

# THE VILLAGEGREEN THE GREENVILLAGE



PREPARED FOR **VILLAGE GREEN OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

PREPARED BY **THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION**

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In *New Towns for America*, (1957) Clarence Stein quotes Lewis Mumford noting that *“Here every part of the design speaks the same robust vernacular: simple, direct, intelligible. I know of no other recent community that lends itself so fully to strict scrutiny, simply because every aspect of its physical development has been thought through.”*

## **Background**

Designed and built between 1935 and 1942, Baldwin Hills Village, the 67.7-acre planned community now known as The Village Green sits on the flats north of Baldwin Hills in southwestern Los Angeles. The design was the result of a successful collaboration between architects Reginald Johnson and the firm of Wilson, Merrill and Alexander, landscape architect Fred Barlow Jr., and urban planner Clarence Stein. Garden City-inspired landscape planning served as the organizing design approach; individual living units, generally two-story apartment buildings, opened out onto landscaped common areas and child friendly play spaces, while parking and roadways were confined to the perimeter. Allées of olive and sycamore trees alluded to early California scenes. Turf panels were replaced by architectonic panels of ground cover, and decomposed granite walkways wove through small gardens. Building on experience from the creation of Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn, Stein helped create Baldwin Hills Village, which he believed was the purest manifestation of his Radburn Idea.

The larger Baldwin Hills district includes 450 acres of protected parkland on the central hills overlooking the Los Angeles Basin. Baldwin Hills Village was declared a City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage site in 1977 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The Village Green was named a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 2001.

## **Scope of Work**

This white paper, intended as a companion to the Historic Structures Report, summarizes the findings that grew out of a site visit by Charles Birnbaum to The Village Green in Los Angeles, California, on May 12, 2011. The visit included a walking and driving tour of the NHL site, as well as a visit to the Administration Building where much of the photographic archives were displayed for review.

In advance of this site visit, all available material provided by the client was reviewed including the draft Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), National Historic Landmark nomination, *Taming the Car: A Vision for Los Angeles* by Steven Keylon, and a variety of historic articles and photographic material.

This White Paper is intended to compliment and inform the Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) already underway. The aim of this document is threefold:

1. Strategically position The Village Green’s “message” to achieve broad consensus by identifying first projects and programmatic opportunities;

2. Evaluate the integrity of The Village Green's landscape, using the landscape's character-defining features as the organizational tools for presenting these findings;
3. Put forth recommendations for further avenues of research that are not currently addressed in the NHL and may be addressed in the CLR.

## **1. Positioning The Village Green's Message**

### **A. Adopt a Holistic Stewardship Message**

The current opening salvo on the home page of The Village Green's website ([www.villagegreenla.net/history](http://www.villagegreenla.net/history)) states:

*"Baldwin Hills Village, now known as The Village Green, is a park-like residential community located on a 64-acre site along the southwest edge of the city of Los Angeles. For more than half a century, Baldwin Hills Village has maintained a surprisingly high degree of historic integrity. In 1972, Baldwin Hills Village was converted from rental units to condominiums and renamed The Village Green."*

This statement, employing historic preservation jargon with such statements as "a surprisingly high degree of integrity" is only speaking to preservationists and history enthusiasts and thereby limits the reach and the audience for The Village Green. Thus, The Village Green should revisit their website with the goal of broadening this narrative to embrace the residential community's shared system of cultural, natural and scenic resource values.

Many of the recommendations in this report will aim to bring back the character-defining planting design that was intended by landscape architect Fred Barlow Jr. For example, this white paper recommends the removal of many contemporary perennial plantings, commonplace in the nursery trade today, and likely enjoyed by many The Village Green residents. These recommendations are put forth in both the discussion of The Village Green's character-defining features under section 2A Visual and Spatial Relationships (p.4), 2C Vegetation (p. 6) and in section 3B, How Historic Preservation and Environmental Concerns Go Hand-in-Hand (p. 15). This paper cannot stress enough that a clear and sensitive communication strategy is in order to advance this agenda, to avoid the appearance of the sort of "preservation police" that dictates façade color, trim or windows. A set of clear guidelines should be ratified with the strictest recommendations for the most significant views and vistas at one end (see figure 1, p. 3), with maximum flexibility in private and semi-private spaces.

### **B. Broadening the Audience**

An outgrowth of the shared value system approach to The Village Green's landscape should be defining who The Village Green wants its audience to be and how it wants to communicate with them. Examples of excellent leadership exist at a variety of cultural properties where a broad on-set

and online audience is being cultivated. In the past few years historic places such as Phillip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, CT; the Tenement Museum on the Lower East side of Manhattan, NYC, NY; and the soon to open former estate of Wallace and Leonore Annenberg in Palm Springs, CA are providing mentorship and leadership while advancing specific agendas. In all three cases these sites have become centers of debate and discourse on such topics as Modern design, the immigrant experience, and domestic and global leadership. If The Village Green endorses a visionary shared value system it has the potential of broadcasting the lessons learned – this could range from the physical, economic and psychological benefits of having separated pedestrian and vehicular experiences, to water and lawn reduction and ways to cool residences through vegetation.



**Figure 1-2:** Unbridled plantings have diminished the integrity of setting by screening the iconic viewshed to the Baldwin Hills that was historically available from the central green.

