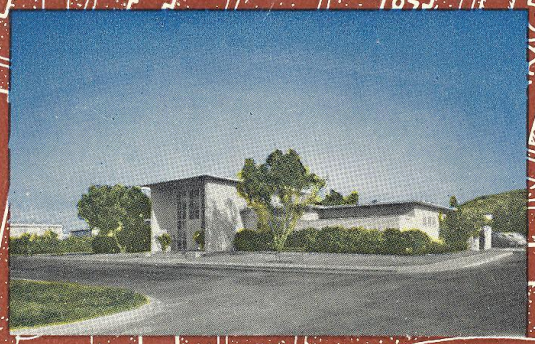
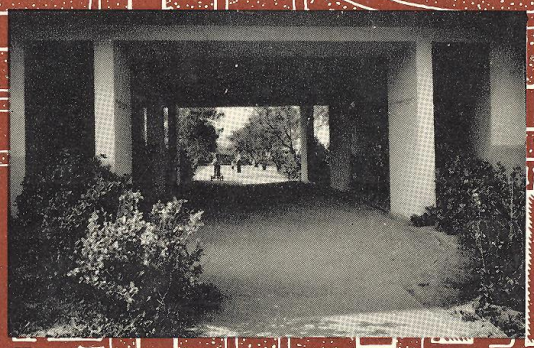


Pencil Points

the magazine of

Progressive Architecture



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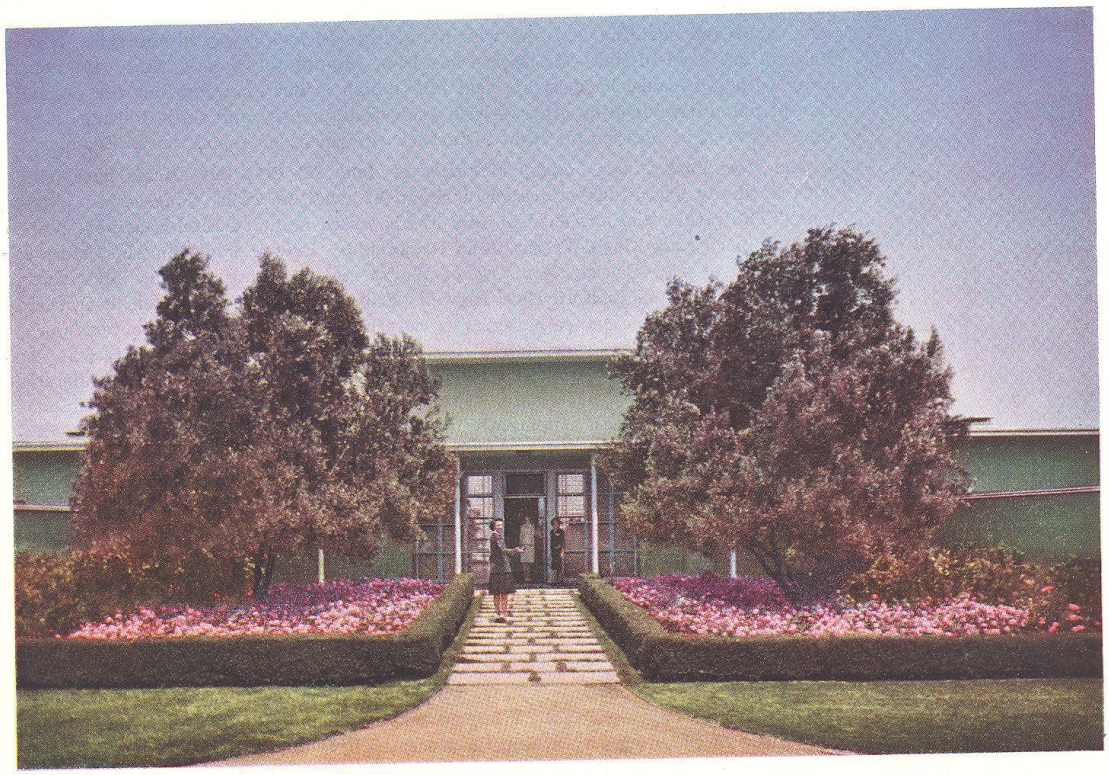


Baldwin Hills Village

ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS:
REGINALD D. JOHNSON, AND
WILSON, MERRILL, AND ALEXANDER

CONSULTING ARCHITECT:
CLARENCE S. STEIN

There is a series of landmarks in the replanning of American communities since the end of the First World War. The new movement began with the planning of Sunnyside Gardens in Long Island City (1924): a fresh experiment in large scale planning and housing, and by no means the least important, even now. Had the positive and negative lessons of Sunnyside been better digested, the crude economies and disordered layouts of so much government housing since 1932 would have been impossible.

