing Act of 1949 enabled the construction of several more public housing

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developments in the City of Los Angeles, including Nickerson Gardens (Southeast Los Angeles), San Fernando Gardens (Pacoima), Mar Vista Gardens (Marina Del Rey), and expansions at Jordan Downs (Southeast Los Angeles), Rancho San Pedro, Pueblo del Rio, and Estrada Courts. These developments are generally higher density than those constructed before and during World War II; buildings are tighter on the property with a smaller percentage of land devoted to open space. Although the architects, landscape architects and planners involved in these later developments used Garden City planning principles in their development, federal guidelines on unit count and cost prohibited the relegation of land to community and recreation facilities and common green space at a degree comparable to that of pre-war complexes.

The following are extant examples of garden apartments that represent the theme, *Public Housing in Los Angeles, 1937-1955*: Carmelitos, Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, Rancho San Pedro, William Mead Homes, Estrada Courts, Rose Hills Courts, Avalon Gardens, Hacienda Village, Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs, Rancho San Pedro Extension, Pueblo del Rio Extension and Estrada Courts Extension.⁴⁶



Children make use of the open courtyards at Rose Hill Courts, c. 1948 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



May pole celebration at Jordan Downs, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



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Western Terrace Defense Housing (no longer extant), c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

THEME: Defense Housing in Los Angeles, 1942-1945

This war involves a total national effort and industrial mobilization. Industry cannot effectively mobilize the plants and plants cannot expand with sufficient rapidity unless there are enough houses to bring the worker to the job, keep him on the job and maintain his efficiency and morale. The allocation of war funds for the shelter of the men and women leaving their homes to serve our war industries is a wise and established national policy. That policy should continue.

-President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a message to Congress, May 27, 1942

According to an article in *California Arts & Architecture*, “before 1942, public housing in the city of Los Angeles was fighting a peacetime enemy – slum – but in that year it went to war along with the rest of America.”⁴⁷ Even before the onset of World War II, the Federal Government was gearing up for the fact that defense workers would be in need of affordable housing. The 1937 Housing Act had been modified in June of 1940 to exempt workers engaged in defense industries from the strict low-income rules for public housing. The Community Facilities Act, known as the Lanham Act,

sought to create 700,000 permanent and temporary units of public housing in Los Angeles for defense workers.⁴⁸ With the large presence of defense-related industries in Los Angeles and the in-migration of able-bodied workers in search of employment, the housing shortage was of immediate concern. By July 1942, it was reported that the population of Los Angeles had grown by 165,000 since 1940 due to the influx of defense workers.⁴⁹



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Temporary defense housing, Banning Homes, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



A defense worker in Los Angeles, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

With the exception of Ramona Gardens, the housing projects that had been run by the Housing Authority of the City and County of Los Angeles were turned over to the newly formed Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA), which was tasked with creating enough defense housing to “bring the worker to the job, keep him on the job and maintain his efficiency and morale.” In October, 1941, HACLA “established a policy of preference for families of low-income defense workers for all developments except Ramona Gardens.”⁵⁰ In 1942, Landgon Post, Director of the Federal Public Housing Authority, stated: “Because the planning and construction of public housing developments was so well initiated before Pearl Harbor, the conversion of these developments into a war housing program has enabled the working men and women in war plants to live in safe, modern homes near their work. This enables them to join hands with our front-line fighters in their common march to victory.”⁵¹

In addition to giving defense workers preference in existing public housing developments, several complexes, including Imperial Courts and Jordan Downs (constructed in 1944 in South Los Angeles and Watts, respectively), were constructed specifically to sate the wartime housing shortage. The adjacency of South Los Angeles to the defense industries in the harbor area made it an apt location for the housing of war workers. Both Imperial Courts and Jordan Downs were converted to public housing and redeveloped or expanded under the auspices of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles after the war.

In addition to those of a more permanent nature, several additional temporary Defense Housing projects were developed. While most were commonly makeshift in nature, consisting of Quonset huts, trailers, or portable structures, a few were more elaborate and carefully designed. One such development, Wilmington Hall Dormitories (Lewis E. Wilson and Armand Monaco, architects; Fred Barlow, Jr., landscape architect) was known as “the largest hotel in the world,” with over 2,000 rooms.⁵² Because of the widespread morale problem – many married men lived in temporary housing facilities during the war because they were unable to bring their families from other parts of the

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country – great care was taken at Wilmington Hall in programming services and recreation.⁵³

The site plans for these temporary defense projects were designed with an eye for their reuse after the war's end. The architects would collaborate with the landscape architects to design street patterns and infrastructure which could be easily modified to accept homes or permanent garden apartments after the war. The landscaping for these temporary projects utilized extremely austere, utilitarian designs, consisting mostly of street trees and grass and/or groundcovers. Due to their temporary nature, none of these developments exist today.

Because all construction not related to defense was halted during wartime, a small number of privately-funded garden apartments were built presumably as defense housing for the duration of the war with the understanding that they would be converted to rental apartments at the end of the war. One such example includes Rancho Vega in North Hollywood, designed by Paul R. Williams, which was completed in 1945. Its name implies that it was constructed to house employees of the nearby Vega Aircraft Company in Burbank.

The following are known, extant examples of garden apartments that were designed and constructed specifically to house defense workers during World War II, thus representing the theme, *Defense Housing in Los Angeles, 1942-1945*: Rancho Vega, Imperial Courts, and Jordan Downs.⁵⁴ However, Imperial Courts and Jordan Downs have both been extensively redeveloped in the years following World War II, and further analysis will be required in order to determine which segments of the complexes (if any) date to the war era.



Rose Hill Courts, which was designed for low-income residents, was converted to defense housing for the duration of World War II (from *Homes for Heroes*)



Rancho Vega housing in North Hollywood, which was designed specifically for war workers and converted to low-income housing after the war. (Google maps, c. 2012)



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A spray pool does double-duty as a paved play area at Aliso Village (now demolished) c. 1943 (from *California Arts and Architecture*, May 1943)

CONTEXT: Residential Development and Suburbanization

THEME: Community Planning and Development: Garden City Planning Principles, 1937-1955

*Though our means were modest, we contrived to live in an environment where space, sunlight, order, color – these essential ingredients for either life or art – were constantly present, silently molding all of us.*⁵⁵

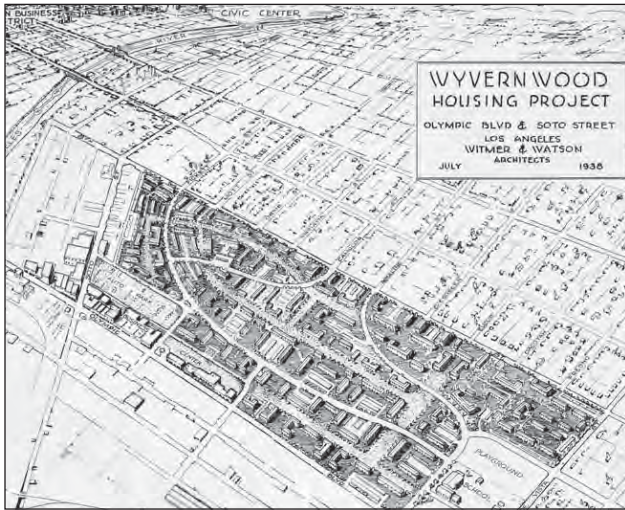
-Lewis Mumford, reflecting on his years living at Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, NY.

*In the average neighborhood people nod politely to their neighbors but usually never get to know them. Here they meet them casually under circumstances that lead to the formation of friendships. Before long they are visiting in one another's homes and enjoying dinners, parties, and Sunday trips together. From these friendships grow an interest in the welfare of the whole community. The people who live in this neighborhood have real community spirit, something that America has lacked since cities became big and the automobile made people restless.*⁵⁶

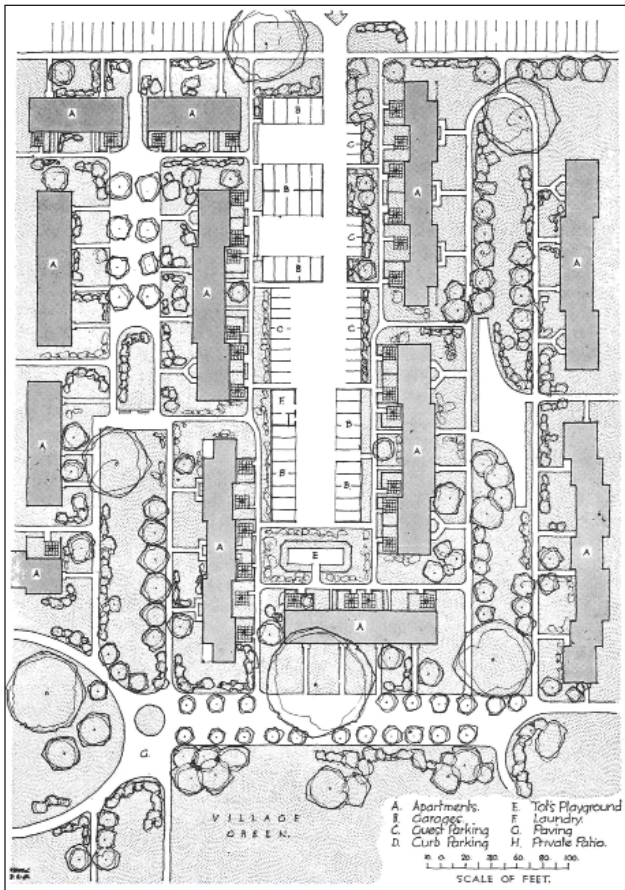


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Wyvernwood site plan, 1938 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)



Separation of automobile storage and pedestrian circulation at Baldwin Hills Village (from Stein, *Toward New Towns...*)

Garden apartments in Los Angeles, like comparable examples nation-wide, are significant as the fruition of innovative concepts developed by a group of reformers to create better, more humane housing conditions through thoughtful planning and design. With a fundamental belief that all people deserve optimal housing conditions regardless of income or social standing, the planners and designers of these complexes thought very deliberately about every aspect of their design, including site plan, the arrangement of automobile circulation and storage, the organization of internal living spaces, landscape, and recreational facilities. They believed that providing residents with easy access to fresh air and open green spaces with provisions for recreation and social interaction would create strong community bonds and sociability, which would enhance and enrich their lives in ways they wouldn't normally be able to achieve in a city apartment or typical suburban situation. These forward-thinking city planners, architects and landscape architects began working collaboratively to create a new idea of urban community, as they had seen in modern housing "the chance of creating...brave new communities – uncluttered, throbbing with new life and vigor, beacons of urbane living."⁵⁷

The Radburn Plan

In their designs of early garden apartment communities in Los Angeles, these designers built upon the principles of Stein and Wright's Radburn Plan – the use of the superblock, the complete separation of the pedestrian from the automobile, houses turned toward gardens or parks rather than the street, and ample space dedicated to a common green or park (often at the "spine" of the complex) – while developing a property type regional in appearance and function, capitalizing on the temperate climate of Los Angeles and ample developable space in the pre-war era, and drawing on regional influences of architectural style and landscape.

The treatment of vehicular circulation and arrangement was a particular challenge to designers of garden apartments, as by the 1930s Los Angeles was already well in the throes of its love affair with the automobile. With superblock site planning, designers were able to relegate automobile traffic and garages to the perimeter of the property, reserving internal space

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to expansive greens and pedestrian circulation. In instances where roads traverse the site plans, they are dedicated to vehicular use only, with dwellings turning their backs to streets and, rather, facing common courtyards or gardens. Garages for vehicular storage are always detached from dwellings and located in dedicated garage courts. Even in the rare cases where a superblock plan wasn't utilized, vehicular circulation and storage is kept separate from pedestrian circulation, commonly in rear alleys.

Recreation

An emphasis on providing common recreational facilities for both children and adults in early garden apartment complexes signaled another major step forward in community planning. In 1942, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles dramatically reported, "An epidemic of juvenile gangsterism swept Los Angeles like a plague in the spring of 1941. Misguided youths, ranging from teen age to the early twenties, murdered, slugged, knifed, shot and plundered their way through all sections of the city."⁵⁸ Much of the blame for this burst of lawlessness was attributed to the fact that these youth had been raised in slums. The Housing Authority explained, "you can't expect to produce good citizens if you force large segments of the population to live in sub-standard homes. You can't let idle or underprivileged individuals worry alone about their problems. Guidance and community activities must be provided. That is why the Commissioners of the City Authority have insisted that recreational space and community activities must be provided for all 16 developments."⁵⁹

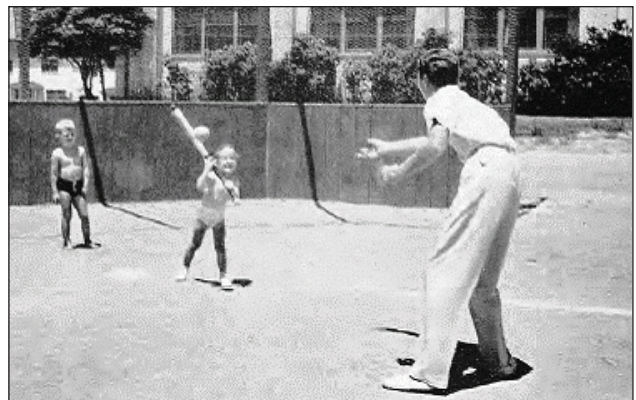
Where slum children once played in decay and filth, those living in garden apartments enjoyed instead "spray pools shooting out cooling water for kids in bathing suits at many of the developments. Table games and sand boxes are in full use. Swings, merry-go-rounds, jungle gyms, horizontal bars, baseball fields, horseshoe pits, volleyball and basketball courts are part of the equipment provided."⁶⁰ Recreational features were also an important part of the garden apartments designed for a wealthier clientele. Reginald D. Johnson (who had collaborated on the public housing garden apartment communities of Harbor Hills and Rancho San Pedro, in addition to the private



William Mead Homes, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)



A play yard at William Mead homes, c. 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)



An impromptu baseball game at Wyvernwood, 1939 (early Wyvernwood brochure, courtesy Los Angeles Conservancy)



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A resident takes advantage of a private patio at Baldwin Hills Village, 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

Baldwin Hills Village) explained that while cities afforded access to culture, shopping and education, “the lack of opportunity in our cities for normal co-operative recreation for both adults and children is shown by the endless lines of automobiles and crowded trolley cars on week-ends and holidays. This great movement of the people is largely motivated by a desire to escape their environment. The truth is that no one stays home in the modern city unless he has to! This not only results in unnecessary drain on the family purse, but also a most unfortunate drain on the nervous system of both adults and children.”⁶¹

Johnson, like many of the other architects and landscape architects involved, believed that “leisure and recreation, in their broadest sense, are fundamentally necessary factors of human life, especially in an industrial age. Recreation, work and home life are fundamentally closely interdependent units, rather

than entities to be segregated by wastefully attenuated transportation facilities, as they are today. Since most production in the city takes place under roof, indoors, it is obvious that urban recreation must emphasize the out-of-doors, plant life, air and light. In our poorly mechanized, over-centralized, and congested cities the crying need is for organized space: flexible, adaptable outdoor space in which to stretch, breathe, expand, and grow.”⁶²

For both public housing and privately funded garden apartments, recreational facilities were considered a vital and integral part of the designs, encouraging residents to get out into the landscape and interact with one another. Playgrounds provided safe places for children, away from the dangers of the automobile; however, recreational amenities were not meant solely for children. HACLA believed that “a well balanced civilization is one which cares for such fundamental

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needs of its people as food, clothing, shelter and health. Along with these, man should have a chance to give expression to his cultural desires for play, for education and for the fulfillment of his ideals."⁶³ The landscape architects designed features which could serve double duty, such as spray pools with concrete basins, painted with lines to convert them to badminton courts when not in use by children.