## 2. Evaluating The Village Green's Integrity

Inspired by the Radburn plan (1928), but local in character, The Village Green still possesses a functional unity today that is unrivaled by other suburb designs of its era. With the exception of a few minor adjustments to the layout, much of the hardscape design is as it was originally intended.

Historic designed landscapes such as The Village Green are composed of a collection of landscape features (including structures) that are organized in space. Fred Barlow Jr. noted in his description of the Baldwin Hills landscape (1944), the six most important objectives of the design. These are just as critical today in establishing a visual and spatial armature of the landmark design.

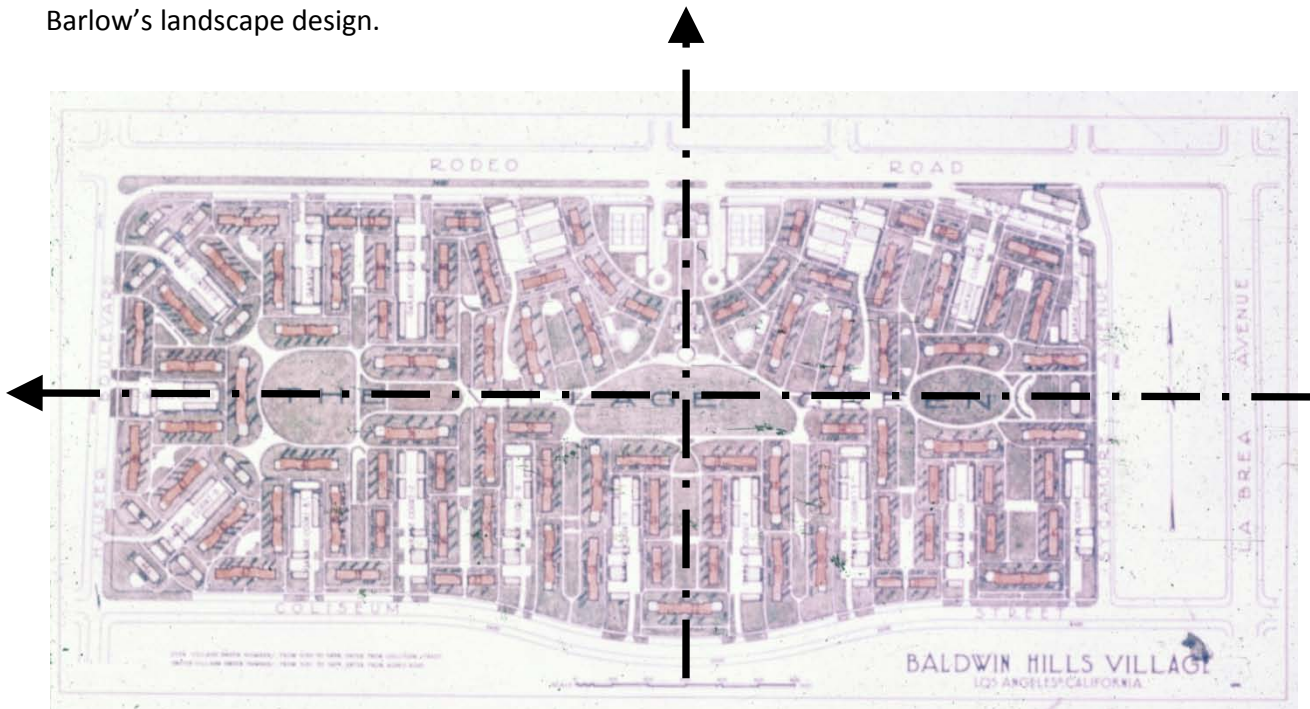
Specifically, Barlow's design objectives noted:

- Provision of maximum open space for freedom of movement;
- Patios to ensure privacy and individual garden areas;
- Character of planting, given by trees and shrubs, while color notes are provided by vines on buildings;



- Groundcovers were used to provide a background for flowering shrubs and vines and to ensure privacy for tenants by restricting play to central lawn areas;
- Lawns were concentrated in central areas large enough for play;
- Various shaped gravel areas will in time be shaded by trees which with benches placed will provide “sitting-out” sections.

Looking at these overarching objectives through the lens of *The Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (US Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996) it appears that many of these foundational design objectives are still present today – as evidenced by the interrelationship of structures to open space, the carefully executed separation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns, and the articulation of the planned community’s public and private spaces. However, the dramatic surge in ornamental understory plantings, the replacement of ground cover areas with small islands of lawn and the absence and/or diminishment of vine clad buildings, shrub masses and hedges, and decomposed granite have collectively altered the overall historic design intent and thereby altered the visual and spatial relationships that historically characterized Barlow’s landscape design.



**Figure 3:** Plan of Baldwin Hills Village. Note the strong axial sight lines running east-west through “The Village Green” and north-south from the Administration Building and Clubhouse

As the Guidelines note, “it is the arrangement and the interrelationship of character-defining features as they existed during the period of significance that is most critical to analyzing prior to treatment.” The succinct narrative summaries that follow aim to evaluate the integrity of The Village Green’s character-defining visual and spatial relationships as well as those individual features that collectively convey the integrity and significance of the NHL design. These

recommendations are presented in the text that follows and are organized from overarching (visual relationships) to small scale (site furnishings).