The next large experiment was Radburn (1929). This was the first community plan to incorporate in its design the fundamental division of functions that the elder

Olmsted had first worked out, with masterly skill, in the design of Central Park — a division that Mr. Robert Moses's planners have, with his usual brashness, turned their backs on. Radburn's dull and conventional architecture kept it from being as esthetically stimulating as Ernst May's Römerstadt; but it represented a more radical approach to modern planning. In the use of the super-block, the blind residential street, the continuous internal park belt, the complete differentiation of footways from motorways, it was the first concrete demonstration of a fundamental new order, different from every historic type of city layout, and possible only through the use of modern technology.

The next landmark was Greenbelt (1935). Greenbelt was an advance upon Radburn in that the architecture and the community design were closer to being of one piece. In outline and execution Greenbelt was one of the high points of American planning: comparable to the great hydro-electric structures erected by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The very name Greenbelt was a happy word for the "horizontal wall" which Sir Ebenezer Howard had correctly regarded as essential to the integrity of the modern community. Whether this belt shall be spinal, as in Radburn, or peripheral, enclosing each neighborhood, and finally encircling the city, remains to be worked out experimentally. (The term "green belt" was first used, I believe, by Sir Raymond Unwin around 1920.)

Since Greenbelt many neighborhood communities have been planned and built: too many of them handicapped by the conditions laid down by Congress for slum replacement: conditions that in many cases provided that an old semi-slum should be replaced — as in New York's Ft. Greene development — by a new superslum. One of the handful of projects that stands out as a fundamental advance in both planning and architecture is Baldwin Hills Village in Los Angeles. Here every part of the design speaks the same robust vernacular: simple, direct, intelligible. I know no other recent community that lends itself so fully to strict scrutiny, simply because every aspect of its physical development has been thought through.

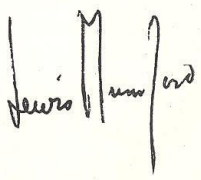
The site plan represents a further development of the Radburn idea, made possible by the use of the row house, with the removal of the garage to the service road. One of the most important facts about this plan is its clarity and readability; the buildings all form a comprehensible whole, which can be taken in at a glance; the stranger is not puzzled or led astray by any mere jugglery of the structures for the sake of achieving specious esthetic effects or pinchpenny economies. Such order is a vital attribute of a modern urban environment.