At Carmelitos, for example (and typical of the early garden apartment communities, both public and private), the Housing Authority explained, "each group of buildings surrounding a parking area is provided with a play area paved with asphaltic concrete. They provided space for mechanical play equipment, which was installed after completion. In addition to these small areas located throughout the project, a large playground, enclosed by a five-foot wire fence and featuring a wading pool in the center, adjoins the community building on the south. Still another and much larger play area, which is also enclosed by a fence, is located to the south of the wading pool. The larger pieces of play equipment, such as slides, travelling rings and jungle bars, are located in this area. The adult recreation center is to the north of the community building. For adult recreation there are two croquet courts, two badminton courts, two horseshoe courts, three shuffleboard courts, and standards for volleyball and basketball. Adequate flood lighting is provided for this recreation center. In addition to the above recreational facilities, sufficient land has been set aside for a future baseball field."⁶⁴

Early Examples

The first garden apartment communities in Los Angeles were planned and constructed in the late 1930s and early 40s, at the end of the Great Depression. The first of these was Wyvernwood in Boyle Heights, which opened in 1939. An early brochure for Wyvernwood, which had nearly 1200 units on 70 acres, boasts, "Happy is the family that looks forward to a trip to the country – to a period of freedom from the rapid, vigorous pace and tenseness of modern city living. Happier still are the fortunate families who enjoy this freedom all year 'round – the delightful carefree kind of freedom offered by the modern Wyvernwood way of living."⁶⁵ Apartment homes were described as turning



A spray pool at Harbor Hills, c. 1941 (from *Pencil Points*, Nov. 1941)



A play yard at Baldwin Hills Village, c. 1944 (Cornell University, Special Collections)



Living in a park-like setting at Wyvernwood, 1939 (early Wyvernwood brochure, courtesy Los Angeles Conservancy)



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Plenty of open space in which to play, Baldwin Hills Village, 1958 (Getty Research Institute)

“their backs to the outside world” and, rather, facing “acres of velvety green lawns and colorful flowers and shrubs.”⁶⁶ Only ten minutes from downtown Los Angeles, Wyvernwood embodied the town and country marriage first espoused by Ebenezer Howard at the turn of the century and later touted by Stein, Wright and the RPAA.

The year that Wyvernwood opened, a number of additional garden apartment complexes were already under construction or in the planning phases by both public and private entities. Clarence Stein himself was involved in the planning and design of some of these early complexes, including Harbor Hills and Carmelitos for the Housing Authority of Los Angeles County and Baldwin Hills Village (now known as Village Green), a privately-funded community designed for middle-class residents.⁶⁷ Whereas the publicly-funded garden apartment complexes such as Harbor Hills and Carmelitos were geared toward a low-rent population during the Great Depression, Wyvernwood, Baldwin Hills Village and Parklabrea (spelled “Park La Brea” today) were constructed and initially marketed to middle-income (and higher) renters. At the same time that public funds were being utilized to provide “decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income,”

believing it to be a “public use and purpose for which public money may be spent and private property acquired,” it was agreed that the task of providing superior housing for middle-class groups should also be undertaken by private enterprise. These privately-funded garden apartment communities, in their best form, utilized the same garden city planning principles seen in the public projects.

Baldwin Hills Village, also nearly 70 acres in size, opened in 1941 and was quickly filled to capacity. Located about eight miles from downtown Los Angeles, advertisements boasted that residents were to enjoy “a new and finer style of living” that resembled “the quiet and beauty of the country.”⁶⁸ The complex was nationally recognized for its innovation in community planning and design, featured in numerous articles in national journals and given awards from the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); it was one of 47 examples selected for inclusion in the 1944 MoMA exhibition “Built in U.S.A 1932-1944.” Stein would later note that it was at Baldwin Hills Village that his tenets came together in their most fully realized form. Even more so than at his communities on the East Coast, in Southern California

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the region's "necessary evil" – the automobile, and the car-centric culture that had grown up around it – had to be remedied. The same year the Arroyo Seco Parkway opened – Southern California's first freeway – the design team behind Baldwin Hills Village finalized their radically inspired plans to "tame the car."

Construction at Parklabrea, which is the largest garden apartment complex in Los Angeles at approximately 175 acres and more than 4,000 units, started construction in 1941 and opened to its first tenants in 1943. The first phase of construction included low-scale, two-story buildings arranged in an innovative radial plan; the towers at the eastern portion of the complex were completed after World War II, in 1951. Parklabrea was one of seven housing projects developed in the United States by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, including Stuyvesant Town, Manhattan, New York; Parkmerced, San Francisco; Parkchester, the Bronx, New York; and Parkfairfax, Alexandria, Virginia. Metropolitan Life ventured into the housing market due to the desire of the organization for permanent investment projects possessing public value. The company had a "policy of making investment not only sound and enduring but valuable from the standpoint of public service."⁶⁹ It is rumored that, prior to World War II, President Roosevelt himself contacted the Chairman of the Board of Metropolitan Life to urge him to act to ease the severe housing shortage in the nation's capital.⁷⁰

Like other garden apartment complexes of the era, the premise behind Parklabrea was to create rental housing in a park-like setting. An early *Los Angeles Times* article reports that plans for the complex were "in keeping with the California climate for outdoor recreation," with only 18 percent of the land devoted to buildings and a view out of every living room into a large park.⁷¹ Although initially planned to contain only two-story dwellings, eighteen, 13-story towers were constructed in the eastern half of the complex in response to the post-World War II housing shortage. As such, Parklabrea is the only garden apartment in Los Angeles to offer high-rise living, which, according to many early proponents of garden apartments, was antithetical to the low-rise, low-density character that otherwise epitomizes the property type.



Park La Brea, c. 1944 (University of Southern California, Digital Archive)



Park La Brea, c. 1944 (University of Southern California, Digital Archive)



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Aerial images of Carmelitos (top) and Park La Brea (bottom) show a contrast in density among two garden apartment complexes. Although initially constructed as a complex of two-story buildings in 1941-43, the Park La Brea towers were added in 1951 to meet the demand for housing in the postwar era (top: Cornell University, Special Collections; bottom: University of Southern California, Digital Archive)

Changing Priorities

The success of the Depression and World War II-era garden apartment developments spurred the construction of similar complexes on a large scale in the post-World War II era, as the housing shortage became more and more acutely felt in Los Angeles. In the late 1940s, the FHA renewed Title 608, which guaranteed developers 90% mortgages on multi-family housing which conformed to FHA guidelines, which favored garden apartments. Title 608 was intended as a temporary solution to insure defense and immediate postwar multi-family housing to ease the housing crisis caused by returning veterans. This made possible the relatively easy financing of large-scale private rental housing, and in the late 1940s several developers took advantage of this temporary extension to build garden apartments. With rumors that funding would soon be cut off, there was a race to get these garden apartments approved before the funding ran out. The two-year period of 1949-1950 alone saw the construction of at least a dozen garden apartments throughout the city, nearly always in suburban areas adjacent to arteries of the city's growing freeway system.⁷²

Post-1945 examples are clearly based on the Garden City planning concepts that shaped the early garden apartments; however, due to the urgency of the postwar housing crisis they are typically higher density with more emphasis on unit count than open space. As such, whereas pre-1945 examples averaged 10 to 20 units per acre, most garden apartments constructed between 1945 and 1955 ranged between 20 to 30 units per acre.

The following are known, extant examples of garden apartments that represent the theme, *Community Planning and Development: Garden City Planning Principles, 1937-1955*: Carmelitos, Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Avalon Gardens, Estrada Courts, Pueblo del Rio, Rancho San Pedro, Rose Hills Courts, Hacienda Village, William Mead Homes, Jordan Downs, Imperial Courts, Mar Vista Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, San Fernando Gardens, Nickerson Gardens, Wyvernwood, Dorset Village, Baldwin Hills Village, Parklabrea, Rancho Vega, Chase Knolls, and Lincoln Place.⁷³



Children of many ethnicities enjoy the spray pool at Aliso Village, 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

THEME: Ethnic Heritage and Segregation, 1937-1955

In these well-built and racially integrated units, children encountered one another in a safe, often convivial atmosphere. For a brief moment in Los Angeles, public housing was clean, comfortable, safe, racially integrated and, for many, highly desirable as a stepping-stone toward private homeownership.⁷⁴

That many of the public housing garden apartment developments in Los Angeles were integrated is extraordinary, as for decades restrictions had dictated where people of color were able to live. In 1948, Robert C. Weaver explained, "In Los Angeles, where racial covenants have a long history and were originally aimed at Armenians, Syrians, and Mexicans as well as Orientals, there is a new wave of covenant promotion. This time the Negro is the principal target. Old covenants are being extended and new ones promoted."⁷⁵

During the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Los Angeles's African American population increased by 25,000 people. By 1940, three census tracts in the Central Avenue district were between 86.7 to 93.4 percent black. It was in these districts that Los Angeles's African American population was concentrated.⁷⁶ In 1941 it was reported that "recent surveys have indicated that of an estimated 60,000 Negroes in Los Angeles, 62 percent of them are dependent upon some form of county, state or federal aid for a living, This factor, plus the exorbitant rentals their segregated condition forces



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upon them, has led to the development of a more serious housing problem among the Negro people than found among any other ethnical group within our city. On the basis of need, it would seem that the Negro should receive first consideration."⁷⁷

The booming defense industry of the 1940s brought another wave of African American migration, with a population increase of over 140,000 in Los Angeles County. Decent and affordable housing, without covenants or restrictions, became increasingly difficult to find. The public housing garden apartment communities of Los Angeles not only improved the housing shortage problem, but attempted to create optimum living conditions where families of many ethnicities lived in integrated communities for the very first time.

FHA and USHA

The FHA had standards and guidelines relative to how an FHA-insured community should be populated. The FHA requirements dictated that the existing social and economic background of the population in a given community would determine the most desirable type of housing needed there. The incomes of families within that community would need to be analyzed to determine the rents the majority could economically afford to pay, and the housing proposed should be designed for that specific market. They also asked that the ethnic makeup of the existing neighborhood be analyzed and used to determine the target group for the new community. The City Housing Authority concentrated primarily "on slum sites and giving preference in tenant selection to the racial groups previously in the site and the surrounding neighborhoods."⁷⁸

Rather than the creation of integrated housing, unfortunately, the outcome was the re-segregation of minorities, most notably in cities like San Francisco, Detroit, Cleveland and Philadelphia. Though these earlier communities were segregated, living conditions were improved. Robert C. Weaver, writing in his 1948 book *The Negro Ghetto*, said that "Pre-World War II public housing proved to be a boon to Negroes. It offered a ray of hope for escape from slum living conditions of the Black Belt. It afforded about 20,000 families deliverance from substandard housing and high rents. It permitted low-income families their first

opportunity for living in decent, new houses designed to meet their family needs and pocketbooks. It provided a setting in which it could later be proved that Negroes, when they had steady though low incomes, and decent housing which had been planned to serve the needs of an income group previously neglected by the building industry, display desirable rent-paying and property maintenance habits."⁷⁹

The two Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles projects in which Clarence Stein was involved—Carmelitos and Harbor Hills—were intended to serve only white residents. The third County project—Maravilla, now demolished—was designed for "persons of the Mexican race. Officials from the County Housing Authority naively claimed that not only would the development be segregated, but it would also be "built in accordance with the habits and customs of these people. Because this Project was planned for Mexican families, extensive study was given to the arrangement of buildings so as to provide ample space and facilities for neighbor groups to assemble."⁸⁰ Unlike the pleasant planned recreational facilities at Carmelitos and Harbor Hills, including playgrounds and splash pools for children, with horseshoe pits, shuffleboard and badminton facilities for adults, the designers of Maravilla gave the children crude areas for play "either on smooth pavement or on plain dirt," and provided a large area near the community building "left unpaved and reserved for such community activities as barbecues and the like."⁸¹ The County Housing Authority, like the rest of the local Housing Authorities around the nation, followed USHA guidelines which stated that the racial composition of new projects should match that of the neighborhoods in which they would be built.

In contrast to the national and County Housing Authority policies, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) was advanced in this regard, appointing Mrs. Jessie L. Terry, an African American woman, Commissioner of the Authority in 1939.⁸² The Authority had an innovative philosophy regarding the proposed makeup of its new communities. Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron, a Republican, formed a progressive Advisory Committee on Tenant Selection for the initial HACLA projects. Bowron appointed a large and diverse team which included African-American

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representatives from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. Other appointments included Ramon Welch of the Spanish American Congress, and other labor and Jewish organizations.⁸³

The Advisory Committee on Tenant Selection met with City authorities in 1940, advocating that the City create integrated housing projects, bending the USHA guidelines which were designed to foster segregation. For the first City housing project, Ramona Gardens, it was determined in December, 1940 that the existing population would be used as a guide to truly mirror the racial composition of families moving into the new development. Instead of using USHA guidelines to re-segregate the new community, this decision broke new ground, creating one of the first (if not the first) interracial public housing projects in the country. Though integrated, quotas were used to balance the makeup of the population.⁸⁴

HACLA made a bolder move in 1943, rescinding its racial quota policy based on the existing population of the community. According to Don Parson, this policy change was in response to pressure from the Los Angeles NAACP, the Urban League, Charlotta Bass and Leon Washington. Frank Wilkinson, the public relations officer of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, was quoted as saying he did “not believe that segregated housing projects contributed towards the making of a better world. He thought that learning to live together makes for a better understanding among all the people.”⁸⁵ Once the anti-segregation policies had been established, Los Angeles was said to have “the most enlightened, liberal and complete interracial policy to be effected anywhere in public housing,” according to the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing.⁸⁶

Depending on the existing ethnic makeup of the location of a new housing project, the applicants would typically reflect that composition. In HACLA projects, “the distribution of Negro residents in public housing units ranged from 2 percent to 25 percent in mixed racial areas. In predominantly Negro areas, Negro occupancy ranged from 85 percent to 100 percent.”⁸⁷At Hacienda Village, the non-segregation policy resulted in



Mrs. Jessie L. Terry, Commissioner of HACLA (City) in 1939 (from *Homes for Heroes*)



A youth festival at Ramona Gardens. HACLA offered many programs designed to foster community (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)



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Ramona Gardens Spring Festival, 1944 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)



A Youth Director and his young friends at Ramona Gardens, 1941 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

the following description of its population: “55 percent Negro; 30 percent white, and 15 percent Mexican. We lose all thought of race when filling a vacancy; we think only of first come, first served. The result being that one building may be housing a Negro, white and Mexican family. No excuse or explanations for racial groups living here are ever given.”⁸⁸ HACLA’s progressive ideals also offered housing to non-U.S. citizens (primarily non-naturalized Mexican citizens) by amending the FHA Act to allow “allied and friendly aliens” admitted to the Ramona Gardens, Aliso Village, Estrada Courts, and Pico Gardens housing projects.⁸⁹

Though HACLA’s policies were miles ahead of other Housing Authorities around the country, they curiously did not extend to Asian Americans living in Los Angeles. Even though many in this population were also living in sub-standard housing, only two Japanese Americans applied to live in Ramona Gardens. Charlotte Brooks explains that “over one hundred Japanese American families on the east side alone qualified for Ramona Gardens because of their low incomes and poor housing. This apparent lack of interest simply reinforced the assumptions of social service workers, who tended to praise both Chinese and Japanese Angelenos as taking care of their own and staying out of trouble.”⁹⁰

Positive Effects

As World War II was drawing to a close, HACLA had made great progress in establishing positive and inclusive communities. By 1944, more than 2,500 African-Americans and over 1,400 other non-white ethnic citizens were living in HACLA housing, representing a total of 35% of the entire HACLA population.

And by all accounts they were living agreeably. “In all developments containing percentages of Negro families living alongside of white families and with other racial groups, there has been a harmonious relationship free from intolerance and discrimination. In one of the projects, the writer saw a series of photographs representing the work of clubs, mothers’ groups, nurseries, in which the members of the different racial groups participate on a voluntary basis, with a mutual interest in common problems.”⁹¹

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Young ladies plant a tree at Pueblo del Rio, 1942 (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

HACLA trained its employees with programs designed to help ensure that racial harmony and participation would be facilitated, not only within the housing developments, but also with the surrounding community.⁹² An important component of this program was the clear understanding that the management would do everything in its power to ensure harmony within its population. A letter was sent by the chairman of HACLA to every resident of Aliso Village, which included the following text:

In order to provide sufficient and adequate housing for all war workers, the Federal government has constructed this development... In these homes, as in the factories turning out vital materials for the frontline battlefields, will come American citizens of all races, creeds and color from

all sections of the country... Aliso Village, therefore, in accordance with the policy of the Federal government and of this Authority, will house all Americans who are engaged in war work and who are in need of housing, regardless of race, creed or color. Any disturbance of the peace which is occasioned by intolerance of any kind will be interpreted as obstructing the war effort and will cause immediate termination of the lease of the offending party. We feel certain that we can count on you (and the members of your family) to avoid any word or deed that could be considered as intolerant.⁹³

In 1947, HACLA looked back and took stock of its efforts. "It was modest enough to realize that the



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Relaxing on the expansive lawns at Pueblo del Rio, c. 1944
(Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

Authority was but one of many agencies, public and private, making a contribution to intergroup understanding and civic unity. Yet it could report that it had made a 'substantial contribution' to these aims. First, the non-discrimination and non-segregation policy was reflected in resident councils composed of various racial and nationality groups. Also, the enlightened racial policy of the Authority had been felt in the communities surrounding its projects, 'both by setting an example of how integration can be accomplished and, more directly, by opening community facilities to non-residents and giving them the experience of sharing in integrated activities.'" The report stated:

*The Los Angeles City Authority's policy of non-discrimination and non-segregation has been reasonably successful. Its experience indicates that such policy, inaugurated at the time of initial occupancy and followed consistently, does work. Integration of varied racial and inter-cultural groups living in developments has been accepted both by the residents and the community. Again it should be stressed that integration cannot be developed without full community participation.*⁹⁴

The following are known, extant examples of garden apartments that represent the theme, *Ethnic Heritage and Segregation, 1937-1955*: Ramona Gardens, Hacienda Village, Estrada Courts, Estrada Courts Annex, Rose Hill Courts, Pueblo Del Rio, William Mead Homes, Jordan Downs and Imperial Courts.⁹⁵



The one-story bungalow constructed of Adoblar brick at Baldwin Hills Village pays homage to the architecture of California's past, c. 1944 (Cornell University, Special Collections)

CONTEXT: Architecture and Designed Landscapes

THEME: Important Architects, 1937-1955

In these houses and the surrounding open space it is easy to live the kind of life people in Southern California seek in the present time. This, it seems to me, makes the buildings contemporary architecture far more than could any veneer of stylized "modern."