### A. Visual and Spatial Relationships

As Clarence Stein noted in *Toward New Towns for America*, “The resulting design of Baldwin Hills Village is dominated by long, restful horizontal lines and planes; long green courts paralleled by long low buildings. The horizontality is accentuated by the unbroken line of the delicate cornice and the deep shadow cast by its overhang.” (p.202) These visual and spatial relationships, in the form of expansive veiled vistas, once running seamlessly through the main green spaces that form the central spine of the plan, towards the backdrop of the Baldwin Hills mountains beyond, within and from garden courts, and from pedestrian passageways that lead to garden courts and garage courts – **collectively are as significant as any built feature** of the original plan -- from the Administration Building to an allee of trees within an individual garden court. It is also this aspect of the historic design intent that has been most diminished -- yet, one that can be remedied with a comprehensive plan for vegetation management and renewal (see related discussion under Vegetation, p. 6).



**Figures 4-7:** Historic and contemporary views of “arrival” illustrate the impact of “plopped” understory plants where sight lines should remain open. (top) Contemporary plantings that block sight lines have replaced former areas of low groundcovers and gravel. (bottom)



The overarching significance of this aspect of the historic design comes through in virtually every aspect of the visual and written historic record. For example, Stein notes in a 1955 letter to Peter Blake, “The Beauty and attraction of a natural green oasis in the monotony of a housing development is far more striking if it is located where it can be best seen and enjoyed.” (p. 557). This is echoed by Stein two years later when he notes that the central park is the “Community heart and backbone faced by all houses.” (p. 189) This central lawn, labeled “The Village Green” (figure 3) is the plan’s single most iconic feature and as with the Great Lawn, Parade Ground or Sheep Meadow in celebrated Olmsted and Vaux designs like Central and Prospect Parks, the passages of scenery that are intended from within and to The Village Green should be mapped through a detailed visual analysis, then recaptured and restored.

## B. Topography

Unlike earlier Wright and Stein New Towns like Radburn (1928) and Chatham Village (1936) both of which had ample “hilly topography and existing trees that guided the architects in the location of buildings” (Stein, p. 201) the “almost flat site of Baldwin Hills” achieved a sense of variation not through topography but through the composition, stepping and clustering of structures. As the site has remained flat and has not been altered over time with any significant regrading operations, the original topographic design possesses a high degree of integrity.



**Figure 8:** Although hard to “read” today because of the lushness of the canopy and understory plantings, The Village Green is viewed in this construction-era aerial photograph as a relatively flat site with little topographic variation. (Spence Air Photo, Cornell Archives)



### C. Vegetation

The vegetative features at The Village Green range from a specimen tree in a garden court or a vine clad trellis, to groups of plants such as hedges, allées, or the articulation of ground cover beds. Here vegetation includes deciduous and to a lesser degree evergreen trees, in addition to shrubs, ground covers, and both woody and herbaceous plants.



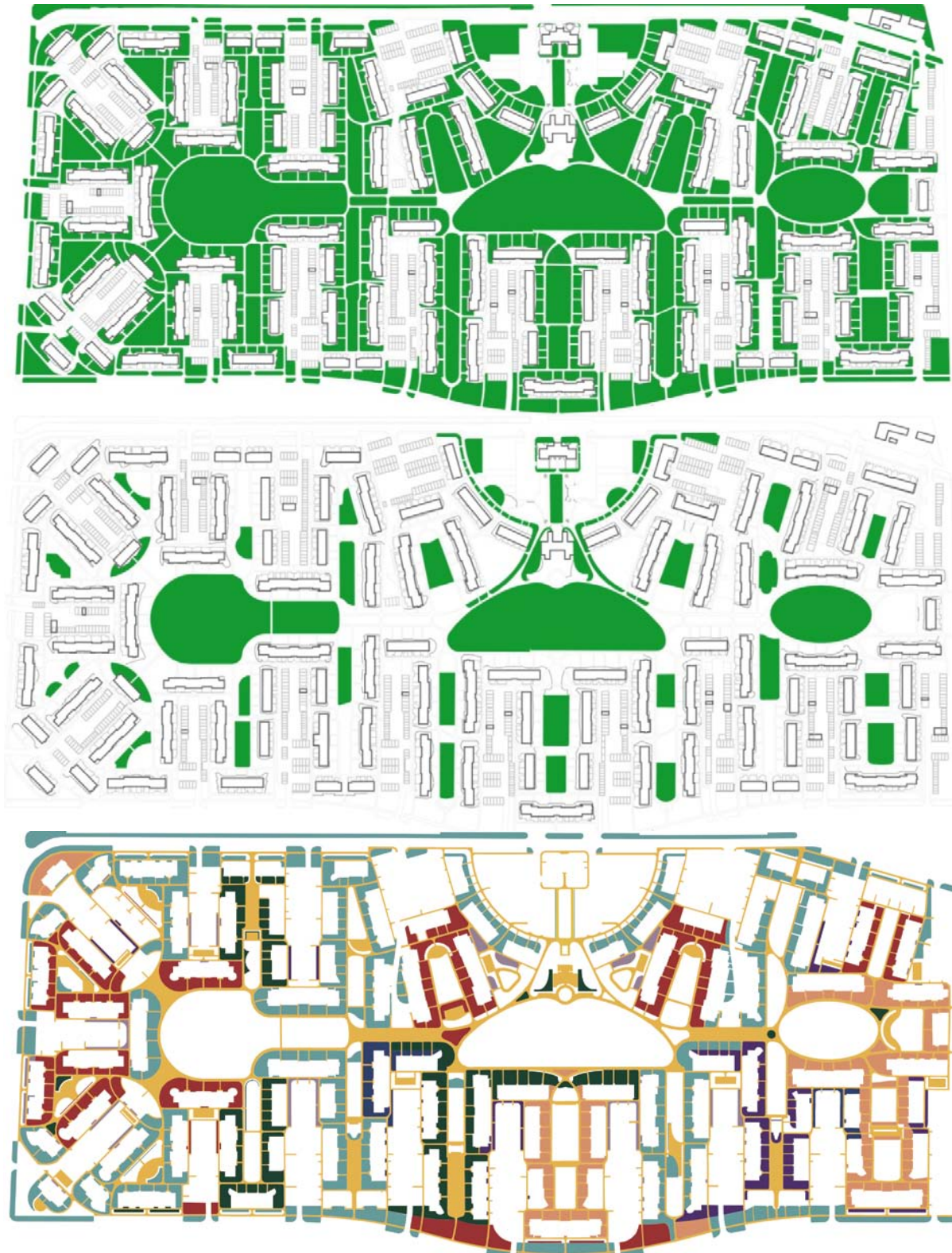
**Figures 9-10:** Two as-built planting compositions illustrate the original planting design intent which reinforced the horizontality of the architecture and the site. This was achieved with broad sweeps of ground covers and low shrubs, while limited areas of lawn were employed – all carrying the eye inwards to garden courts and lawns.