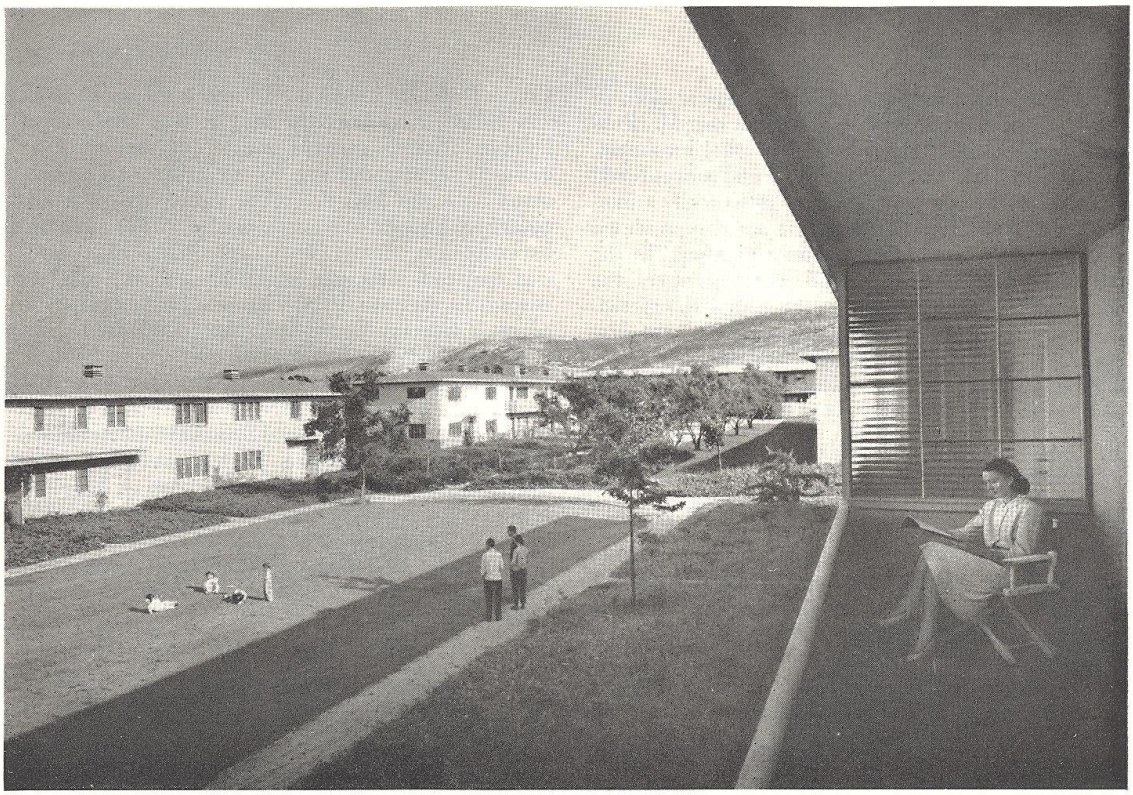
Unlike Radburn, unlike most English examples, Baldwin Hills Village uses the long row as the unit of building. That is perhaps one of the secrets of its economy, its spaciousness, its fine urbanity. The free-standing small house, or the short row of semi-detached houses, does not create either esthetic harmony or economy. When such units are standardized they look dull, and when the architect seeks to cover this dullness by trivial variations, the whole effect is fidgety. Worse still, the individual houses lack both usable land and visual privacy. In Baldwin Hills Village, on the contrary, there is a maximum provision of continuous green space, framed by long rows whose restful horizontal planes are differentiated only by their colored walls. Such a pattern could be universalized, with minor variations, just as the eighteenth century squares were universalized in the building of so much of early-nineteenth-century London. With all our talk of standardization, it is high time that we achieved such a standard and addressed ourselves firmly to living up to it in city planning.

The details of these Baldwin Hills Village houses are as well thought out as the general plan. The provision of little closed-in garden areas, for sunbathing and dining and idling, fully protected by a high fence against the cool afternoon winds that are characteristic of the West Coast, is a fine regional adaptation. Within, too, the rooms are spacious: they have been planned for active housekeeping, and would not become oppressively small and disordered through the presence of a few children. (Is it perhaps not an accident that few architectural photographs of modern "economic" housing show the occupants? Their rooms are already crowded before people enter them.)

Baldwin Hills Village is a challenge to a whole school of housers and planners who have ruthlessly pared down the first costs of building without bothering to note the depressing long-term results. The planners of this community have proceeded as if they themselves were going to live in it; and as a result, it will still be a livable community when a good part of our existing housing projects have succumbed, once more, to premature blight. These houses are, happily if a little ironically, the crown of Reginald Johnson's career as a designer of spacious private mansions; and in the plan itself, for which Clarence Stein was consultant, his experience with Sunnyside, Radburn, and Greenbelt came to its richest fruitage.

Here, then, is a standard for what modern community building may be. Better we may still have; but lower than this no large-scale development should fall.





Description and Appraisal...Baldwin Hills Village

by *Catherine Bauer*

Fundamental to the project, promoted as it was by a group of progressive architects, was the clear conception of "Thousand Gardens" (the Village's original name) as a demonstration of modern community design. This private rental development was designed to—and does—provide not only openness and privacy usually available solely to well-to-do home buyers; but also, many amenities and services possible only when both design and management of the entire community are unified. Balcony, walled patio, and landscaped central Green typify one extraordinary provision: that for outdoor living.