-Clarence Stein, *Toward New Towns for America*⁹⁶

The definition of architectural style of the buildings that comprise garden apartment complexes presents some difficulty, as the buildings were intentionally understated and modest. Rather, the holistic design process focused predominantly on site plan, circulation, color palette, shadow, and landscape to create visual interest. The buildings themselves reflect the concept of "functional modernism" and the belief that they should draw as much as possible upon the utilitarian ideals of European architectural precedents in public housing. David J. Witmer said that "in a housing community of such extent it seemed essential to keep the exterior design of the buildings simple and straightforward for enduring

appeal, and to rely upon proportion and silhouette and a moderate variety of simple detail to relieve monotony, with the clean lines of modern building coupled with the restrained suggestion of traditional design, light and cheerful colors."⁹⁷

When applying "decorative" styles, the architects typically conjured minimalistic versions of regional styles, such as Monterey Colonial Revival, American Colonial Revival, and California Ranch, often with subtle modern touches. Garden apartments are often classified as Mid-century Modern, Vernacular Modern or Minimal Traditional in style, and none of these



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A group of architects holds markers bearing the names of their housing projects, c. 1950. Robert Alexander and Richard Neutra are at the center of the group, standing. (Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

classifications are wholly appropriate. Rather, the buildings are “modern” in concept but ultimately (and perhaps deliberately) unclassifiable.

This is a particularly remarkable concept when considering the caliber of architects who were behind the designs of garden apartments in Los Angeles. Richard Neutra, Reginald D. Johnson, Roland E. Coate, H. Roy Kelley, Ralph C. Flewelling, Lloyd Wright and Paul R. Williams are today considered master architects at the forefront of their respective architectural movements, whether historicist or forward looking. These architects designed grand homes for Los Angeles’s wealthiest residents. Their ability and willingness to produce the modest designs of garden apartment dwellings conveys both a humility and readiness to forego stylistic ownership for the betterment of the collaboration that is perhaps not always associated with master architects.

Although the buildings are deliberately simple in appearance, they often represent innovations in mass production building techniques, which cut down on construction costs and schedules. Due to the enormous scale of these projects, architects and engineers worked to streamline the construction process by creating a

standardized set of components that could be reused in different configurations throughout the project site. For instance, at Wyvernwood, the following innovations were employed: “ready-mixed concrete for foundations; standard, demountable, steel and plywood forms which were used over and over again; exceptionally accurate installation of rough framing to receive mill work with a minimum of fitting; prefitted, premortised windows and doors; and site-fabricated roof trusses were all employed for their small unit savings which add up to huge totals when applied to the project as a whole.”⁹⁸ In addition, by purchasing building materials in the vast quantities necessary, it was possible to “buy a far superior quality of equipment and materials when building 1,000 apartments than when building a dozen or so.”⁹⁹

The following is a list of master architects who were involved in the development, design and planning of multiple garden apartments in Los Angeles from 1937 to 1955.¹⁰⁰

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Clarence Stein, FAIA (1882-1975)

Clarence S. Stein, one of the 20th century's most profound visionaries, led groundbreaking innovations in urban planning and is widely credited with bringing the Garden City Movement to the United States. Through his work with the RPAA and on the pioneering garden communities of Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York; Radburn, New Jersey; and Greenbelt, Maryland, Stein was hired by the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles to serve as the consulting architect on its first two projects: Carmelitos and Harbor Hills. Concurrently with this work, Clarence Stein was also acting as consulting architect for Baldwin Hills Village in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. These three housing developments, which still exist, are significant examples of the work of Clarence Stein on the west coast.



Clarence Stein (left) and Reginald Johnson (right) (left: Cornell University, Special Collections; right: from *Journal of the AIA*, Feb. 1953)

Reginald D. Johnson, FAIA (1882-1952)

After a long and successful career designing some of the grandest estates in Southern California, Reginald Johnson planned to retire at age 53. He accepted one last commission, for the Santa Barbara Post Office in 1936. According to fellow architect Robert Alexander, “[Johnson] had won all the honors to which most professional men aspire. He felt that this was the end of a satisfying professional life, but, in the end, he found a new beginning. He grew young.”¹⁰¹ This “new beginning” was his profound involvement in the housing movement.

A few years earlier, around 1933, after visiting his friend Clarence Stein on the East Coast, Johnson became interested in housing reform. Touring the slums of Washington, D.C, he was appalled by what he saw. He decided to devote his energies to improving these horrific conditions, and the work gave him a newfound purpose. “For the first time, Reg[inald] saw people in architecture, and a subjective, universal social need for better homes. Humanity became his client.”¹⁰² Returning to Southern California, and partnering with architect Lewis E. Wilson, he took a very active role in the “social, economic and political disputes” of these explosive times. After studying the problems of housing, he became convinced that a public housing program “was the soundest immediate solution for the most neglected segment of the housing need,” personally



Both Stein and Johnson were on the design team for Baldwin Hills Village (in collaboration with Robert Alexander and Lewis Wilson) (Cornell University, Special Collections)



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Lewis E. Wilson (Wilson family archives)



Ramona Gardens, which was designed by Lewis Wilson in collaboration with Lloyd Wright, George J. Adams, Walter S. Davis, Ralph C. Flewelling, and Eugene Weston Jr. (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

investigating the local slum conditions, and leading groups on tours of the slums, hoping to gain their allegiance. "With steadfast conviction, he provided leadership and inspiration in the never-ending battle to clear slums and provide housing for people at the opposite end of the economic scale from his former clients."¹⁰³

Catherine Bauer and William Wurster said of Johnson that "in the whole international arena of housing and community planning, there has been no single leader more attractive, more creative, or more devoted than Reginald Johnson. In a movement fraught with bitter controversy and too-facile dogma, his humane idealism and basic freedom of spirit were particularly significant qualities. His influence will endure through everyone who knew him and worked with him."¹⁰⁴ Johnson worked on the designs for Harbor Hills and Baldwin Hills Village (with Clarence Stein), in addition to Rancho San Pedro for HACLA. Though he didn't become actively involved in the design of later garden apartment developments, he remained active and encouraging in the movement through the time of his death in 1952.

Lewis E. Wilson, AIA (1900-1957)

Lewis Eugene Wilson, trained and licensed as both an engineer and architect, was known less for his own architectural designs than he was for his innovative thinking and infectious enthusiasm for and success at motivating others. Additionally, he was admired for his fierce determination for the advancement of architecture and planning as social responsibility.

Wilson was involved in the fight for responsible housing from the beginning. In 1933, he submitted the first Limited Dividend Housing project for the city of Los Angeles, the PWA Garden Homes, which was a \$3,000,000 development (though unbuilt). He spent five months in Washington, D.C. in 1933 and 1934, representing the Beaudry Housing Project, a \$5,000,000 proposed PWA development, in collaboration with Reginald D. Johnson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, Donald B. Parkinson, and Sumner Spaulding. (Though not successfully built at that time, the project ultimately became Ramona Gardens with a modified design team.) While in Washington, he made exhaustive studies of housing projects on the East

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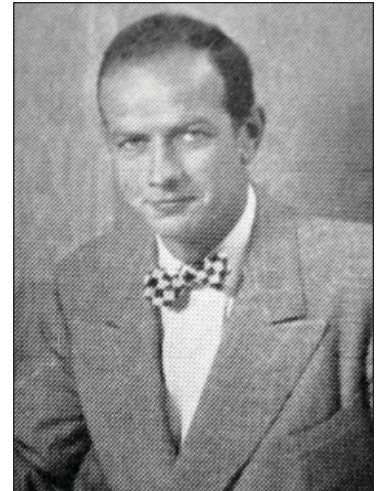
Coast. Most importantly, he assisted in the passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act (the 1937 Housing Act), which facilitated the creation of local housing authorities, from its inception in 1934 through its final adoption in 1937.

In 1940, Wilson became a member and Vice President of the Citizen's Housing Committee, a privately funded public interest group formed to promote the creation of better housing for both public and private ownership. During these years he frequently lectured on the benefits of the housing movement and garden cities to community groups and on the radio.¹⁰⁵ Highly regarded for his dogged perseverance and good business sense as well as his affable, good-natured disposition, Wilson was a popular and well-respected advocate of the emerging housing movement and went on to be affiliated with Harbor Hills, Aliso Village and Ramona Gardens in Los Angeles, as well as Baldwin Hills Village and the temporary defense project Wilmington Hall. During World War II, Wilson was the War Housing consultant for HACLA.

Robert E. Alexander, FAIA (1907-1992)

Robert Evans Alexander was hired by Lewis Wilson and Edwin Merrill and in 1936 was made partner of the firm, which became known as Wilson, Merrill and Alexander. By the mid 1930s, Alexander was increasingly interested in concepts of housing and observed upon moving to Los Angeles that "the Southern California scene I found was based on mid-western ideals of a farm house reduced by side yard, rear yard and front yard zoning to ridiculous 'ranch houses' cheek by jowl. The picture glass window facing the public street invaded family privacy. A man could shake hands with his neighbor while shaving. The garage was relegated to the back yard. I dreamed of turning the whole scene inside out, putting the automobile and the entrance in their proper places, minimizing the useless 'front yard,' and maximizing the joy of the private and secluded inner life. A beautiful but hybrid monster resulted, acclaimed by the outside world."¹⁰⁶

In terms of the role architecture had versus the role of civic planning, according to Alexander, "houses for the rich were for the birds and that 'housing' was a vast social and economic problem that might be solved by



Robert E. Alexander (from *Architectural Forum*, 1949)

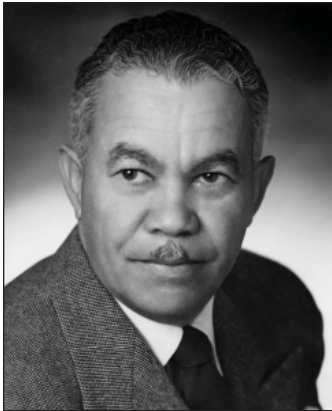


In addition to Baldwin Hills Village, Robert E. Alexander also collaborated on the design of Estrada Courts, pictured here (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



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Paul R. Williams (from the *Paul R. Williams Project Web Site*)



A rendering by Paul R. Williams for Compton Imperial Housing, which would become known as Nickerson Gardens (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

technology and economic manipulation and that my professional life work would be more effective tackling these problems."¹⁰⁷ He also wrote that "The form of the house is absolutely unimportant. In the field of form the community plan is the only important thing. It must have a head, a heart, a soul and a purpose... Tomorrow's client is the people and it is not a beast. We must take architecture to the people." Later, in writing about the fact that Baldwin Hills Village was created in a spirit of investment rather than speculation, he said that "we were investing in the common good, in architectural innovation, in the future of Los Angeles. We weren't out to turn a gigantic profit."¹⁰⁸

In addition to Baldwin Hills Village, Alexander was affiliated with Estrada Courts, and the unbuilt Elysian Park Heights project in Chavez Ravine, in collaboration with Richard Neutra, with whom he formed a partnership from 1949 until 1958.

Paul R. Williams, FAIA (1894-1980)

Although most commonly known as the designer of elegant homes for some of Los Angeles's wealthiest (and at times, most famous) clients, Paul R. Williams devoted much of his energies during the Depression and World War II to socially responsible housing. As early as 1933, Williams was appointed commissioner of the National Board of Municipal Housing, and in Los Angeles, he was a member of the Housing Commission from 1933 through 1941. He was also associate architect with the Federal Negro Housing Project in Washington, D.C., and maintained an office there for several years.¹⁰⁹ His first opportunity to design a public housing project was Langston Terrace, with Hilyard Robinson, in Washington, D.C., of 1936, the first federally funded public housing project."¹¹⁰

In Los Angeles, Williams collaborated on the designs for Pueblo del Rio, Nickerson Gardens and Hacienda Village, as well as the privately-funded Rancho Vega defense housing community.

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Richard Neutra, FAIA (1892-1970)

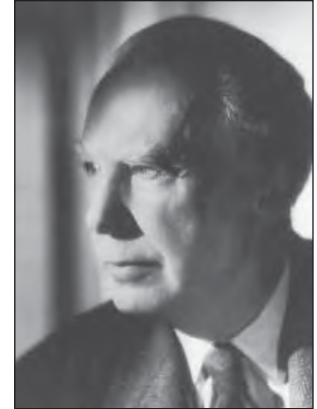
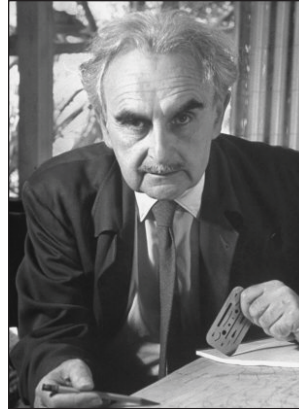
Arguably one of the most significant modern architects of all time, Richard Joseph Neutra was born in 1892 in Vienna. He moved to Los Angeles at the urging of his friend and fellow Viennese architect Rudolf M. Schindler in 1923. Throughout the 1930s, Neutra was relatively busy creating International Style residences – both modest and grand - for progressive clients, mostly around Los Angeles (though as far away as Texas, New York and Portland). By the mid 1930s, however, Neutra began to “dream of designing large-scale, high-quality housing for low-income workers.”¹¹¹

His sensitivity to site, emphasis on strong indoor/outdoor relationships (creating functional, usable outdoor living spaces), and strong social ethic made him particularly adept at the successful designs for the garden apartment communities of Maravilla, Pueblo del Rio, Hacienda Village, Channel Heights, and the unbuilt Chavez Ravine project. After World War II, Neutra partnered with architect Robert E. Alexander until 1958.

Lloyd Wright (1890-1978)

The son of legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (known as Lloyd) was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1890. Wright began his career as a landscape architect, joining the Olmsted Brothers in Boston as a draftsman. Moving to Southern California in 1911, Wright worked briefly as a landscape architect and draftsman for Irving Gill, later partnering with landscape architect Paul G. Thiene in Los Angeles.¹¹² After working on landscape designs for his father on a few projects in Los Angeles, Wright began working as an architect in 1920.

After completing many notable projects (the Hollywood Bowl; the Taggart, Navarro, and Sowden residences; in addition to his own residence/studio) through the beginning of the Great Depression, in 1934 Lloyd Wright joined a team consisting of architects (including George J. Adams, Walter S. Davis, and Ralph C. Flewelling) planning a slum clearance project known as the Utah Street Project (later completed as Aliso Village).¹¹³ Even in these earliest stages of the garden apartment development, Wright recognized the importance of early involvement with a landscape architect, investigating prospective collaborators



Richard Neutra (left) and Lloyd Wright (right) (left: from the L.A. Junction Web Log; right: from Alan Weintraub, *Lloyd Wright, the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.*)



Pueblo del Rio, which was designed by Richard Neutra in collaboration with Paul R. Williams, Adrian Wilson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, and Wurdeman & Beckett.



Lloyd Wright was on the design team for Ramona Gardens, pictured above (from *Architectural Forum*, May 1942)



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David Witmer (left) and Loyall F. Watson (right) (*Los Angeles Times*)



Witmer & Watson collaborated on the design of Wyvernwood, the first garden apartment in Los Angeles (early Wyvernwood brochure, courtesy Los Angeles Conservancy)

(finally choosing the firm of Bashford and Barlow).¹¹⁴ In addition to Aliso Village, Wright collaborated on the design of Ramona Gardens.

David J. Witmer, AIA (1888-1973) & Loyall F. Watson, AIA (1885-1960)

The firm of Witmer & Watson created the garden apartment communities of Wyvernwood and Estrada Courts. The firm was highly regarded for their simple and restrained residences, large and small, all over Southern California, usually with a strong indoor/outdoor relationship and frequently in close collaboration with a landscape architect. From 1934 to 1938, Watson was Supervisor of Architecture for the Southern California District of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), often speaking on the benefits of the application of the FHA. Because of this, he became an expert on FHA building and funding requirements, making him ideally adept later at getting the Wyvernwood project – the first of its kind in Southern California – through the difficult approval process. Witmer & Watson, in collaboration with architects Robert E. Alexander and Winchton Risley, designed the adjacent Estrada Courts for the City Housing Authority in 1942.