and other ornamental grasses. Unlike earlier schemes of broad, low-lying masses all possessing compatible textures and an absence of showy blooms (as these bolder colors were relegated to trellises), today's understory plantings significantly diminish the historic planting intent. In sum, if the original intent in Stein's words for the architecture was that "the forms of the buildings are all simple" with "no extraneous ornament or moldings" (p. 202) shouldn't this philosophy also be applied to plantings?

In evaluating the integrity of The Village Green plantings, the site is fortunate to have ample historic documentation that includes a diverse collection of photographs over many years (many detailed enough to I.D. plants by genus and species) as well as a series of detailed planting plans, at a scale of one inch to twenty feet, with dates noted on the "plan as planted" (ca. 1940-42).

Although trees were small when planted, Stein recognized that in time that they would articulate and reinforce the plan's visual and spatial qualities. For example, Stein noted in 1957, "There are charming landscaped courts, some with spaced olive trees shading the gravel-covered spaces for walking and children's play. But it will be years before trees in the central parks or courts are large enough to form an important, rather than a minor, **natural decorative element of the big composition.**" (p. 202)

This revealing quote, emphasizing **the big composition** is significant to the unbridled change that has occurred at The Village Green -- namely the introduction of a now fashionable perennial plant palette found in today's suburban Southern California residential landscapes. Examples of these usual suspects found at The Village Green include hostas, allium, birds of paradise, acanthus, liriop



**Figure 11-13:** Vegetation analysis conducted by Steven Keylon of The Village Green notes the expansion of lawn areas in 2011 (top) in contrast with limited historic lawn areas (middle) and comprehensive ground cover plantings (bottom) in 1942-49.



## D. Circulation

Circulation features at Baldwin Hills are limited to roads, parking courts, pedestrian walks, parking areas, and gravel areas which collectively contribute to what Clarence Stein originally referred to as its “specialized means of circulation” resulting in a “complete separation of pedestrian and auto.” (p.189)

Reflecting on the work in a February 8, 1950 letter to architects Mayer and Whittlesey, Stein noted that the separation of roads for pedestrians and vehicles “has been successful over a period of many years at Radburn, Greenbelt, Baldwin Hills Village, and elsewhere. Compared with the old method of road and path combined as [a] single street, it is safer, more peaceful, [and] more beautiful.” This letter could have been written today as the majority of the primary paths, roads, and parking areas at The Village Green are in their original alignment and configuration. As is the case with the site’s topographic features there has been little change to the circulation network, which therefore displays a high degree of integrity of width and alignment.