The loudest postwar controversies in the building field may rage around proposals for public action and subsidy for slum clearance, urban redevelopment, and low-rent housing. But how much progress can we expect from private builders?

Business, industry, and labor; officials, intellectuals, reformers of every color—all assume that housing and large-scale redevelopment must play a central role in postwar adjustment. Everyone assumes that public policy will be required to guide private action, public action necessary in one form or another to supplement and promote private action. But the kind and extent of public stimulation cannot be determined without first trying to answer such questions as: What proportion of the potential housing market will private builders reach? Can modern improvements in plan, form, or equipment stimulate basic changes in the standard of demand? (This factor alone could have great economic significance.) Or is everyone satisfied with the same old thing done the same old way?

These are big questions, not to be answered categorically; but they are so vital to the development of sound postwar housing and city planning policy that all progressive trends in the private housing field should be closely scrutinized.

Baldwin Hills Village in Los Angeles is probably the most seriously progressive experiment in home building by private enterprise since Radburn, New Jersey, was started eighteen years ago. Therefore it has national significance and is worth careful evaluation. Although wartime conditions have prevailed during its two years of operation, it is nevertheless possible to begin to answer from practical

experience some questions that had to be decided on purely theoretical grounds in the course of design. Is there really a market for spacious, modern rental housing and highly developed community facilities? For what sort of families? Does the bold plan really work; does it raise new problems?

The density is extremely low—about seven per gross acre—and interior space standards are unusually high; this is probably the most spacious urban rental housing ever built in the United States. Is this openness worth while? How should it affect standards for postwar building, particularly for re-using expensive central sites?

What about costs? If this is "optimum," even luxurious, large-scale housing, how much more does it cost than the minimum "decent, safe, and sanitary" standards of low-rent housing? Is the difference so little that some increase in minimum standards is warranted? What types of initiative—limited dividend, cooperative, insurance company, national building outfits (and with what form of public participation) are likely to be most effective in broadening the new market here opened up?

In this article I can only suggest answers to a fraction of such questions, tentatively and personally. It would be well worth while for a competent research staff to dig up some real answers—much more worth while, I think, than some recent efforts to reach statistical conclusions on whether housewives launder small articles before undressing, or vice versa.

History and Purpose

As early as 1934 a group of Los Angelenos had spotted this stretch of open farmland just inside the southwest city limits, sloping gently up under rough desert hills, as a likely site for a modern community. Reginald Johnson had for some time devoted his entire energies to housing and city planning. His associated firm, Lewis Eugene Wilson, Edwin E. Merrill, and Robert E. Alexander, had likewise considerable experience in housing. Clarence S. Stein, a prime mover of Radburn and many other eastern community experiments, was brought in as an active consultant.

The Rental Housing Division of FHA provided the only likely means of financing such a project (barring 100% equity investment as used by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company). The National Housing Act permits mortgage insurance up to 80% of capital value on approved rental projects which limit the return on their equity to 6%. Rent levels are also limited. The FHA proved to be actively interested.

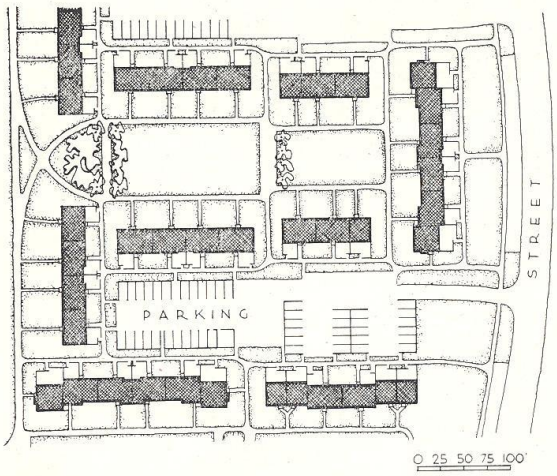
The big difficulty, even with FHA guarantees, was to secure capital for the 80% mortgage at 4% interest (plus ½% for the insurance). After many months of fruitless negotiations with banks and insurance companies, capital was finally secured from the National Mortgage Association (RFC). It is a significant fact, indicating the heavy hand of financial tradition, that this sound, serious enterprise required public financing to start. There was actually more public money in it than there is in most public housing!