At Baldwin Hills Village, landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. collaborated with the design team to offer both public and private interaction with the landscape. c. 1944 (Cornell University, Special Collections)

THEME: Designed Landscapes, 1937-1955

Often we stand and just look out at the green through the large front windows. It refreshes the spirit, calms the inner upheavals brought on by the impact of war news, rests the eyes and brings a fleeting calm to jangled nerves.

- Early Baldwin Hills Village resident, Helen Spears, in 1944

The architects of garden apartments worked earnestly to provide the optimum in housing through their designs of the built features of these complexes, though that was only part of the picture. Housing advocate Langdon W. Post explained, “the walls, the floors and the ceilings do not constitute the whole job. Playgrounds, air and sunshine, neighborhood improvement, all are... conferred upon the community.”¹¹⁶ In the most

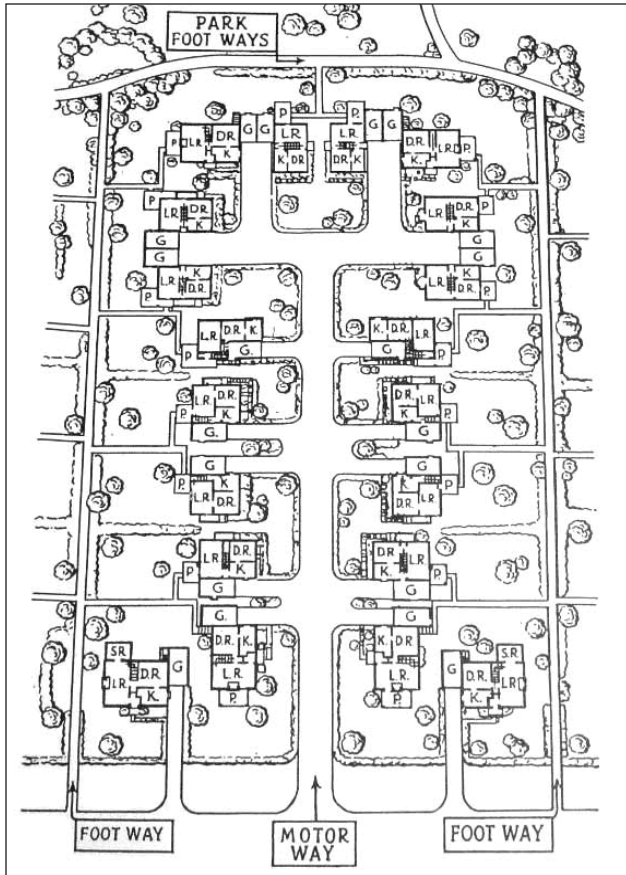
successful of these garden apartments, the results were a brilliant integration of not only architecture and planning, but also, and perhaps most importantly, of landscape architecture.

From the very beginning of the Garden City Movement, the landscape and the inclusion of a good landscape architect on the design team, was of prime importance.



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At Radburn, houses are arranged in cul-de-sacs which kept pedestrian and automobile circulation separate (from Tim de Chant, *Per Square Mile* Web Log)



A pedestrian underpass at Radburn, which furthered the goal of keeping pedestrian and automobile traffic separate (Cornell University, Special Collections)

For planner Raymond Unwin, “landscape was not just a background to lives lived, it was a weapon of social change. Unwin’s vision was the communal landscape, one that promoted social interaction at every turn. In his creation of the Hampstead Garden Suburb in London, he realized the democratic landscapes the Garden City Movement espoused.”¹¹⁷ According to Unwin, “the most beautiful gardens of all I believe to be those in which some of the aims of the landscape gardener have been carried out on a simple and orderly plan, where the formal frame or setting has been provided for the display of the informal beauties of trees and blossoms and still or running water.”¹¹⁸

This call for simplicity and order in Garden City landscapes was followed by Stein and Wright’s favored landscape architect, Marjorie Sewell Cautley (1891-1954), who created uncomplicated, well-organized community spaces with an informal feeling. Cautley provided ample recreational facilities, creating a functional landscape that would be used by the community. To more seamlessly incorporate the new community into the existing landscape, Cautley favored the use of native plantings; at Radburn in particular, Cautley selected trees and shrubs native to the site, some even moved from areas on the site itself, giving the community a strong sense of place. She wrote, “it was the desire of the landscape designer to preserve for Radburn a part of the beautiful natural growth that is being destroyed so rapidly throughout northern New Jersey.”¹¹⁹

In Los Angeles, the landscape architects working on garden apartments followed the concepts of their European and East Coast predecessors and built upon their legacies. With innovative solutions, these landscape architects sought to fully utilize the available open space to create landscapes and facilities which would complement the architect’s vision for modern, human-scale buildings. They also believed that by providing easy access to fresh air, open green spaces, provisions for recreation, and opportunities for both privacy and community interaction, they would help create better lives for their inhabitants.

Landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell, who designed the landscapes for a number of the City and County

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Housing Authority garden apartments, including Carmelitos with Clarence Stein, believed that “with communities, as with individuals, appearance has a definite effect upon self respect, moral tone, pride, and those other things of the spirit that determine outlook upon life. Attractive surroundings invite proper living. If the component parts of a community are properly arranged, the logic of its plan will be reflected in an attractive appearance. Wisely chosen and carefully executed details, which fit into the large mosaic of the city plan, contribute untold values to the health, the moral, social, and economic values of the community.”¹²⁰

The landscapes for garden apartment communities for public housing came with their own unique set of challenges. Most of the developments were quite large but the landscape budgets small, which forced the landscape architects to find creative ways to design landscapes that were not only attractive but also functional. Quotas had been developed for the number of trees or shrubs per unit which should be used. Because the gardens would see much more traffic and abuse than a typical suburban residence, they had to be practical and hard wearing. Ongoing maintenance would be a concern, and as a result, several of the developments set aside large areas for the private use of the residents to grow vegetables, flowers, or whatever they desired. This helped cut down the maintenance costs by management.

This set of limitations made the landscape architects focus on simplicity and function foremost, though this wasn’t necessarily thought of as detrimental. This required planting that was streamlined and limited to those things “which are essential to proper enframement [sic], enclosure and screening.” Ralph D. Cornell wrote, “The original USHA policy of eliminating unnecessary frills within its housing projects has had a restraining influence on the predominant tendency to overstuff the landscape planting. In the main I consider this to be wholesome and a step forward. The necessity of making every tree and shrub count to its utmost cannot but lead to directness and simplicity of treatment that is basically functional and ultimately satisfactory.”¹²¹



A Pueblo del Rio resident watering plants in front of her unit (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



The simplicity and clarity of the landscape complimented the architecture, Aliso Village (from *California Arts & Architecture*)



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The olive trees and decomposed granite at Baldwin Hills Village make reference to the mystique of “Old California” (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

The earliest garden apartment communities in Los Angeles used the romance and drama of “Old California” as a theme for not only the architecture, but also for the design of the landscapes. Responding both to the natural existing environment as well as to local cultural history, these contemporary landscapes utilized plant materials associated with the invention of “Old California.” At Aliso Village for example, the landscape created by Fred Barlow, Jr. and Katherine Bashford was described by the *Los Angeles Times* as attempting to “restore much of the former beauty and some of the early California flavor it had when the tract flourished as a vineyard first planted by the Mission fathers. To the few pepper and eucalyptus trees that have withstood the test of time will be added such plants as the white oleander, California olive and walnut, Brazil pepper, live oaks, evergreen grape vines, various types of English ivy and crepe myrtle.”¹²²

References were made to the Spanish land grants as well, describing that because “the Aliso Village site was one of the original centers of the early Spanish

colony, all streets in the development will bear Spanish names.” Even the names of the projects harkened to early California – in addition to Aliso Village, there were Ramona Gardens, Maravilla, Pico Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Pueblo del Rio, and Hacienda Village.

These contemporary landscape interpretations of the feeling of Old California often incorporated native trees and plant species. This was a deliberate and practical consideration, because native California trees and plants would be hard-wearing, low-water and low-maintenance. The two landscape architects most closely affiliated with garden apartments in Los Angeles, Fred Barlow, Jr. and Ralph D. Cornell, both masters in their field, had extensive backgrounds utilizing native plants: Cornell in his years in partnership with native plants expert Theodore Payne, and Barlow working for the Civilian Conservation Corps at Yosemite. Slow growing and durable, natives were often mixed with other compatible drought tolerant Mediterranean and South African plant materials.

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Turf areas were included only where they would be functional. Fred Barlow, Jr. in particular was mindful to include grass areas only where it would be actively used by the residents. Barlow believed that “lawn areas in general, particularly in the more arid regions, should be confined to a minimum. A good rule is to plan only enough lawn for your actual use. Too many homes are set back from the street behind deep expanses of lawn that are costly to maintain and serve no purpose for any but the admiration of the passing public. There are many ways in which such an area can be treated other than planting it to lawn. Groundcovers are suitable where the area will not be walked on; paving of decomposed granite, water-bound and tightly packed, when tree shaded is very effective; and the use of some of the easily maintained native grasses and cover crops has much to recommend it in more rural settings.”¹²³ Barlow used groundcovers in innovative ways in his garden apartment landscapes, as a lower water and lower maintenance alternative to panels of turf. They also provided broad, architectonic panels with varying color and texture.

Though their styles differed, Barlow’s and Cornell’s landscapes for the large USHA projects enhanced the communities, and in collaboration with the architects, provided attractive and functional landscapes meant to foster community.

After World War II, as privately funded garden apartments were built in great quantities throughout Los Angeles, the quality of the landscapes changed. Because density was generally higher, many of the developments didn’t provide recreational amenities, instead using that space for more dwellings. Less-experienced landscape architects, or in some cases nurseries, provided the design for the landscapes, and the focus turned from functional spaces meant for active participation in the landscape to more traditional suburban landscapes meant to be enjoyed from apartment windows or from pathways. In addition, contrary to the previous focus on using native and drought-resistant plant species, tropical and sub-tropical plantings were used, catering to changing tastes in the post-war period.



Flowering groundcover and expansive lawns illustrate the variety of landscape at Wyvernwood, c. 1940 (from *Architectural Forum*, May 1940)



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The following are known, extant examples of garden apartments that represent the theme, *Designed Landscapes, 1937-1955*: Avalon Gardens, Baldwin Hills Village, Carmelitos, Estrada Courts, Estrada Courts Extension, Hacienda Village, Harbor Hills, Jordan Downs, Mar Vista Gardens, Nickerson Gardens, Parklarea, Pueblo del Rio, Pueblo del Rio Extension, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Rancho San Pedro Extension, Rose Hills Courts, William Mead Homes, and Wyvernwood.



At Baldwin Hills Village, the landscape design included several allées, which helped organize space (from Stein, *Toward New Towns...*)

THEME: Important Landscape Architects, 1937-1955

In lending unity and coherence to these developments, landscape work is playing a prominent role. Furthering the philosophy of economical construction, [these] projects are simple and utilitarian in architectural design. The skillful use of shrubbery and trees called for in the landscape treatment, however, eliminates any suggestion of plainness and severity. In this way the landscape architect supplements the building architect in attaining an attractive finished and complete effect, at modest cost.¹¹⁵

It is interesting to note that the majority of architects working on garden apartments in the early years of the housing movement in Los Angeles were widely known for their prescient belief that the early and complete collaboration with landscape architects was crucial to the success of their residential projects (Roland E. Coate, Reginald D. Johnson, H. Roy Kelley). Some architects (Richard Neutra, Lloyd Wright, Paul R. Williams) had even started their careers as landscape architects, and some would often serve as the landscape architect for their future work. This belief in and understanding of the important role of the landscape architect in site planning and the importance of their involvement from the outset made these early garden apartment communities, both public and private, particularly extraordinary.

In the design of garden apartment complexes, for the first time in the history of multi-family housing in Los Angeles, the landscape architect played a dominant role in the design team, as evidenced by the amounts they were paid for their services. At Ramona Gardens, for example, the combined salaries for all the Housing Architects Associated was \$14,292.50, the bulk of it going to lead architect George J. Adams (\$6,090). In comparison, the firm of Bashford and Barlow was paid \$7,000 for their landscape architecture services.¹²⁴ Landscape architects often collaborated on the site plan and were responsible for designing, preparing drawings and specifications for, and supervising construction of the lawns, interior walks and terraces, service areas, parking areas, fences, irrigation and drainage, planting, pools, and such other site surface improvements



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Fred Barlow, Jr. (left) and Katherine Bashford (right) (left: Barlow family archives; right: from the archives of Margaret Foster)



The newly-planted landscape at Harbor Hills, designed by Bashford and Barlow (from *Pencil Points*, Nov. 1941)

as agreed upon in advance by the collaborators. And finally, the landscape architects would design, prepare drawings and specifications for, and supervise construction of all outdoor recreation areas, facilities, and structures.¹²⁵

The following is a list of landscape architects who worked on garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles between 1937 and 1955.

Fred Barlow, Jr, FASLA. (1902-1953)

In Los Angeles, the landscape architect most passionate about and prolific at designing Garden City landscapes was Fred Barlow, Jr. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, he worked for landscape architect Paul G. Thiene from 1926-29. Beginning in 1930, began a 13-year collaboration with landscape architect Katherine Bashford, becoming partner in the firm Bashford and Barlow in 1936, after nearly two years working for the Civilian Conservation Corps at Yosemite. Bashford and Barlow became widely known for their restrained and often contemporary landscapes for some of the Southland's most impressive homes still being built during the Great Depression.

For many years beginning in the late 1930s, Barlow worked almost exclusively on the landscape designs for garden apartment communities in Southern California. Barlow, in collaboration with Bashford, designed the landscapes for six USHA garden apartments - Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Aliso Village, Avalon Gardens, and Normont Terrace. Fred Barlow, Jr. (without Bashford) designed the landscapes for several more garden apartments - Baldwin Hills Village, Dana Strand Village, Rancho San Pedro extension, and the Estrada Courts Extension. He also designed 30 temporary defense housing projects, including Portsmouth Homes and the Wilmington Hall Dormitories. Barlow was so invested in garden apartments that he moved into Baldwin Hills Village upon completion, living there with his family from 1942 to 1948.

Katherine Bashford, FASLA (1885-1953)

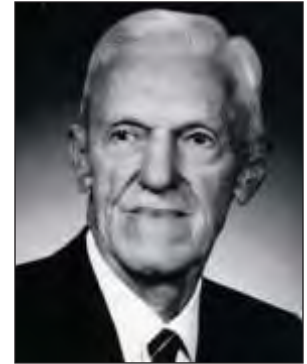
Fred Barlow, Jr's partner, Katherine Bashford, was born in Prescott, Arizona, in 1885 and as a teenager moved with her family to Los Angeles. A self-taught landscape

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architect, Bashford's first professional experience was with Florence Yoch beginning in 1921. In 1923, Bashford opened her own office and throughout the 1920s and 30s was highly sought after by the leading architects of the day for her landscapes for the grand estates being created in Southern California during that time. Bashford was elected Fellow of the ASLA in 1936. In the last phase of her career, in partnership with Fred Barlow, Jr., Bashford collaborated on the landscapes for six large-scale garden apartment communities for the United States Housing Authority: Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Aliso Village, Avalon Gardens, and Normont Terrace. Katherine Bashford retired in 1943.



Thomas D. Church (left) and Ralph D. Cornell (right) (left: Marc Treib, *Thomas Church, Landscape Architect*; right: from The Cultural Landscape Foundation Web Site)

Thomas D. Church, FASLA (1902-1978)

Considered by many to be one of the finest landscape architects of the twentieth century, Thomas Dolliver Church was born in Boston in 1902, and raised in California. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, he got his master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. After travelling through Europe and a short stint teaching, he moved to San Francisco in 1932 and opened his landscape practice. Known primarily for his increasingly modern landscapes for residences not only in California but throughout the United States, Thomas Church did the landscape design for the Valencia Gardens garden apartments for the San Francisco Housing Authority (Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons). He also did the landscape for the large-scale privately funded garden apartments for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in San Francisco, Parkmerced. In Los Angeles, Church designed the landscape for the second phase of the Parklabrea project in 1951.