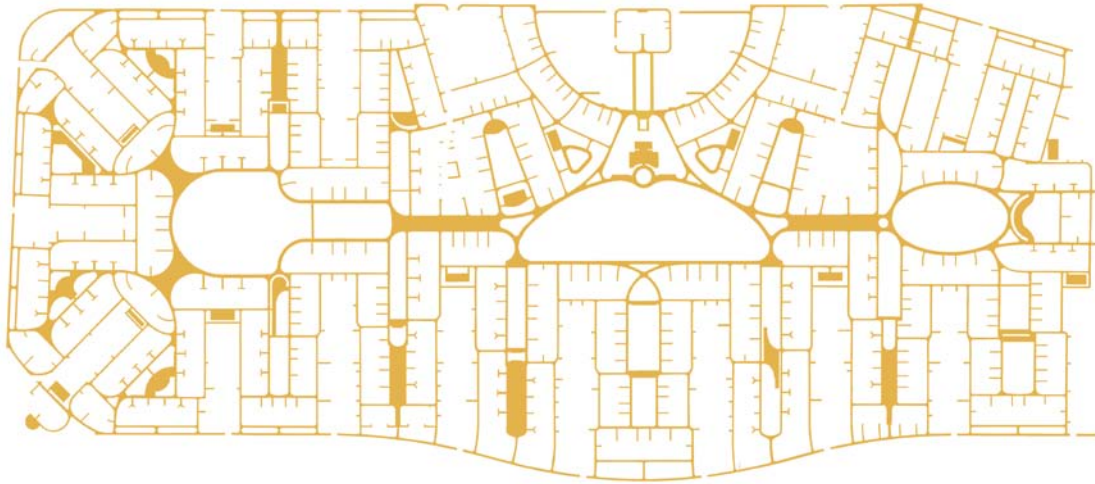


**Figures 14-15:** 1960s flagstone paths, captured in these photographs by Julius Shulman rarely survive today. To understand later features such as these by Merrill Winans (1965-66), careful analysis should be undertaken as part of a CLR to better understand how these fit within the landscape’s continuum.

The other remaining area of consideration when evaluating circulation is the material itself. As the Guidelines note, “the character of circulation features is defined by such factors as alignment, width, surface and edge treatment, grade, materials, and infrastructure.” A historic photograph review reveals that although the alignment and widths of paths and roads often remain the same, areas that were constructed of decomposed crushed granite, (see figure 16 below), flagstone paths, outdoor patios, and asphalt paths that are now concrete are all worthy of further research and analysis.

Catherine Bauer in her September 1944 article in *Pencil Points* noted, “One successful garden court treatment is the use of wide gravel areas spotted with trees. Perhaps this might have been more

widely adopted; the Tuileries has always seemed an ideal urban park, more useful than a lawn for strolling with the baby carriage and for children’s play.” (For related thoughts on this idea, see p. 15, and how environmental concerns also affect material selection)

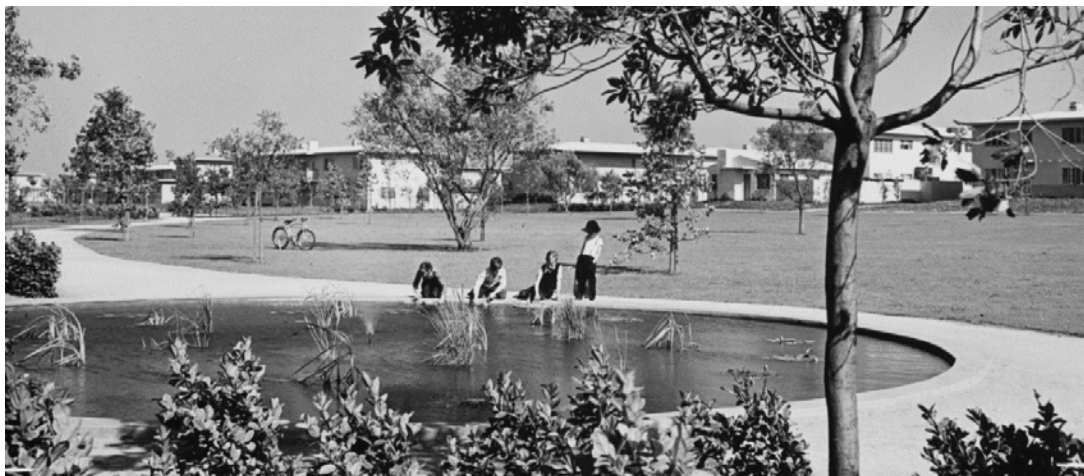


**Figure 16:** Plan of decomposed granite areas, built between 1942-49 (mapped in 2011, courtesy The Village Green).

Therefore, it is the recommendation of this paper that any future treatment plan should include comprehensive recommendations regarding surface and edge materials for all paths and roads in the public realm.

### **E. Water Features**

As the Guidelines note, “water features may be aesthetic as well as functional components of the landscape” and in the case of The Village Green there is only one feature – the circular basin, originally intended for wading which serves as an axial hinge point between the clubhouse and The Village Green.



**Figure 17:** The wading pool soon after construction.



In Catherine Bauer's "Description and Appraisal . . . Baldwin Hills Village," (*Pencil Points*, September 1944) the critic noted that even then the pool was "waterless until someone figures out a way to keep babies out of it" and yet it was "designed for children to wade in."

Shortly after the wading pool was constructed it was determined to be unsafe, and became a planter. Today, in the former footprint of the pool there is a single coral tree which sits in barren, exposed, soil. This is an unfortunate situation as the wading pool rests on the center line of the critical north-south axial relationship that runs through the center of the Administration Building and Clubhouse (see figures 20-24, p. 12 ). It is this change of function, from a pool to a planter, the severing of the critical visual axial relationship, along with the loss of the mass of water, reflecting the sky and clouds above that suggest that this feature no longer has design integrity. As the feature is the only significant designed water feature at The Village Green, and critical to the site's significant north-south axis, every effort should be made to reinstate the original idea of a circular mass of water.