By 1941 arrangements were shipshape and construction started. Just as the first rentals were being made, came Pearl Harbor. Which means, of course, that the Village has never yet known "normal" operation. Gas rationing meant that a private bus line had to be put in between the project and the nearest main artery, half a mile away. New individual telephones lines were out, so an exchange had to be set up in the Administration Building. Rents, which average around $12 per room or $52 per unit, were frozen before operating costs were known. And the mass influx of war workers to Los Angeles caused a general housing shortage so severe that it is impossible to tell whether the long waiting list is due primarily to selective popularity or to necessity.

Baldwin Hills Village was never intended for low-income families. It is no substitute for public housing; and at present it doesn't even reach very far into the middle group, although principles and techniques used may have great significance for this vital building market.

Site Development

Above, in front of units, ground cover and flowers, rather than formal lawns, simplify maintenance problems, give privacy to ground floors. Below, portion of plot plan shown on facing page, with alternating service and garden courts. Garages and laundry drying space occupy service courts, which open to surrounding streets; garden courts are extensions of the central green.



Nor is it intended as a universal solution, even for the economic group it does serve. Many settled families want outright ownership of large private yards and individual houses . . . although even here it is likely that some of the Village's communal amenities and services may become popular and influence the whole process of city planning and subdivision. In the past, however, only two broad choices were open even to well-to-do families—the choice between a house-and-garden, normally purchased and taken care of by the occupant, and a rented apartment, usually without facilities for outdoor living and in a poor environment for children. Projects like the Village fill this gap.

Site and General Character

About 8 miles from Los Angeles' Civic Center by highway, 25 to 35 minutes by bus and trolley, Baldwin Hills Village is not ideally accessible in wartime. But the center of decentralized Los Angeles has little routine meaning for the average citizen, and the Port industries, Culver City, and Hollywood are considerably nearer at hand.

Breezy, cooler in summer than most of Los Angeles, sometimes foggy because the Pacific is not many miles beyond the wild, treeless hills to the south, the site is curiously San Franciscan in feeling. Viewed from the hills to the south, the pattern of the Village is as distinct, unified, and unlike the rest of Los Angeles as some Italian medieval town, or Robert Owen's sketch for the Ideal Community. Its long buildings are set in orderly fashion in a clear-cut green rectangle, 1000 by 3000 feet, no roads crossing it, highways around the edge, and beyond that, except for a school to the north and a sprinkle of speculative houses at the northeast corner, only open yellow fields and victory gardens on the lower hill slopes. This protective belt is

probably transitory, however, except for the hills, which may yet be saved since they do not invite subdivision. (These hills have double importance, incidentally, as their rugged incline persuaded the city to permit streets officially platted across this site to be closed.)

The community's real protection must come from its own character and form. Its spaciousness provides, perhaps, the one basic weapon against future blight. But low density alone can be cancelled out by bad planning. So the second, equally important, line of defense for Baldwin Hills Village is its pattern, inward turning toward 20 acres of quiet, permanent Village Green.

There are drawbacks: one wonders why no school was provided within the development. A temporary school is located across Rodeo Road, which will some day be a main highway. Eventually a permanent school will have to be built on a more advantageous site. On the other hand, there is an excellent high school nearby.

The block to the east is set aside as a commercial district for this whole section. I have no means to judge whether this is speculative romance or sensible civic planning: the site does adjoin a major artery, but is pretty rural now. However, Los Angeles will probably have at least one more wave of outlying development. Perhaps it is more urgently important to give sensible expression to this new building on the fringe than to haggle over areas already spoiled.

Experience seems already to suggest that perhaps community facilities cannot be as rigidly segregated as they were originally, with only social and administrative buildings inside the project. A nursery school, left out of the final building scheme, proved to be really needed, and two dwelling units had to be remodeled for the purpose. A general store, lunch-counter, beauty and barber shop perforce took additional units. Even after the big commercial center is available these interior neighborhood services will probably still be required.