An aerial image of Park La Brea, c. 1952. The landscape was designed by Thomas D. Church (Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)

Ralph D. Cornell, FASLA (1890-1972)

Ralph D. Cornell was born in Nebraska in 1890, moving with his family to California when he was eighteen years old. Graduating first from Pomona College, he went on to earn a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture from Harvard. After serving with the Army in World War I, he returned to Los Angeles to open up his landscape design firm. After a period in association with native plant advocate Theodore Payne through the 1920s and 30s, sometimes in collaboration with others, Cornell created the landscapes for

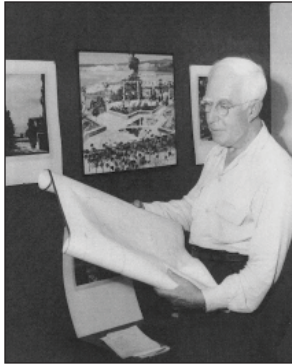


The landscape at Hacienda Village, shown here circa 1950, was designed by Ralph Cornell (Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research)



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Hammond Sadler (left) and Tommy Tomson (right) (left: archives of Suzanne Sadler Stone; right: archives of Duchess Tomson Emerson)



The landscape at Rose Hill Courts was designed by Hammond Sadler (c. 1944, Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Collection)



The landscape for the first phase of Park La Brea was designed by Tommy Tomson (University of Southern California, Digital Archive)

countless residences, estates, parks, and schools, often with an emphasis on using native plants and trees. After creating the landscape for Carmelitos, Clarence Stein's first garden apartment community in Southern California, Cornell went on to create landscape designs for six other garden apartments for the County and City Housing Authorities of Los Angeles: Maravilla, Pico Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, William Mead Homes, Hacienda Village, Nickerson Gardens and Victory Park. He also designed many temporary defense projects for USHA during World War II.

Hammond Sadler, FASLA (1886-1958)

Hammond Sadler was born in London, England in 1886. A few years after graduating from the University of Reading, England, Sadler moved to the United States to work for the Olmsted Brothers' firm, most notably at Palos Verdes Estates. Opening his own firm in the midst of the Great Depression, he designed many of the grand estates being built in Beverly Hills, Bel Air and Pasadena. With Sadler's experience in community planning gained while working with the Olmsted Brothers, he was particularly adept at handling the large scale plans for the landscapes of the privately funded Wyvernwood community, as well as the public housing garden apartments for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles at Estrada Courts and Rose Hill Courts, and the redevelopment of Jordan Downs circa 1955.

Tommy Tomson, ASLA (1900-1986)

Born in Zanesville, Ohio (with the name "Golden Sands"), Tommy Tomson came to Los Angeles in the 1920s. When a screen test didn't result in a studio contract, Tomson became a self-taught landscape architect. His first major commission was for the Santa Anita Racetrack, which opened in 1934. In addition to Los Angeles Union Station and the site plan for the city of Palm Desert, Tomson did the landscape designs for countless residences, many belonging to Hollywood stars. Tomson created the landscape for the largest of Los Angeles' garden apartments: Parklabrea (the first phase, in 1943).



Clarence Stein (standing, at left) directs the architects as they use wooden blocks in designing the site plan for Carmelitos, c. 1938 (Cornell University, Special Collections)

CONCLUSION

In the region of the future, the use of land should be planned with care – the home in relation to the entire neighborhood, the neighborhood in relation to the entire city, and each city in relation to the region. Natural resources should be conserved and protected, mountain forests, desert spaces, beaches, water supplies; areas must be set aside for parks, playgrounds, education and recreation; residential areas spacious and quiet should be protected from business encroachment, from dangerous highways; commercial areas should be located where they are accessible and convenient to customers; industry and manufacturing must have their rightful place, with opportunity for development, a place convenient of access for the workers, with transportation facilities for materials and products; and all these areas must be interconnected by the system of streets and highways and freeways.¹²⁶

-From "...and now we plan," exhibit by the Southern California chapter of Telesis, 1941

The garden apartments of Los Angeles were conceived at a singular moment in the development of Los Angeles, a relatively brief period between the waning years of the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II. Even though local and world conditions seemed grim, a critical mass developed which spurred a relatively small group of visionary reformers on a

course to reverse decades of poor planning in Southern California. With backing from the Federal government and a rare period of public support, these visionaries were possessed with a heady mix of optimism and solidarity.



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Clarence A. Dykstra, in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, optimistically believed that “Los Angeles, with its youthful vitality and because of our minimum of encumbrance from the past should be one of our first cities to point the way to this future – the city beautiful. It has all the elements in natural setting and resources, physical and human. There remains only the vital surge of civic well-to-do which comes with the realization of a worthy objective.”¹²⁷ That surge took hold, and for a few brief years, garden apartments in their purest form graced the Los Angeles landscape.

In 1941, *Los Angeles Times* art editor and critic Arthur Millier wrote, “Fifteen years ago most architects were content to put all their creative thought into planning a single house at a time. Scratch an architect today, however, especially a younger architect, and he bleeds community planner’s blood. He thinks, not of houses, but of groups, communities, cities, regions.”¹²⁸ It was this younger generation, with support from several older, seasoned architects, who believed in “an awakened social conscience directed to the making of a better world in which all men may have opportunity to develop to the maximum the powers with which nature has endowed them.”¹²⁹

The planners, architects and landscape architects involved in this movement believed that by incorporating garden apartments into a Master Plan of an intelligently planned Los Angeles, they could create a “community consciousness.” In any one of hundreds of existing poorly planned neighborhoods, “there is little neighborly contact, but rather a continual and often irritating consciousness of neighbors. The desirable neighborhood is one developed as a community in which the concept of home extends beyond the individual house and lot to the neighborhood; where an opportunity to participate in the life of the group leads to the development of a sense of responsibility for the whole.”¹³⁰ They understood, sensibly, that garden apartments were only one part of the larger scheme. L. Deming Tilton, in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, said: “A single school, or bridge, or well-planned subdivision cannot alone, no matter how meritorious individually, assure the proper organization and development of the community as a whole. Each item plays its part, but the highest returns are secured from

a composition in which there is a place for everything and everything is in its proper place.”¹³¹

Mirroring the opening scenes of Clarence Stein’s 1939 documentary *The City*, the reformers of Los Angeles believed that through organic community planning, life could be made simpler and more harmonious. By collaborating to create thoroughly planned and early examples of complete environmental design, “especially if it has a center for the activities of community life, we stimulate the revival of the traditional democracy of the New England village. A definite relationship existed between the plan of the village with church, school, shops, and houses clustered around a central green, and the town meeting in which all its citizens participated.”¹³² The garden apartments of Los Angeles represent the living embodiment of these ideals.



ENDNOTES

- 1 National Register Bulletin #16b, *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Washington, D.C.: Dept of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991 rev 1999).
- 2 For more information about SurveyLA, please see <www.surveyla.org>.
- 3 Except perhaps Arlington, Virginia, which has the largest known concentration of garden apartments in the nation.
- 4 Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: an Island on the Land* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1946) 135.
- 5 Stephanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles; A Typological Analysis* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992) 9.
- 6 Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1902) 48.
- 7 Charles Benjamin Purdom, *The Garden City: A Study in the Development of a Modern Town* (New York: Garland, 1985) 229.
- 8 National Register of Historic Places, *Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia 1934-1954* (United States Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002) E7.
- 9 Quoting architect and housing advocate, Albert Mayer. Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) 8.
- 10 Henry Wright, *Rehousing Urban America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935) xii.
- 11 Raymond Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice* (London: Adelphi, 1909) 164.
- 12 Henry Wright, *Rehousing Urban America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935) 30.
- 13 Roy Lubove, *Community Planning in the 1920s* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964) 61.
- 14 Clarence S. Stein and Kermit C. Parsons, *The Writings of Clarence S. Stein* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) xxiv.
- 15 Taken from Clarence Stein's article titled "Dinosaur Cities" (Survey Graphic 7, May 1925). Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) 134-138.
- 16 Peter G. Rowe, *Modernity and Housing* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1993) 103.
- 17 Gertrude S. Fish, "Housing Policy during the Great Depression," in *The Story of Housing* (New York: Macmillan, 1979) 196.
- 18 National Register of Historic Places, *Garden Apartments*, 17.
- 19 "Garden Apartments," *The Architectural Forum* May 1940: 309.
- 20 The success of Colonial Village coincided with the beginning of conceptual development of Baldwin Hills Village. Reginald Johnson and Lewis Wilson began collaborating on the Village in 1935, looking for a suitable piece of land on which to build. Robert Alexander did the first sketch of Baldwin Hills Village in 1935 as well. Federal Housing Administration, "FHA Experience With Rental Housing" *Insured Mortgage Portfolio* Vol. 4 (April 1940) 12.
- 21 "Multiple Housing Under FHA: Government Housing Standards," *Architectural Record* September 1938: 97.
- 22 "Garden Apartments" 309.
- 23 "Garden Apartments" 309.
- 24 Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000) 106.
- 25 Parson 8.



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HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

26 The following public housing developments were constructed in the City and County of Los Angeles as a result of the 1937 Housing Act: Ramona Gardens, Victory Housing Project, Avalon Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, Hacienda Village, Rose Hills Courts, Estrada Courts, Pico Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, William Mead Homes, Aliso Village, Dana Strand Village, Normont Terrace, Channel Heights, Wilmington Hall, Harbor Hills, Carmelitos, Maravilla, and Victory Park. All except Ramona Gardens were temporarily converted to defense housing during World War II.

27 Cuff 216.

28 Cuff 216.

29 Cuff 273.

30 Simon Eisner interviewed by Edward A. Holden, "Seven Decades of Planning and Development in the Los Angeles Region" Oral History Transcript, 1987-1989: Simon Eisner." (Los Angeles: University of California, Oral History Program) 70.

31 Don Normark, *Chavez Ravine, 1949: A Los Angeles Story* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003) 21.

32 The garden apartments named were Baldwin Gardens (mortgage loan \$2,868,400; \$481,400 over); Montebello Gardens (Wilshire-La Cienega Co. - \$1,675,803 mortgage; \$261,797 over); Hollypark Knolls (\$2,453,255 mortgage, \$161,745 over); Lincoln Place (\$5,025,400 mortgage, \$142,300 over); Chesapeake Rodeo (\$2,967,000 mortgage, \$80,500 over). "70 FHA 'Windfall' Projects Named," *Los Angeles Times* 12 June 1954: 5. The investigation was led by William F. McKenna, a Los Angeles attorney appointed by President Eisenhower. It was pointed out that Section 608 had "expired before the Eisenhower administration."

33 "FHA Past Work Lauded by Builders' Spokesman," *Los Angeles Times* 1 Sept. 1954: 2.

34 Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 1938) 5.

35 Parson 18.

36 Undated note (c. 1935) from Lloyd Wright to an unnamed assistant, requesting landscape architect's names from the Los Angeles Telephone Directory. Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

37 Letter from Lloyd Wright to Reginald D. Johnson and Lewis E. Wilson; Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

38 According to the CPI Inflation Index, \$900-1200 in 1940 dollars calculates to about \$14-19,000 in 2011. <http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm/> , accessed July 6, 2012

39 Stein and Parsons 387-88.

40 "Public Housing," *California Arts & Architecture* July 1941: 32.

41 Howard Holtzendorff, "Homes for Heroes" Los Angeles, 1942: unpaginated.

42 To illustrate the benefit provided by public housing, a 1941 article in the *Los Angeles Times* featured the first tenants of Ramona Gardens, in East Los Angeles. According to the article, Ralph A. McMullen, a member of the Housing Authority, welcomed the Foxman family, who had come from a small, four room house with no bath and a toilet on the back porch, which had cost them \$18.00 a month, excluding utilities. Their new apartment at Ramona Gardens was a new, five and one-half room unit, featuring three bedrooms, a built-in radiator, private bath and toilet, electric refrigerator, gas range, separate laundry tub, and room to park their car. The cost of the unit was \$15.00 a month, including gas, electricity and water. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Inflation calculator, 18.00 in 1941 translates to 281.41 in 2012, while \$15.00 equals \$234.51. "Housing Unit Gets Tenant," *Los Angeles Times* 3 Jan. 1941: 11.

43 Mel Scott, *Cities Are for People* (Los Angeles: Pacific Coast Academy, 1942) unpaginated.

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- 44 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 45 Scott unpaginated.
- 46 For detailed information regarding location, year of construction, design team, etc., see the attached spreadsheet in Appendix A.
- 47 "Labor Plans for Defense Housing," *California Arts & Architecture* April 1942: 22.
- 48 Parson 47.
- 49 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 50 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 51 Nicola Giulii, Chairman of HACLA, letter to Mayor Fletcher Bowron dated July 1, 1942 taken from "Homes for Heroes" by Howard Holtzendorff, unpaginated.
- 52 "Government Builds Big Hotel for Workers," *California and Western Medicine* Vol. 59, No. 2, 1944
- 53 A gymnasium and theater building was suitable for almost any form of entertainment from a motion picture to a basketball game. The Cafeteria served food for all shifts and a snack bar was open all night. Additional facilities included a music room, lounges, library, barber shop, laundry and cleaning shop, overseen by a staff of 185, giving complete "hotel" service. Furnishings included everything but toothbrushes and soap. The development was demolished at the end of the war. "Government Builds Big Hotel for Workers."
- 54 For detailed information regarding location, year of construction, design team, etc., see the attached spreadsheet in Appendix A.
- 55 Clarence Stein, *Toward New Towns for America* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1951) 27.
- 56 Scott unpaginated.
- 57 Parson 8.
- 58 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 59 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 60 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 61 "The Villager" *Baldwin Hills Village Newsletter* 15 Dec. 1943.
- 62 "The Villager" *Baldwin Hills Village Newsletter* 15 Dec. 1943.
- 63 Holtzendorff unpaginated.
- 64 "A Review of the Activities" 49.
- 65 "Life at Wyvernwood," brochure, 1939 (from the collections of the Los Angeles Conservancy), unpaginated.
- 66 "Life at Wyvernwood" unpaginated.
- 67 Baldwin Hills Village is known today as Village Green.
- 68 "Display Ad 29 – No Title," *Los Angeles Times* 2 Jan. 1942: B2.
- 69 "Parkfairfax," Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Archives, New York, NY. From Laura L. Bobeczko's "A Study in Decentralized Living: Parkfairfax, Alexandria, Virginia," *Historic Alexandria Quarterly*, Vol. III, no. 6, Spring 1997: 7.
- 70 Bobeczko 7.
- 71 "Insurance Company Maps \$12,500,000 Project: Housing Plan Disclosed" *Los Angeles Times* 4 Jan. 1941: A1.
- 72 In the FHA "Windfall Scandal" investigations of 1954, it was alleged that in 1948, an FHA official from Washington called 15 to 20 local builders to a meeting at the Los Angeles FHA offices, telling the builders that they could "build Title 608 projects without investing any capital." If this allegation is true, that might explain the number of garden apartments built in 1949 and 1950. "70 FHA 'Windfall' Projects Named," *Los Angeles Times* 12 June 1954: 5.



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73 For detailed information regarding location, year of construction, design team, etc., see the attached spreadsheet in Appendix A.

74 Josh Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 117.

75 Robert C. Weaver, *The Negro Ghetto* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948) 246.

76 Weaver 63-65.

77 "Negro Housing Problem is Critical," *Housing Headlines* 20 Feb. 1941. Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

78 Weaver 75-76.

79 Weaver 75-76.

80 The Maravilla community ultimately was represented by "many nationalities and several races" during World War II. "A Review of the Activities of the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, 1938-43" Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, 1944.

81 The structures at Maravilla were originally planned as one-story buildings "designed to simulate the early California adobe houses" with concrete blocks simulating the adobe bricks used by "Mexicans during the pioneer days." Wartime restrictions forced the designers to wood frame construction. "A Review of the Activities of the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, 1938-43," 63.

82 Mrs. Terry later became manager of Pueblo del Rio. "In 1940, Mrs. Terry had the signal honor of being one of three Negroes to be included in 'Who's Who in the New Deal.'" Holtzendorff unpaginated.

83 Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 77-78.

84 The only other housing project in California was in Oakland, "a community with a similar tradition of black political activism." Brooks 77-78.

85 Parson 1.

86 Sides 116.

87 Mignon E. Rothstein, *A Study of the Growth of Negro Population in Los Angeles and Available Housing Facilities Between 1940 and 1946*, (Thesis, Department of History, University of Southern California, 1950) 102

88 Weaver 190. At Pueblo Del Rio, built in an area predominantly African-American, the applicants reflected that. In 1947, the distribution was 94.2% African-American, 5.6% "other," and only 0.2% "anglo." While at Avalon Gardens, built in a location which had been historically white, the distribution was 94.9% "anglo," 5.1 % "other," and 0% African-American. Rothstein 89

89 Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 225-226.

90 Brooks 82.

91 Mignon E. Rothstein, *A Study of the Growth of Negro Population in Los Angeles and Available Housing Facilities Between 1940 and 1946*, (Thesis, Department of History, University of Southern California, 1950) 86

92 Weaver 189.

93 Weaver 189-190.

94 According to Josh Sides in *LA City Limits*, "whereas blacks represented less than 30 percent of HACLA's tenants in 1947, they accounted for 65 percent by 1959. The proportion of Mexicans rose too, though not as dramatically, from 15 percent to 19 percent. Whites, once the largest group of HACLA residents (55 percent), represented only 14 percent by 1959." Sides 118.