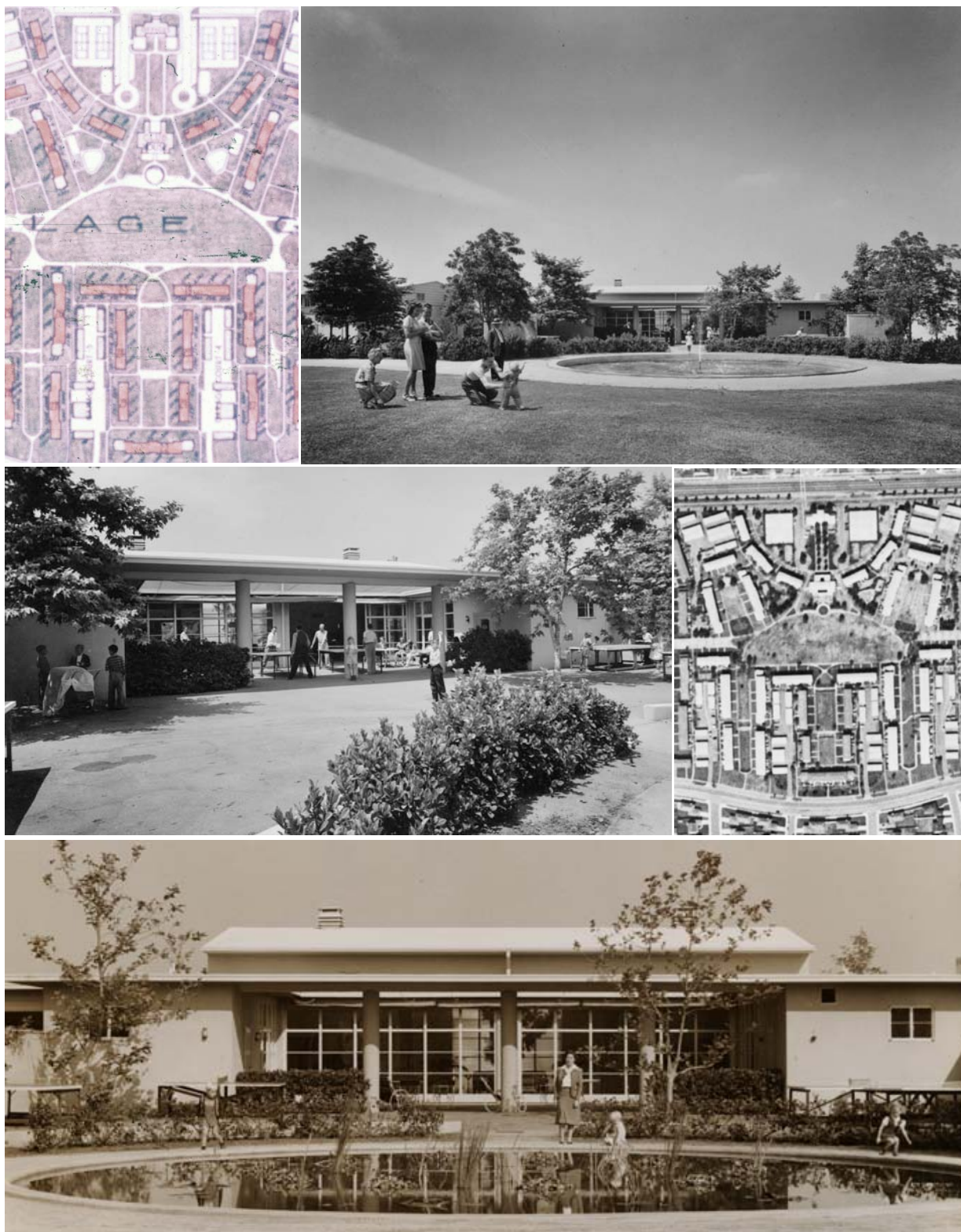


**Figures 18-19:** The former wading pool, converted to a planter with a solitary coral tree (2011) .

#### **F. Structures, Furnishings and Objects**

From large-scale structures to small scale furnishings and objects, these landscape features contribute to The Village Green's significance and convey its historic character.

Contributing structures may be significant individually or they may simply convey the historic character of the landscape – and in the process they establish the landscape's historic visual and spatial relationships. Fortunately at The Village Green, the placement of residential properties has changed little over time, thus possessing a high degree of integrity. Changes however have been made to the public building ensemble, in the process altering the historic arrival experience. Here integrity has been diminished at both the Administration Building (a result of the four additional garage buildings) and perhaps to the greatest degree, at the Clubhouse, which was converted into two residential units in the 1950s.



**Figures 20-24:** The Administration Building and Clubhouse: The loss of this central north-south vista, and the activities that were associated with this two building complex that created a center of energy for the community, is the greatest loss to the character and the sense of place of The Village Green.



In the case of the original Administration Building and Clubhouse, as the NHL nomination notes, these two “buildings lay on the site’s main north-south axis, which opens out onto this central green before continuing across the site and becoming one garden court” (NHL, p. 7). Here in particular, in addition to the diminished integrity of the severed north-south axial relationship, the loss of the uses originally associated with the clubhouse – as Bauer points out “the building was intended for a nursery school; now it houses facilities for games, rental library, darkroom, kitchen, parties” diminish the import of this space to serve as a center of activity for the village (p. 58). Hence, it is not just the loss or alteration to this historic fabric that is unfortunate, it is the loss of the uses that were originally associated with this structure, and its complimentary outdoor activity spaces that should be recaptured. (For more on the Clubhouse see Suggested Research Avenues)

Moving to small scale features at The Village Green, these include walls, steps, terraces, trellises, tennis courts, playground equipment, even laundry drying apparatus. The Guidelines note that “site furnishings generally are small scale elements in the landscape that may be functional, decorative, or both.” At The Village Green historic furnishings also include light fixtures, which are still present on site today, while benches, which were “originally proposed ... were not installed” (Stein, p. 195).