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- 95 For detailed information regarding location, year of construction, design team, etc., see the attached spreadsheet in Appendix A.
- 96 Stein and Parsons 202.
- 97 "Problems of Planning Large Scale Housing are Discussed by Architect," *Southwest Builder and Contractor* 14 July 1939: 12-13.
- 98 "Garden Apartments in Los Angeles, Calif.," *The Architectural Forum*, May 1940, 312.
- 99 "Large-Scale Developments Urged for Low-Cost Rentals," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1939: 9.
- 100 Full architect biographies are included in Appendix B.
- 101 Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A., 1882-1952," obituary by Robert Alexander, *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* XIX (Feb. 1953): 81-85.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Letter to F. A. Gutheim, AIA, from Catherine Bauer Wurster and William Wurster, 15 Dec. 1952.
- 105 "Chatterbox," *Los Angeles Times* 30 Apr. 1936; "Prominent Officials Talk on Open Forum," *Los Angeles Times* 23 Jan. 1938; "Housing Expert Gives Warning," *Los Angeles Times* 27 Mar. 1940.
- 106 Reginald Johnson was not the only one impressed with Robert Alexander's talent. After Baldwin Hills Village was completed, Alexander opened his own firm and had a long, successful career as an architect, and completed a great number of projects, both large and small scale. In fact, he became the most successful of all the architects involved at BHV after 1942. In 1949, he partnered with Richard Neutra, a partnership that lasted until 1958. He was also the only architect involved in BHV who was singled out and featured in the pivotal 1944 Pencil Points article introducing Baldwin Hills Village.
- 107 Parson 8.
- 108 Leon Whiteson, "The Village Green, its Designer Both Stand the Test of Time" *Los Angeles Times* 29 May 1990: E1
- 109 *Paul R. Williams Project* website, accessed June 18, 2012.
- 110 Hudson 25.
- 111 Hines 188.
- 112 Alan Weintraub, *Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.* (New York: Abrams, 1998) 272-273.
- 113 Letter dated August 17, 1934. Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Collection 1561, Box 44, Folder 1; Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA; Ralph C. Flewelling joined the group after 1934.
- 114 Undated note to Lloyd Wright, ca. 1934, listing practicing landscape architects gathered from the telephone book. Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Collection 1561, Box 44, Folder 1; Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- 115 "Landscaping Featured in PWA Housing," *The Architect and Engineer* Feb. 1937: 17-18.
- 116 Parson 43.
- 117 George Bull, "Rise of the Green City" *Landscape Journal* 26 Oct. 2011. Landscape Institute. Accessed 6 July 2012. <http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/news/index.php/news_articles/view/rise_of_the_green_city/>.
- 118 Unwin 125.
- 119 Marjorie Sewell Cautley, "Planting at Radburn," *Landscape Architecture* Oct. 1930: 24.
- 120 George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tinton, eds., *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan* (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941).



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- 121 Ralph Cornell, "Landscaping of Pueblo Del Rio" *Architect and Engineer*, September 1942: 21-22.
- 122 "Landscaping Plans Made" *Los Angeles Times* 23 Oct. 1942: 16.
- 123 Henry M. Hesse, *Homes for Moderns* (Hollywood: Murray & Gee, 1946).
- 124 "Housing Architects Associated – Audit of Accounts; April 3, 1939 to October 31, 1941. Eugene Weston, Jr - \$4,132; Ralph C. Flewelling - \$1,904; Walter S. Davis - \$1,546; Lloyd Wright – 522; Lewis E. Wilson - \$98;" Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Collection 1561, Box 44, Folder 1; Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- 125 "Division of the Responsibility Among the Design Professions", *Landscape Architecture*, July 1953, p. 173-8. This set of standards was a slightly revised version of the original standards, adopted by the ASLA on January 27, 1941, and published in the Winter 1941 supplement.
- 126 "...and now we plan," Brochure accompanying an exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum, Oct. 22, 1941 -- Jan. 18, 1942, unpaginated. Los Angeles County Museum of Art archives.
- 127 Robbins and Tinton 9-10.
- 128 "Now We Plan," *Los Angeles Times* 19 Oct. 1941: 13.
- 129 "...and now we plan," unpaginated.
- 130 "...and now we plan," unpaginated.
- 131 Robbins and Tinton 265.
- 132 "...and now we plan," unpaginated.



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APPENDICES



GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT



APPENDIX A: List of Known Garden Apartments in Los Angeles

Publicly-owned, extant

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
City of Los Angeles					
1941	Ramona Gardens 2830 Lancaster St.	East Los Angeles	Housing Architects Associated: George J. Adams, Walter S. Davis, Ralph C. Flewelling, Eugene Weston Jr., Lewis E. Wilson, Lloyd Wright	Katherine Bashford & Fred Barlow, Jr.	Baruch Corporation
1942	Avalon Gardens 701 East 88th Pl.	South Los Angeles	California Housing Architects: Carleton M. Winslow, chief architect; Roland E. Coate, Samuel E. Lunden, architects	Katherine Bashford & Fred Barlow, Jr.	E. C. Nesser Company
1942	Estrada Courts 3232 Estrada St.	Boyle Heights	Architects Associated: Robert E. Alexander, Winchton L. Risely, David J. Witmer, Loyall F. Watson	Hammond Sadler	H. Gorelink
1942	Pueblo del Rio 1801 East 53rd St.	South Los Angeles	Southeast Housing Architects Associated: Paul R. Williams, Adrian Wilson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, Wurdeman & Becket, Richard J. Neutra	Ralph D. Cornell	R. E. Campbell
1942	Rancho San Pedro 275 West 1st St.	San Pedro	Architects Collaborating: Reginald D. Johnson, A. C. Zimmerman, J. E. Allison, David Allison, H. Roy Kelley, James R. Friend	Katherine Bashford and Fred Barlow, Jr	Aetna Construction Company
1942	Rose Hills Courts 4466 Florizel St.	Montecito Heights	W.F. Ruck, chief architect; Claud Beelman, architect	Hammond Sadler	L. F. Dow Company
1942	Hacienda Village (now Gonzaque Village) 1515 105th St.	Watts	Planning Associates: Paul R. Williams, chief architect; Adrian Wilson, Walter C. Wurdeman, Richard J. Neutra, Weldon Becket, architects	Ralph D. Cornell	E. P. Dentzel
1942	William Mead Homes 1300 North Cardinal St.	Chinatown	Housing Group Architects: P.A. Eisen, chief architect; Norman F. Marsh, Herbert Powell, Armand Monaco, A.R. Walker, David D. Smith, architects	Ralph D. Cornell	Baruch Corporation



GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Publicly-owned, extant

(continued)

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
1944/ 1955	Jordan Downs 2114 East Century Blvd.	Watts	1955 Reconstruction- James R. Friend	1955--Hammond Sadler	1944--Zoss Construction Co. (?)
1944/ 1955	Imperial Courts 2214 East 114th St.	Los Angeles	1955 Reconstruction- John L. Rex		Dentzel & Whyte
1954	Mar Vista Gardens 11965 Allin St.	Mar Vista	Albert Criz	Eckbo, Royston and Williams	
1953	Rancho San Pedro Extension	San Pedro	Armand Monaco	Fred Barlow, Jr.	
1954	Estrada Courts Extension	Boyle Heights	Paul Robinson Hunter	Fred Barlow, Jr.	
1955	Pueblo del Rio Extension 55th St and Long Beach Ave	South Los Angeles	Theodore Criley, Jr. and Henry C. Burge; Robert E. Faxon, Associate; Armand Monaco	Wilbert I. Davies	
1955	San Fernando Gardens 10995 Lehigh Ave.	Pacoima	Arthur B. Gallion & Victor D. Gruen	Francis Dean	
1955	Imperial Compton (now Nickerson Gardens) 1590 114th St.	Watts	Paul R. Williams	Ralph Cornell	
County of Los Angeles					
1940	Carmelitos Housing Project 5150 Atlantic Blvd. Long Beach	Long Beach	Associated Housing Architects: Cecil A. Schilling, Kenneth S. Wing and C. Arthur Schilling, architects; Clarence S. Stein, consulting architect	Ralph D. Cornell	George A. Fuller Co.
1941	Harbor Hills Housing Project 26607 Western Ave. Lomita	Lomita	Associated Architects: Reginald D. Johnson, lead architect; Donald B. Parkinson, Eugene Weston, Jr., Lewis E. Wilson and A. C. Zimmerman, architects; Clarence S. Stein, consulting architect	Katherine Bashford and Fred Barlow, Jr	H.A. Nichols

GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

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Privately-owned, extant

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
1939	Wyvernwood 2901 East Olympic Blvd.	Boyle Heights	David J. Witmer & Loyall F. Watson	Hammond Sadler	Lindgren & Swinerton
1941	Dorset Village 3130 West Slauson Ave.	Ladera Heights	W. George Lutzi (and Allen)		Aetna Construction Co.
1942	Baldwin Hills Village <i>(now Village Green)</i> 5300 Rodeo Rd.	Baldwin Hills	Reginald D. Johnson, Robert Alexander, Clarence Stein, Lewis Wilson, Edwin Merrill	Fred Barlow, Jr.	Baruch Corporation
1944	Park La Brea 6200 West 3rd St.	Mid-Wilshire	Leonard Schultze & Associates, and Earl T. Heitschmidt	Tommy Tomson, 1943; Thomas Church, 1950	Starrett Bros. & Eken, Inc.
1945	Rancho Vega 10403 Edison Way	North Hollywood	Paul R. Williams		
1948	Century Square 2032 W. Century Blvd.	Inglewood			
1948	Crenshaw Village 4220 Santa Rosalia Dr.	Crenshaw			
1948	Fairfax Park Apartments 5720 West Jefferson Blvd.	Baldwin Hills	Hiram J. Hamer		Hiram J. Hamer & Yuna Howard
1948	Manchester Gardens 87th and Belford	Westchester	Martin Stern, Jr.		
1949	Baldwin Gardens 5802 Bowcroft St.	Baldwin Hills	Martin Stern, Jr.		Baldwin Gardens Co.
1949	Chase Knolls 13401 Riverside Drive	Sherman Oaks	Heth Wharton & Ralph Vaughn	Margaret Schoch	B.C. Deane & Gunether and Shirley
1949	Montebello Gardens Apartments 1st and Harding, Montebello	Montebello			Wilshire-Fairfax Buildings, Inc
1950	Belford Park Apartments 8809 Belford Ave.	Westchester	Martin Stern, Jr.		Halper Construction Co.
1950	Cienega Village 5710 South Fairfax Ave.	Ladera Heights			



GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Privately-owned, extant

(continued)

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
1950	Ladera Townhouse 6233 South La Brea Ave.	Ladera Heights	John C. Lindsey (architect) H.L. Standofer (engineer)		New House Building Corp.
1950	Lincoln Place 1042 Frederick St.	Venice	Heth Wharton & Ralph Vaughn		Union Housing Corp.
1950	North Hollywood Manor 6724 Tujunga Ave.	North Hollywood	Heth Wharton & Ralph Vaughn		Valco, Inc.
1950	Sunset Barrington Apts. 233 South Barrington Ave.	Brentwood	S. Charles Lee (original) Ternstrom and Skinner (remodel, 1962)		
1950	Verdugo Mesa 4269 Verdugo Rd.	Eagle Rock	Erwood Eiden		
1951	Chesapeake Rodeo Apts. 4500 West Rodeo Ln.	Crenshaw	Max Maltzman		W.E. Robertson, Co.
1953	Gloria Home Apts. 3700 South Nicolet Ave.	Crenshaw	Maurice H. Fleishman		R.R.R., Inc.
Outside of City of Los Angeles					
1948	Garfield Gardens 200 North Garfield Ave.	Montebello			W.E. Robertson, Co.
1951	Hollypark Knolls 3120 Hollypark Dr.	Inglewood	Max Maltzman		W.E. Robertson, Co.

GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT



Publicly-owned, demolished

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
City of Los Angeles					
1942	Aliso Village 1401 East 1st St.	Boyle Heights	Housing Group Architects: Ralph Flewelling, chief architect; George J. Adams, Lewis E. Wilson, Eugene Weston Jr., Lloyd Wright, architects	Katherine Bashford & Fred Barlow, Jr.	R. E. Campbell
1942	Channel Heights Western Ave. & 25th St	Harbor Area	Richard J. Neutra	Raymond E. Page	Baruch Corporation
1942	Dana Strand Village 401 Hawaiian Ave.	Harbor Area	George J. Adams, Graham Latta	Fred Barlow, Jr.	Myers Bros.
1942	Normont Terrace 990 West 256th St.	Harbor Area	Winchton L. Risley, Stanley Gould	Katherine Bashford & Fred Barlow, Jr.	William C. Crowell Company
1942	Pico Gardens 500 South Pecan St.	Boyle Heights	Project Architects Associated: John C. Austin, Sumner Spaulding, E. Heitschmidt, Henry C. Newton	Ralph D. Cornell	J. K. Thomas & Theodore A. Beyer Corporation
1942	Cabrillo Homes Housing Project 2001 River Ave.	Long Beach	Eugene Weston, Jr., Walter L. Reichardt	Geraldine Knight Scott	Zoss Construction Company
1942	Victory Park (Cal 4105)		Adrian Wilson and Theodore Criley, Jr.	Wilbert Davies and Ralph D. Cornell	
1942	Wilmington Hall 450 Neptune St.	San Pedro	Lewis E. Wilson & Armand Monaco	Fred Barlow, Jr.	Zoss Construction Company
1945	Portsmouth Homes 2323 Portsmouth Road	San Pedro	Kenneth Wing, Ralph Flewelling & R. Benedict Brout	Fred Barlow, Jr.	
1945	Western Terrace 1655 Seaport Drive	San Pedro			
1946	Rodger Young Village Northeast Griffith Park	Griffith Park			Baruch Corporation



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Publicly-owned, demolished

(continued)

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
1947	Basilone Homes Glenoaks Blvd	Sun Valley			William Radkovich Co.
1950	Banning Homes N. Gaffey St. and Anaheim St.	San Pedro	William Allen, W. George Lutzi		E. C. Nesser
1954	Aliso Apartments				
County of Los Angeles					
	Maravilla Housing Project 4801 Chavez Ave. East L.A.	East Los Angeles	Maravilla Associated Architects: Harold S. Johnson, Myron Hunt & H. C. Chambers, Walker & Eisen, and Hibbard & Gerity, architects; Richard J. Neutra, consulting architect	Ralph D. Cornell	

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Privately-owned, demolished

Year	Name and Address	Neighborhood	Architect(s)	Landscape Architect(s)	General Contractor
1948	Sepulveda Park Apartments 3217 South Sepulveda Blvd.	West Los Angeles	Harris, Rice & Campbell	James E. Boothe	Zuckerman & Morris
1949	Alvern Apartments 7061 Alvern St.	Westchester	Max Maltzman		Halper Construction Co.
1949	Wilshire La Cienega Gardens La Cienega Blvd. & Cadillac Ave	Mid City	Martin Stern, Jr.		Weber-Diller Building Co
1955	Airport Road Apts. 9440 Airport Blvd.	Westchester			Vons Investment Co.



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APPENDIX B: Architect and Landscape Architect Biographies

ARCHITECTS

Robert E. Alexander, FAIA (1907-1992)

Robert Evans Alexander was born on November 23, 1907 in Bayonne, New Jersey. Alexander earned his B.A. in Architecture from Cornell University in 1930. Following his graduation, Alexander studied at Académie Beaux Kinds in Paris, as well as in Italy and Spain. He moved to Los Angeles in the summer of 1930, moving back to Cornell briefly in 1933 to act as head coach for the freshman football team, and then came back to California to work as a set designer at the United Artists Studios during the height of the Great Depression.¹

Alexander was hired by Lewis Wilson and Edwin Merrill and in 1936 was made partner of the firm, which became known as Wilson, Merrill and Alexander. Alexander was listed as Architect and Production Manager for the firm. By the mid 1930s, Alexander was increasingly interested in concepts of housing and observed that upon moving to Los Angeles “the Southern California scene I found was based on mid-western ideals of a farm house reduced by side yard, rear yard and front yard zoning to ridiculous ‘ranch houses’ cheek by jowl. The picture glass window facing the public street invaded family privacy. A man could shake hands with his neighbor while shaving. The garage was relegated to the back yard. I dreamed of turning the whole scene inside out, putting the automobile and the entrance in their proper places, minimizing the useless ‘front yard,’ and maximizing the joy of the private and secluded inner life. A beautiful but hybrid monster resulted, acclaimed by the outside world.”²

In terms of the role architecture had versus the role of civic planning, according to Alexander, “houses for the rich were for the birds and ‘housing’ was a vast social and economic problem that might be solved by technology and economic manipulation and that my professional life work would be more effective tackling these problems.”³ He also wrote that “The form of the house is absolutely unimportant. In the field of form the community plan is the only important thing. It

must have a head, a heart, a soul and a purpose... Tomorrow’s client is the people and it is not a beast. We must take architecture to the people.” Later, in writing about the fact that Baldwin Hills Village was created in a spirit of investment rather than speculation, he said that “we were investing in the common good, in architectural innovation, in the future of Los Angeles. We weren’t out to turn a gigantic profit.”⁴

In addition to Baldwin Hills Village, Alexander was affiliated with Estrada Courts, and the unbuilt Elysian Park Heights project in Chavez Ravine, in collaboration with Richard Neutra, with whom he formed a partnership from 1949 until 1962. Like the rest of the Baldwin Hills Village design team, Alexander moved into the Village with his family, staying until 1951.

Reginald D. Johnson, FAIA (1882-1952)

Reginald Davis Johnson was the son of Bishop Joseph Johnson of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. Born in New York, he moved with his family to Pasadena in 1895.⁵ Reginald Johnson went to the East Coast for college; he attended Williams College and later got his B.S. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) in Boston. After graduating, Johnson travelled to Europe to study first-hand the Old World architecture, with a view to adapting these styles to the needs and modes of modern day America. By the time he returned to Pasadena to open his architectural practice 1912, he was well-grounded, educated, and his practice was a success from the start. His collaborations with Gordon Kaufmann and Roland Coate produced some of Southern California’s finest buildings. During his more than 25 years in architecture, he created houses, businesses, churches, and grand hotels of great distinction and elegance, including the “Milaflores” estate in Montecito, St. Paul’s Cathedral in Los Angeles, the Hale Solar Laboratory at Caltech University in Pasadena, and the Biltmore Hotel in Santa Barbara.

By the mid-1930s, after a long and successful career designing some of the grandest estates in Southern California, Reginald Johnson planned to retire at age 53. He accepted one last commission, for the Santa Barbara Post Office. According to fellow architect



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Robert Alexander, “[Johnson] had won all the honors to which most professional men aspire. He felt that this was the end of a satisfying professional life, but, in the end, he found a new beginning. He grew young.”⁶ This “new beginning” was his involvement in the Depression-era movement to better house the nation’s population.

A few years earlier, around 1933, after visiting his friend Clarence Stein on the East Coast, Johnson became interested in the housing movement. Touring the slums of Washington, D.C, he was appalled by what he saw. He decided to devote his energies to improving these horrific conditions, and the work gave him a newfound purpose. “For the first time, Reg[inald] saw people in architecture, and a subjective, universal social need for better homes. Humanity became his client.”⁷ Returning to Southern California and partnering with architect Lewis E. Wilson, he took a very active role in the “social, economic and political disputes” of these explosive times. After studying the problems of housing, he became convinced that a public housing program “was the soundest immediate solution for the most neglected segment of the housing need,” personally investigating the local slum conditions and leading groups on tours, hoping to gain their allegiance. “With steadfast conviction, he provided leadership and inspiration in the never-ending battle to clear slums and provide housing for people at the opposite end of the economic scale from his former clients.”⁸

Catherine Bauer and William Wurster said of Johnson that “in the whole international arena of housing and community planning, there has been no single leader more attractive, more creative, or more devoted than Reginald Johnson. In a movement fraught with bitter controversy and too-facile dogma, his humane idealism and basic freedom of spirit were particularly significant qualities. His influence will endure through everyone who knew him and worked with him.”⁹ Gregory Ain later said that he considered Johnson “a most extraordinary man, somewhat like Thomas Jefferson: civilized, cultivated and great social responsibility.”¹⁰

Reginald D. Johnson worked on the designs for Harbor Hills and Baldwin Hills Village (with Clarence Stein), in addition to Rancho San Pedro for HACLA. Though he didn’t become actively involved in the design of later garden apartment developments, he remained active and encouraging in the movement through the time of his death in 1952.

Richard Neutra, FAIA (1892-1970)

Arguably one of the most significant modern architects of all time, Richard Joseph Neutra was born in 1892 in Vienna. Though he studied under master architect Adolf Loos, after World War I he took a job with landscape architect Gustav Ammann, gaining background and knowledge in “botany, landscaping, and site planning that would serve him well the rest of his life.”¹¹ After working briefly for architect Erich Mendelsohn in Berlin, Neutra moved to the United States in 1923, working first for Frank Lloyd Wright as a landscape architect and then with Rudolph Schindler, with whom he and his wife Dione lived at Schindler’s Kings Road house. Starting his own architecture firm in the late 1920s, it was the iconic steel-framed Health House for Mr. and Mrs. Lovell that put him on the map.

Throughout the 1930s, Neutra was relatively busy creating International Style residences, both modest and grand, for progressive clients, mostly in and around Los Angeles (though as far away as Texas, New York and Portland). By the mid 1930s, however, Neutra began to “dream of designing large-scale, high-quality housing for low-income workers.”¹²

His sensitivity to the site, and his emphasis on strong indoor/outdoor relationships - creating functional, usable outdoor living spaces - made him particularly adept at the successful designs for the garden apartment communities of Maravilla, Pueblo del Rio, Hacienda Village, Channel Heights, and the unbuilt Chavez Ravine project. After World War II, Neutra partnered with architect Robert E. Alexander (Baldwin Hills Village, Estrada Courts) until 1958. Neutra continued in practice and died in 1970.

Clarence Stein, FAIA (1882-1975)

Clarence S. Stein, one of the 20th century’s most profound visionaries, led groundbreaking innovations in urban planning. Though trained as an architect, he was also a persuasive writer. Born, raised and educated in New York, Stein was primarily considered an East Coast figure, though he did have strong and early ties to Southern California. After studying architecture at Columbia University and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Stein returned to the United States in 1911, joining the firm of Bertram Goodhue in New York. Goodhue sent Stein to Southern California, where he worked as chief designer on several large-scale projects, including the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, California, and the master

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plan and individual buildings for the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena (where he met Reginald D. Johnson).

Stein moved back to New York in 1919 and in 1921 began a long and fruitful collaboration with architect Henry Wright (1878-1936). This charismatic partnership would produce some of the most innovative urban planning in the history of the United States. In 1923, at Stein's initiative, the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) was formed, in collaboration with Henry Wright and other members including Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and Alexander Bing. The goal of this group was to "connect a diverse group of friends in a critical examination of the city, in the collaborative development and dissemination of ideas, in political action and in city building projects."¹³ The RPAA had a profound influence on urban development through the prolific and effective writing of its members.

Stein's notable early projects include Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York; Radburn, New Jersey; and Greenbelt, Maryland. Due to the national acclaim of these early developments, in 1938 Stein was hired by the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles to serve as the consulting architect on its first two projects: Carmelitos and Harbor Hills. Concurrently with this work, Clarence Stein was also acting as consulting architect for Baldwin Hills Village in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. These three housing developments, which still exist, are significant examples of the work of Clarence Stein on the west coast.

Paul R. Williams, FAIA (1894-1980)

Paul Revere Williams, one of the nation's first African-American architects, was born in Tennessee and moved at an early age with his parents to Los Angeles, where they came hoping to recover from tuberculosis. Orphaned by the age of four, Williams kept busy drawing and it was his interest in art that led him to enroll in an architecture course at Polytechnic High School. Informing his instructor that he intended to pursue architecture, he recalled later that "he stared at me with as much astonishment as he would have had I proposed a rocket flight to Mars."¹⁴ Attending the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in Los Angeles, Williams would win the Beaux-Arts Medal, and later attended the University of Southern California to study architectural engineering. His first job was with urban planner and landscape architect Wilbur D. Cook, Jr., and it was here that Williams honed the skills which would later

serve him well designing successful garden apartments. He worked next for architect Reginald D. Johnson and then in the offices of architect John C. Austin. In 1921, Williams became the first registered African-American architect west of the Mississippi, opened his own office in 1922, and became the first African-American architect in the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1923. Almost immediately after beginning his practice, Williams became one of the most sought after architects of high-end residential homes, his clients appreciating his elegantly sophisticated and thoughtfully-designed homes. Williams often urged his clients to hire landscape architects, A.E. Hanson and Ralph D. Cornell in particular.

As early as 1933, Williams was "appointed a commissioner of the National Board of Municipal Housing, and in Los Angeles, he was a member of the Housing Commission from 1933 through 1941. He was also associate architect with the Federal Negro Housing Project in Washington, D.C., and maintained an office there for several years."¹⁵ His first role as architect on a public housing project was at Langston Terrace in Washington, D.C. (1936), with Hilyard Robinson. Langston Terrace was the first federally-funded public housing project.¹⁶

In Los Angeles, Williams collaborated on the designs for the Pueblo del Rio and Hacienda Village, as well as the privately funded Rancho Vega defense housing communities. During World War II, Williams served as an architect for the U.S. Navy.¹⁷

After World War II, Williams continued to design exclusive homes, mass-produced tract communities, businesses, hotels, department stores, etc. According to David Gebhard, "the self-assured atmosphere and knowing correctness of his designs has made them continuously popular, not only with the upper middle class, but also with his fellow architects. Williams was, without question, one of America's foremost architects of those years, and while this is in part an affirmative comment on the slow transformation of racial relations experienced in the United States, in the end it was due to Paul R. Williams' own gentle but strong perseverance."¹⁸

Lewis E. Wilson, AIA (1900-1957)

Lewis Eugene Wilson, trained and licensed as both an engineer and architect, was known less for his own architectural designs than he was for his innovative



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thinking and infectious enthusiasm for and success at motivating others. Additionally, he was admired for his fierce determination for the advancement of architecture and planning as social responsibility.

Lewis Wilson came from a family with a strong architectural background. His father George W. Wilson had been an architect in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, and both Lewis and his younger brother Adrian worked from early boyhood through high school in their father's office before Lewis continued on to college at the University of Arkansas. Lewis' brother Adrian Wilson went on to enjoy a long successful career as an architect, both in Southern California and abroad, and worked on the garden apartment communities of Pueblo Del Rio, Hacienda Village and Victory Park.¹⁹

In Los Angeles in 1924, Wilson formed a partnership with architect and engineer Edwin Merrill, creating the firm of Wilson and Merrill. Wilson was listed as Chief Architect and Engineer in the firm, while Merrill was documented as Architect and Office Manager.

Wilson was involved in the fight for responsible housing from the beginning. In 1933, he submitted the first Limited Dividend Housing project for the city of Los Angeles, the PWA Garden Homes, which was a \$3,000,000 development, though unbuilt. He spent five months in Washington, D.C. in 1933 and 1934, representing the Beaudry Housing Project, a \$5,000,000 proposed PWA development, in collaboration with Reginald D. Johnson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, Donald B. Parkinson, and Sumner Spaulding. (Though not successfully built at that time, the project ultimately became Ramona Gardens with a modified design team.) During his time in Washington, he made exhaustive studies of housing projects on the East Coast. Most importantly, he assisted in the initiative to pass the Wagner-Steagall Act (the 1937 Housing Act), which facilitated the creation of local housing authorities, from its inception in 1934 through its final adoption in 1937.

In 1940, Wilson became a member and Vice-President of the Citizen's Housing Committee, a privately funded public interest group formed to promote the creation of better housing, for both public and private ownership. Reginald Johnson was also a member, along with architect Eugene Weston and housing reformer Frank Wilkinson.²⁰ Wilson was also affiliated with the Los Angeles Housing Committee and the Metropolitan

Housing Council, in addition to other national housing organizations. He was later the President of the Home Owners' League of America, in addition to serving as consulting architect to the Los Angeles Housing Authority.

During these years he frequently lectured on the benefits of the housing movement and garden cities to community groups and on the radio.²¹ Highly regarded for his dogged perseverance and good business sense as well as his affable, good-natured disposition, Wilson was a popular and well-respected advocate of the emerging housing movement and went on to be affiliated with the Harbor Hills, Aliso Village and Ramona Gardens housing projects in Los Angeles, as well as Baldwin Hills Village and the temporary Defense project Wilmington Hall. During World War II, Wilson was the War Housing consultant for HACLA.

After World War II, Wilson designed the Baldwin Theatre adjacent to Baldwin Hills Village and collaborated with Clarence Stein on an unbuilt shopping center nearby. Wilson, who had moved into Baldwin Hills Village in 1942, died there in 1957.

David J. Witmer, FAIA (1888-1973) & Loyall F. Watson, AIA (1885-1960)

The firm of Witmer & Watson created the garden apartment communities of privately-funded Wyvernwood and HACLA project Estrada Courts. Loyall F. Watson was born in New York in 1885. Though little is known of his early life or education, he was trained as both a structural engineer as well as an architect. His partner, David Julius Witmer, was born in Los Angeles in 1888 and graduated from the Harvard Graduate School of Architecture in 1912. He began his own firm in 1914 and upon partnering with Loyall Watson in 1919, the firm became known as Witmer & Watson. The firm was highly regarded for their simple and restrained residences, large and small, all over Southern California, usually with a very good indoor/outdoor relationship and frequently in close collaboration with a landscape architect. From 1934 to 1938, Watson was Supervisor of Architecture for the Southern California District of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), often speaking on the benefits of the application of the FHA. Because of this, he became an expert on FHA building and funding requirements, making him ideally adept at getting the Wyvernwood project – the first of its kind in Southern California – through the difficult

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approval process. Witmer & Watson, in collaboration with architects Robert E. Alexander and Winchton Risley, designed the adjacent HACLA Estrada Courts in 1942.

During World War II, Witmer was named Co-Chief of the U.S. War Department and collaborated on the design of the Pentagon with architect G. Edwin Bergstrom.

Lloyd Wright (1890-1978)

The son of legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (known as Lloyd) was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1890. Wright began his career as a landscape architect, joining the Olmsted Brothers firm in Boston as a draftsman. Moving to Southern California in 1911, Wright worked briefly as a landscape architect and draftsman for Irving Gill, later partnering with landscape architect Paul G. Thiene in Los Angeles.²² After working on landscape designs for his father on a few projects in Los Angeles, Wright began working as an architect in 1920, becoming licensed in 1928.

After completing many projects (the Hollywood Bowl; the Taggart, Novarro, and Sowden residences; in addition to his own residence/studio) through the beginning of the Great Depression, in 1934 Lloyd Wright joined a team of architects (including George J. Adams, Walter S. Davis, and Ralph C. Flewelling) planning a slum clearance project known as the Utah Street Project (later completed as Aliso Village).²³ Even in these earliest stages of the garden apartment development, Wright recognized the importance of early involvement with a landscape architect, investigating prospective collaborators (finally choosing the firm of Bashford and Barlow for both the Aliso Village and Ramona Gardens projects).²⁴ In addition to Aliso Village, Wright collaborated on the design of Ramona Gardens. After World War II, Wright continued with residential projects (including the Jester, Newman, and Moore houses) as well as the Wayfarer's Chapel in Palos Verdes. He died in 1978.

Additional Architect Biographies

In addition to the formidable list of significant architects who designed garden apartments in Los Angeles, a number of lesser-known architects and designers played a significant role in the development of the property type. Although these individuals may not necessarily fit

the classification of "master" architect or designer, their contributions are worthy of note.

William Allen, AIA (1901-1986) & W. George Lutzi, AIA (1902-1994)

The firm of Allen & Lutzi created many garden apartment communities, both private and public, from 1940 through 1950. William Allen was born in Russia in 1901. Taking postgraduate classes in architecture and structural engineering, he worked from 1922-26 in various architectural firms before becoming a partner in the firm of Allen, Hillier, Sheets Architects, in 1926. After the Stock Market Crash, that partnership dissolved and Allen worked for different government agencies before meeting architect W. George Lutzi.

Born in Los Angeles in 1902, William George Lutzi took postgraduate classes in architecture and structural engineering and then learned the trade on the job while working for architect Clarence Small from 1920-30, and then for Paul R. Williams from 1930-35. He began his own practice in 1935, got his license in 1938, and began a partnership with architect William Allen in the firm Allen & Lutzi, also in 1938.

Allen & Lutzi's work consisted primarily of civic work, including the Burbank, Redlands and South Gate City Halls, countless fire stations, auditoriums, and schools, as well as "projects of a complicated nature for L.A. District Engineers of U.S. Corps of Engineers."²⁵ By the late 1930s, they began designing elegant hotels and apartments, evolving into increasingly larger scale garden apartment communities as the 1940s progressed, using a simplified version of American Colonial Revival style. During these years, Allen & Lutzi would work primarily with builder Ben Weingart, who owned both the Aetna Construction Company and Consolidated Hotels. Weingart apparently had a great appreciation for the garden apartment type, later buying the Wyvernwood community.