**Figures 25-26:** Character-defining light standards (left) and walls that define private gardens and garden courts (right) still survive today and possess a high degree of integrity.

### 3. Suggested Research Avenues for The Village Green

#### A. Go Deeper with Color and Texture Analysis

Color and mass has always been of foundational importance to the design of The Village Green. As noted by Clarence Stein in *Toward New Towns for America*, “The forms of the buildings are all simple. Adequate and rhythmic pattern is secured by means of the organization and grouping of the simple, straight-forward essentials: windows, doors and balconies. There are contrasts in mass of different lengths of buildings consisting of two to six houses, and of heights of one and two stories. Additional variety comes from the different direction in which the structures run, resulting in varied play of light, shade and shadow. . . **Add to this the contrasts of pastel coloring – bluish green,**

**suede grey, dark tobacco brown, grey blue – and holding these together large masses of white, slightly greyed, reminiscent of the house rows of Denmark and Sweden.** There is added diversity in the individual landscape treatment of different courts.” ( p. 202)

When Clarence Stein embarked on The Village Green in 1935 it was just seven years after his collaboration began with landscape architect Marjorie Sewell Cautley on Radburn. The very same year, Cautley would publish *Garden Design: The Principles of Abstract Design Applied to Landscape Composition* (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, NY). Here, the foreword by MIT Architecture Dean, William Emerson, notes, “Mrs. Cautley has demonstrated how the same governing principles apply to architectural as well as to landscape design. The thoroughness and ingenuity with which this idea is developed are overwhelmingly convincing. The analogy between masses, colors, and textures, formed by trees, shrubs or flowers, and those similarly produced by the use of steel and masonry, pigments, or contrasting surfaces, is one of engrossing interest to anyone either practicing or teaching in these professional fields today.” Emerson concludes, “Architects have been sensitive to texture ever since architecture was first studied, but its significance today is enhanced today by the need for adding interest to wall surfaces, frequently not otherwise interesting, as seen in our modern buildings. The existence of a similar quality to be searched for in the handling of foliage, where scale and contrasting areas of light and shade are the main decorative elements.”

Touring The Village Green today, where most of the highly geometric trellises lay bare, there is a need to respond to Cautley’s plea for the benefit of wall decorations which “divided walls into panels.”

It is well documented that vines were historically critically important to the overall planting scheme at The Village Green. Often displayed in strong geometrical compositions – framing doorways and windows or in triangles both widening at the top and bottom, these contributing features provided a tactile surface to the flat building exteriors while also providing blasts of color in the otherwise warm and cool palette of greens. As Stein noted, “these **vine-covered foregrounds**, along with broad central lawns and parks, are all part of the general landscape picture” and that “They are very attractive, very ordered, very harmonious, with pleasing variety, like the buildings that surround the courts” (p. 198). In some cases, “the view of cars is hidden, or at least lessened by the vines that overgrow the fences, as well as the intervening planting.” (p. 193)

It is worth noting that beyond The Village Green, Stein’s Radburn protégé, Marjorie Cautley dedicated several pages to espaliered trees, shrubs, vines, and what she calls “foliage walls,” citing how Beatrix Farrand achieved great success at Princeton with “a great variety of plants . . . namely the wild grape and the underappreciated catbrier” (p. 86). In each of these cases, Cautley looks at the scale of the plants and the leaves, not to mention blooms, berries and seasonal color displays (p. 84-88).

In addition to the loss of color and texture on vertical building surfaces, the color and texture of the ground plane has also been significantly altered over time. A visit to The Village Green today shows



many foundation plantings that are from presently-popular perennial and herbaceous stock readily available in the commercial trade. Here again, in seeking guidance, Cautley's words strike a chord, noting, "In nature, plants are grouped according to ecology, or adaptability to their environment. In landscape work, plant groups seem to depend on fashion and styles. It is often possible to ascertain the decade in which a garden was laid out by the type of plants that were in vogue at the time. . . Contrasts in foliage texture are too numerous to bear listing. Good and bad examples may be observed in various types of planting and in the stereotyped collections used for borders and for foundation petticoats" (p. 200).

#### **B. Investigate and Articulate How Environmental Concerns Go Hand-in-Glove with Historic Preservation**

Building on the idea of Holistic Stewardship (see page 2), many of the preservation challenges that The Village Green faces today are opportunities to coalition build with the environmental community.

For example, the loss of climbing vines and other herbaceous plants may be addressed through an environmental and energy conservation lens. Benefits of climbers, include: nesting for birds, noise



**Figure 27-29:** The loss of vines is a tremendous loss to community character at The Village Green. In many cases the trellis work that supported vines survives today (bottom left).

abatement and control, visually pleasing, reduction in building temperatures yields energy savings, reduction in urban heat island effect, reduction in Co2 in atmosphere, increased biodiversity, and a general improvement in air quality.

Research findings by Living Roofs reinforce this idea, noting that trellises with “climbers can dramatically reduce the maximum temperatures of a building by shading walls from the sun, the daily temperature fluctuation being reduced by as much as 50%. The effectiveness of this cooling effect is related primarily to the total area shaded rather than the thickness of the climber (Köhler 1993). Together with the insulation effect, temperature fluctuations at the wall surface can be reduced from between  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}/14^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $60^{\circ}\text{C}/140^{\circ}\text{F}$  to between  $5^{\circ}\text{C}/41^{\circ}\text{F}$  and  $30^{\circ}\text{C}/86^{\circ}\text{F}$  (Peck et al 1999). The use of climbers to reduce solar heating is most effective if they are used on the wall that faces the sun, together with the west wall, which experiences afternoon heating.” (See figures 27-29).

Another example where historic preservation and environmental values can coalesce is in regard to lawn areas which seem to have taken over former beds of ground cover, decomposed granite (a permeable material) and shrub massing (figures 30-31). For example, a review of the block-by-block “as planted” planting plans for the project (ca. early 1940s) reveals that most areas that were intended for ground cover have since been replaced with both lawn and perennial flowering plants.



**Figure 30:** Groundcover beds not only respected sight lines, but played off of the geometry of the structures.





**Figure 31:** Character-defining groundcovers meld with shrubs and vines, creating a rich, tactile palette that achieves its interest and diversity through tonality, leaf shape, size and texture.

Recognizing that groundcovers require less maintenance than lawns (resulting in significant cost savings) there are many reasons to minimize lawn. This includes the reduction of biodiversity brought on by the one species approach; lawn fertilizers can harm the environment; maintaining lawns requires large amounts of water (2-3 cm every 3–7 days); gasoline powered lawnmowers generate noise pollution and produce smog; fewer weed problems occur with groundcovers; groundcover beds absorb fallen leaves and groundcovers keep soil warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

These are only a few examples of benefits that are beneficial to the environment and the historic design intent of The Village Green. As a compliment to the CLR, a “Plan for Vegetation Management and Renewal” should be generated that not only puts forth specific recommendations for replanting (e.g. where lawn should go, vines re-established, specific trees for areas, etc.) but it

should also quantify those environmental benefits (e.g. water and noise reduction, cooling of houses, etc.)

### **C. First Demonstration Projects: The Restoration of Garden Courts**

Restoration of select courts should be advanced as a first symbolic project to provide the community with tangible examples of how the historic design intent and current environmental values come together and are not mutually exclusive. Ideally, these initial projects should provide powerful examples at both a public/civic-scale as well as a more intimate residential-scale, of how The Village Green management can play a leadership role in assisting homeowners to further understand the recommendations of this white paper, while promoting the community's vision and values as it moves forward. Possible candidates for this effort include at a residential scale, Court 9/10, whose original design has been largely obliterated, and Court 4/5 which retains a majority of the historic tree plantings, and would require only minor alterations to its plantings and groundcover to restore the original design intent. At a civic scale, the restoration of the olive allée (see Figure 32, below) which runs along the north/south axis between the central Administration Buildings and Clubhouse would be both highly visible and enormously symbolic.



**Figure 32:** The olive allée on the community's north/south axis – an important designed landscape feature in a prominent shared space – would be highly visible and enormously symbolic as a demonstration landscape.



#### D. An Economic Feasibility Study for the Clubhouse Should be Commissioned

As previously stated, the greatest loss to The Village Green is the diminished role that the Administration Building/Clubhouse can play for 21<sup>st</sup> century life as both a symbolic and meaningful center of energy – a community hearth for the village. Recognizing the significant cost to acquire these two residences today, an economic feasibility study should be undertaken for this central



**Figure 33:** The former Clubhouse is now two private residences that feel fortress-like; severing the critical north-south axial relationship while limiting the activities that can occur in concert with the Administration Building.

administrative core of the community exploring a diversity of programmatic options. This may include a gallery space (for new work or historic-themed exhibits that relate to the social and design history of the Village), while there could also be an opportunity for complimentary outdoor sculpture displays within the community; lectures and community-based programs (see 1B Broadening the Audience discussion), café for coffee and light fare, baby sitting, etc.

This should come from the community but there are excellent examples in other historic planned communities to draw upon.

#### Conclusion

When architect and urban planner Richard Berry returned to The Village Green, more than twenty years after its construction, he noted that it “appears to first-time visitors in Los Angeles as something of a restful sanctuary offering a momentary respite from the urbanscape figuratively screeching at the sensibilities from all sides. Approaching a quality that perhaps is describable simply as environmental art, it exhibits itself something of an anachronism and an enigma, apparently well ahead of its time when it was created, it has to date never been repeated even though constantly admired.”

This assessment still resonates today, while the idea of restful sanctuary, not to mention the prospect of living with a piece of environmental art are powerful magnets to lure and sustain residents, let alone inspire marketing and communications professionals. The Village Green is unique in its origins, and, quite happily, the stewardship it is being afforded by its invested present-day residents has the potential to measure a great return on that investment in a unique and unrivaled authentic mid-century landmark.

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