Collaborating with Weingart, Washington Gardens, a small-scale garden apartment development utilizing the typical street grid, opened at Washington Boulevard near Vermont Avenue in 1940. This was followed by Columbia Manor at 372 S. Columbia. These garden apartments placed "U" shaped two story structures into the regular street grid, creating groups of courtyard apartments with the latest amenities. The Edgemont-Franklin offered a series of spacious garden courts



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enclosed by “U” and “C” shaped housing groups.²⁶ These communities offered “all of the pleasures of a real home with separate entrance, lawn, flowers, plus Apartment House advantages.”²⁷

The following year (1941), also for Weingart, Allen and Lutzi designed a true superblock garden apartment community, Dorset Village. Dorset Village, an eight-acre early private garden apartment near Crenshaw and Slauson, consisted of 196 units in 26 buildings. “Adding notably to the new residential volume of Los Angeles, Dorset Village, a \$1,000,000 housing project composed of 28 two-story apartment-house structures, has been completed on an eight-acre tract... The 196-family rental project, whose structures contain six, eight and 12 apartments, is owned by Consolidated Hotels, Inc. The architecture is early American in style, with several different types of exterior, utilizing stucco, redwood and combinations of both these materials. Each building opens on landscaped gardens.”²⁸ They rented from \$40 and up per month, including a garage.

Another garden apartment project, the Peyton Hall Apartment Hotel, also from 1941, was a 2.7 acre community on Hollywood Boulevard. Later owned by actress Claudette Colbert, the Hollywood garden apartments were popular with film stars. Consisting of seven, two-story Colonial-style buildings on two acres, it had a tiled swimming pool which once graced the Norma Talmadge estate, formerly on the site.

In addition to the privately-funded Dorset Village, Allen & Lutzi worked on the U.S. Army Defense garden apartment communities of Banning Homes, Jordan Downs, Rose Hills Courts, the Dana Strand annex, Western Terrace Housing, and Rodger Young Village. After World War II, again with Weingart, Allen & Lutzi designed a large-scale garden apartment community, Crenshaw Village (1948). Lutzi dissolved partnership with William Allen in 1954. Allen died in 1986 in Los Angeles; Lutzi died in 1994 in Orange County.

Max Maltzman (1899-1971)

Born in Russia in 1899, Max Maltzman is most widely known for the dozens of luxury apartment buildings he designed in the 1920s and 30s, usually in Period Revival or Modern styles, including the Ravenswood in Hancock Park, Los Angeles, and the Charmont in Santa Monica. A building contractor as well as an architect, after World War II he designed a tract of 44 homes in Altadena before working on the garden apartment

communities of Alvern Apartments, Chesapeake Rodeo, and Hollypark Knolls. He then went on to design (and was general contractor for) the original Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas in 1952, as well as several more tract home communities in Fullerton and Whittier in the mid-1950s. Maltzman died in Los Angeles in 1971.

Martin Stern, Jr., AIA (1917-2001)

Born in New York in 1917, Martin Stern, Jr. graduated from the University of Southern California and worked briefly for Paul R. Williams before opening his practice in Beverly Hills in 1945.²⁹ He designed some early custom homes before his work on the garden apartments of Manchester Gardens, Wilshire-La Cienega Gardens, Baldwin Gardens, and Belford Gardens, before continuing onto other apartment buildings, both large and small, and office buildings. After a brief hiatus from architecture while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces circa 1950, he collaborated with architect William Cody on the Tamarisk Country Club in Palm Springs, multiple shopping centers, housing tracts, custom homes and Googie-style coffee shops. Beginning with additions to the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas in 1953, Stern began a long run designing countless hotels and casinos in Las Vegas through the 1990s. Martin Stern, Jr. died in 2001.



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Fred Barlow, Jr, FASLA (1902-1953)

In Los Angeles, the landscape architect most passionate about and prolific at designing Garden City landscapes was Fred Barlow, Jr. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, he worked for landscape architect Paul G. Thieme from 1926-29. Beginning in 1930, began a 13-year collaboration with landscape architect Katherine Bashford, becoming partner in the firm Bashford and Barlow in 1936, after nearly two years working for the Civilian Conservation Corps at Yosemite. Bashford and Barlow became widely known for their restrained and often contemporary landscapes for some of the Southland's most impressive homes still being built during the Great Depression. Collaborating through the 1930s most frequently with architect H. Roy Kelley, the team of Kelley, Barlow and Bashford would win many awards from the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Fred Barlow, Jr. was also instrumental in the creation of the Southern California Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), which was formed in 1937.

For many years beginning in the late 1930s, Barlow worked almost exclusively on the landscape designs for garden apartment communities in Southern California. Barlow, in collaboration with Bashford, designed the landscapes for six USHA garden apartments: Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Aliso Village, Avalon Gardens, and Normont Terrace. Fred Barlow, Jr. (without Bashford) designed the landscapes for several more garden apartments: Baldwin Hills Village, Dana Strand Village, Rancho San Pedro extension, and the Estrada Courts Extension. He also designed 30 temporary defense housing projects, including Portsmouth Homes and the Wilmington Hall Dormitories. Barlow was so invested in garden apartments that he moved into Baldwin Hills Village upon completion, living there with his family from 1942-48.

Later in his career, Barlow focused on large scale community planning and was most widely known for the landscapes he created for Harbor Junior College, UC Riverside and Hollywood Park racetrack. Barlow served as Vice-President of the National ASLA from 1951 until his death in 1953. He was posthumously elected a Fellow of the ASLA.

Katherine Bashford, FASLA (1885-1953)

Fred Barlow, Jr's partner, Katherine Bashford, was born in Prescott, Arizona, in 1885 and as a teenager moved with her family to Los Angeles. A self-taught landscape architect, Bashford's first professional experience was with Florence Yoch beginning in 1921. In 1923, Bashford opened her own office and throughout the 1920s and 30s was highly sought after by the leading architects of the day to design the landscapes for the grand estates being created in Southern California during that time. Bashford was elected Fellow of the ASLA in 1936. In the last phase of her career, in partnership with Fred Barlow, Jr., Bashford collaborated on the landscapes for six large-scale garden apartment communities for the United States Housing Authority: Harbor Hills, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Aliso Village, Avalon Gardens, and Normont Terrace. Katherine Bashford retired in 1943.

Thomas D. Church, FASLA (1902-1978)

Considered by many to be one of the finest landscape architects of the twentieth century, Thomas Dolliver Church was born in Boston in 1902 and raised in California. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, he got his master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. After travelling through Europe and a short stint teaching, he moved to San Francisco in 1932 and opened his landscape practice. Known primarily for his increasingly modern landscapes for residences not only in California but throughout the United States, Thomas Church did the landscape design for the Valencia Gardens garden apartments for the San Francisco Housing Authority (Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons). He also did the landscape for the large-scale privately funded garden apartments for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in San Francisco, Parkmerced. In Los Angeles, Church designed the landscape for the second phase of the Parklabrea project in 1951.

Ralph D. Cornell, FASLA (1890-1972)

Ralph D. Cornell was born in Nebraska in 1890, moving with his family to California when he was 18 years old. Graduating first from Pomona College, he went on to earn a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture from Harvard. After serving with the Army in World War I, he returned to Los Angeles to open up his landscape design firm. After a period in association with native plant advocate Theodore Payne, through the 1920s and 30s, sometimes in collaboration with others,



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Cornell created the landscapes for countless residences, estates, parks, and schools, often with an emphasis on using native plants and trees. After creating the landscape for Carmelitos, Clarence Stein's first garden apartment community in Southern California, Cornell went on to create landscape designs for six other garden apartments for the County and City Housing Authorities of Los Angeles: Maravilla, Pico Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, William Mead Homes, Hacienda Village, and Victory Park. He also designed many temporary defense projects for USHA during World War II.

Hammond Sadler, FASLA (1886-1958)

Hammond Sadler was born in London, England in 1886. A few years after graduating from the University of Reading, England, Sadler moved to the United States to work for the Olmsted Brothers' firm, most notably at Palos Verdes Estates. He opened his own firm in the midst of the Great Depression and designed many of the grand estates being built in Beverly Hills, Bel Air and Pasadena. With Sadler's experience in community planning gained while working with the Olmsted Brothers, he was particularly adept at handling the large scale plans for the landscapes of the privately-funded Wyvernwood community, as well as the public housing garden apartments for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles at Estrada Courts and Rose Hill Courts, and the redevelopment of Jordan Downs circa 1955.

Tommy Tomson, ASLA (1900-1986)

Born in Zanesville, Ohio (with the name "Golden Sands"), Tommy Tomson came to Los Angeles in the 1920s. When a screen test didn't result in a studio contract, Tomson became a self-taught landscape architect. His first major commission was for the Santa Anita Racetrack, which opened in 1934. In addition to Los Angeles Union Station and the site plan for the city of Palm Desert, Tomson did the landscape designs for countless residences, many belonging to Hollywood stars. Tomson created the landscape for the largest of Los Angeles' garden apartments: Parklarea (the first phase, in 1943).³⁰

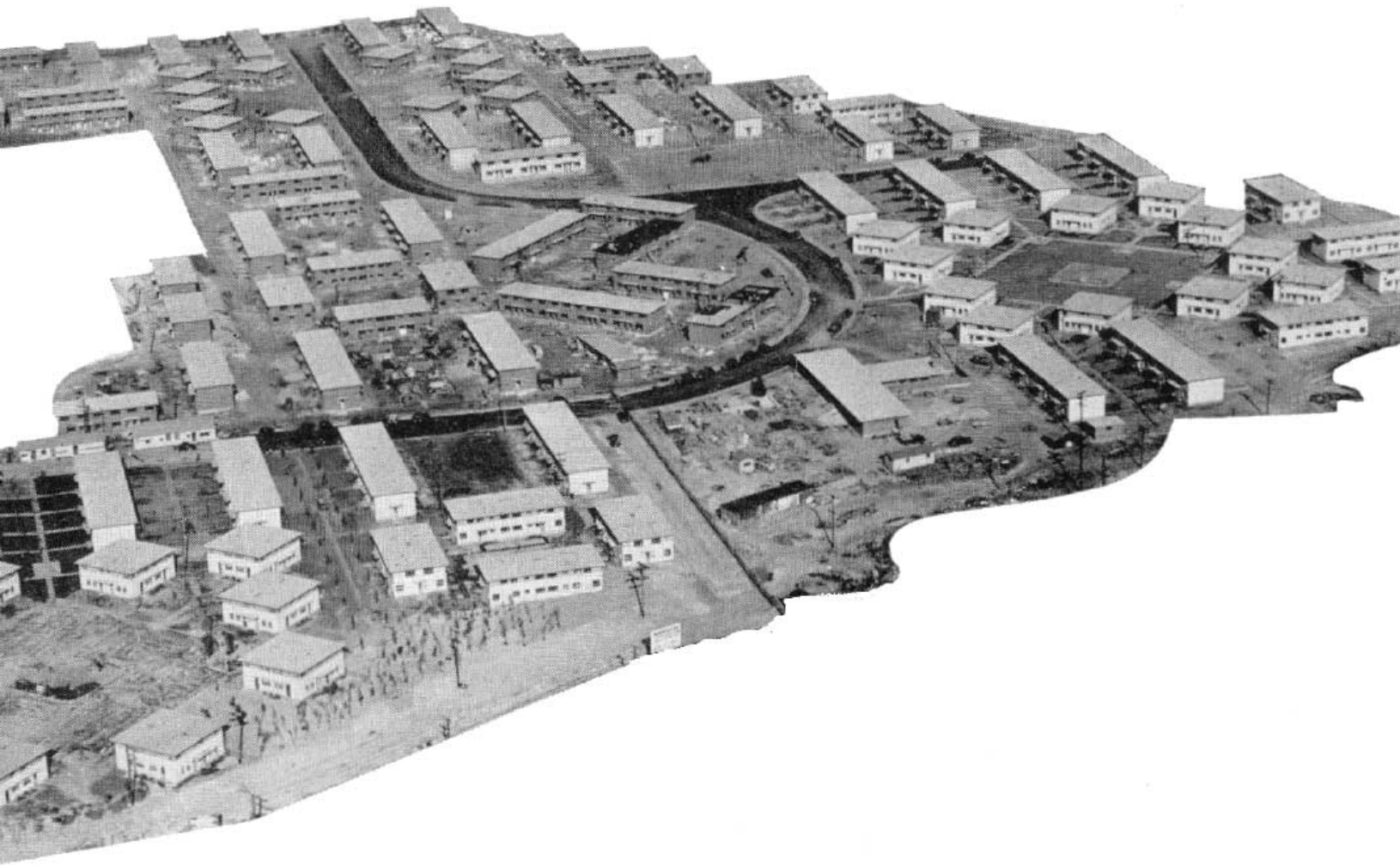
GARDEN APARTMENTS of LOS ANGELES

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT



Endnotes

- 1 Robert Alexander, "Villager of the Month," *The Villager* 1 May 1946.
- 2 Reginald Johnson was not the only one impressed with Robert Alexander's talent. After Baldwin Hills Village was completed, Alexander opened his own firm and had a long, successful career as an architect, and completed a great number of projects, both large and small scale. In fact, he became the most successful of all the architects involved at BHV after 1942. In 1949, he partnered with Richard Neutra, a partnership that lasted until 1962?? He was also the only architect involved in BHV who was singled out and featured in the pivotal 1944 Pencil Points article introducing Baldwin Hills Village.
- 3 Parson 8.
- 4 Leon Whiteson, "The Village Green, its Designer Both Stand the Test of Time" *Los Angeles Times* 29 May 1990: E1
- 5 Joseph Johnson was a descendant of the New England Transcendentalists.
- 6 "Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A., 1882-1952," obituary by Robert Alexander, *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* XIX (Feb. 1953): 81-85.
- 7 "Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A.," obit.
- 8 "Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A.," obit.
- 9 Letter to F. A. Gutheim, AIA, from Catherine Bauer Wurster and William Wurster, 15 Dec. 1952.
- 10 Anthony Denzer, *Gregory Ain* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008) 121.
- 11 Thomas Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928) 26.
- 12 Hines 188.
- 13 Benton MacKaye, "Regional Planning" *The Sociological Review* 20 Oct. 1928: 293-299.
- 14 Karen E. Hudson, *Paul R. Williams, Architect* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993) 11.
- 15 *Paul R. Williams* Project website, accessed June 18, 2012.
- 16 Hudson 25.
- 17 *Paul R. Williams* Project website, accessed June 18, 2012.
- 18 Hudson 28.
- 19 Adrian Wilson, with architect Erle Webster, established the firm of Webster and Wilson in about 1929, which lasted until World War II. Webster and Wilson designed many homes and businesses in the 1930's, including the "Ship of the Desert" in Palm Springs, for which Bashford and Barlow designed the landscape. Webster's wife Honor Easton often collaborated on the interiors for the architectural commissions, and Erle and Honor were close personal friends of Fred Barlow, Jr's. Fred was one of the first people invited to see their newborn daughter in 1941. Adrian Wilson later collaborated on the Pueblo del Rio housing project in 1942 with Paul Williams and also collaborated with Paul Williams and other colleagues on the Los Angeles Criminal Courts and the Hall of Administration buildings, as well as the Anaheim, Las Vegas and Honolulu convention centers.
- 20 Parson 37.
- 21 "Chatterbox," *Los Angeles Times* 30 Apr. 1936; "Prominent Officials Talk on Open Forum," *Los Angeles Times* 23 Jan. 1938; "Housing Expert Gives Warning," *Los Angeles Times* 27 Mar. 1940.
- 22 Alan Weintraub, *Lloyd Wright – The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.* (New York: Abrams, 1998) 272-273.
- 23 Letter dated August 17, 1934. Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Collection 1561, Box 44, Folder 1; Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA; Ralph C. Flewelling joined the group after 1934.
- 24 Undated note to Lloyd Wright, ca. 1934, listing practicing landscape architects gathered from the telephone book Lloyd Wright papers (Collection Number 1561). Collection 1561, Box 44, Folder 1; Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- 25 Allen & Lutz Architects, *Architects Roster Questionnaire* 1953. The American Institute of Architects Archives.
- 26 "Ready-to-Rent," *Los Angeles Times* 19 Oct. 1940: 5.
- 27 "Adults Only," *Los Angeles Times* 28 Sept. 1940: 6
- 28 "Housing Project Completed," *Los Angeles Times* 23 Nov. 1941: A6
- 29 Alan Hess, *Googie Redux* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004) 115. Stern's AIA Directory entry says he began his practice in 1945.
- 30 The experience of working on such a grand scale, for such a large corporate client, gave Tomson a stomach ulcer so severe that he had to live on baby food for a year after completion of the Parklabrea project.



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