Organization of Space

The primary planning axiom, already suggested, was spaciousness. The land was cheap, $2,300 per acre, the site flat enough for freedom. The architects wanted an open suburban character, orderly but informal, dominated more by green than by buildings. The result was the extremely low density, for these 627 family units, of 7.3 per gross acre. This amplitude of space had to be clearly articulated according to function: for community amenity, recreation, and interior communication; for auto access and services; and for private outdoor living. This meant discarding traditional concepts of streets, sidewalks, lots, or yards. It was decided that about one-third of the project should be planned for families without children, to the advantage of both childless families and those with children.

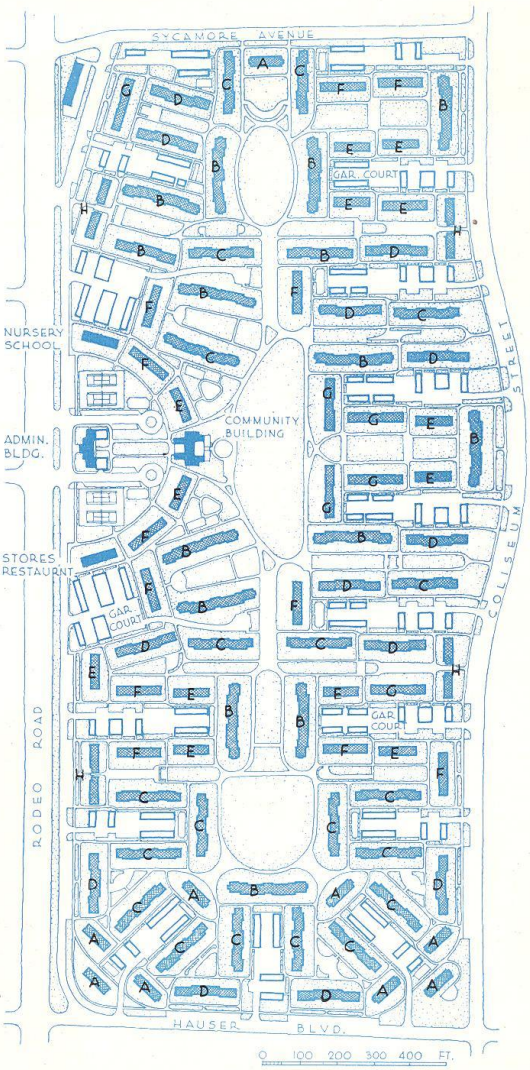
The entire area, about 80 acres, was considered one huge super-block, with residential and community buildings all turning in toward the open green core. In most suburban neighborhoods the skeleton is the street-system: indeed, the very word "subdivision" implies a cutting-up process. But in Baldwin Hills the entire scheme is determined by a flowing central park area: the Village Green, in three segments, radiating out on all sides into smaller garden courts surrounded by residential groups, with at least 100 feet between facades. Access roads, garages, and service courts form an entirely separate system, indented from the outside. In this project, for the first time in large-scale rental housing, another type of space was recognized as essential: *private* outdoor living areas, which are provided by patios, usually wall-enclosed, and to a lesser extent by balconies.

Community Space

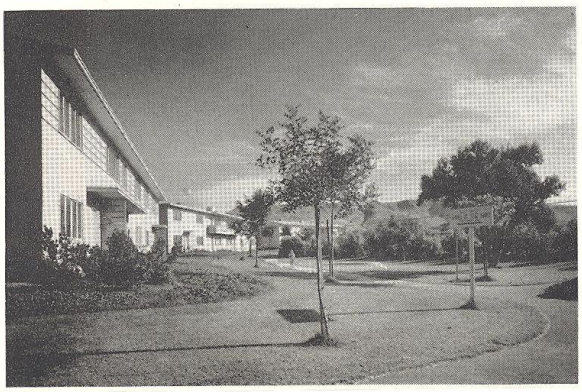
The central park and garden court have varied purposes: large grass areas for general use; flower-plots, trees, and a pool for pleasure; playgrounds, tennis, and badminton courts for specific use; and finally, a 20- to 30-foot strip of ground-cover (usually ivy) along the fronts of all residential buildings, to insure privacy for ground-floor rooms and discourage children's play too close to open windows. Maybe the Green is too "pure"; there is nowhere to sit, for instance.

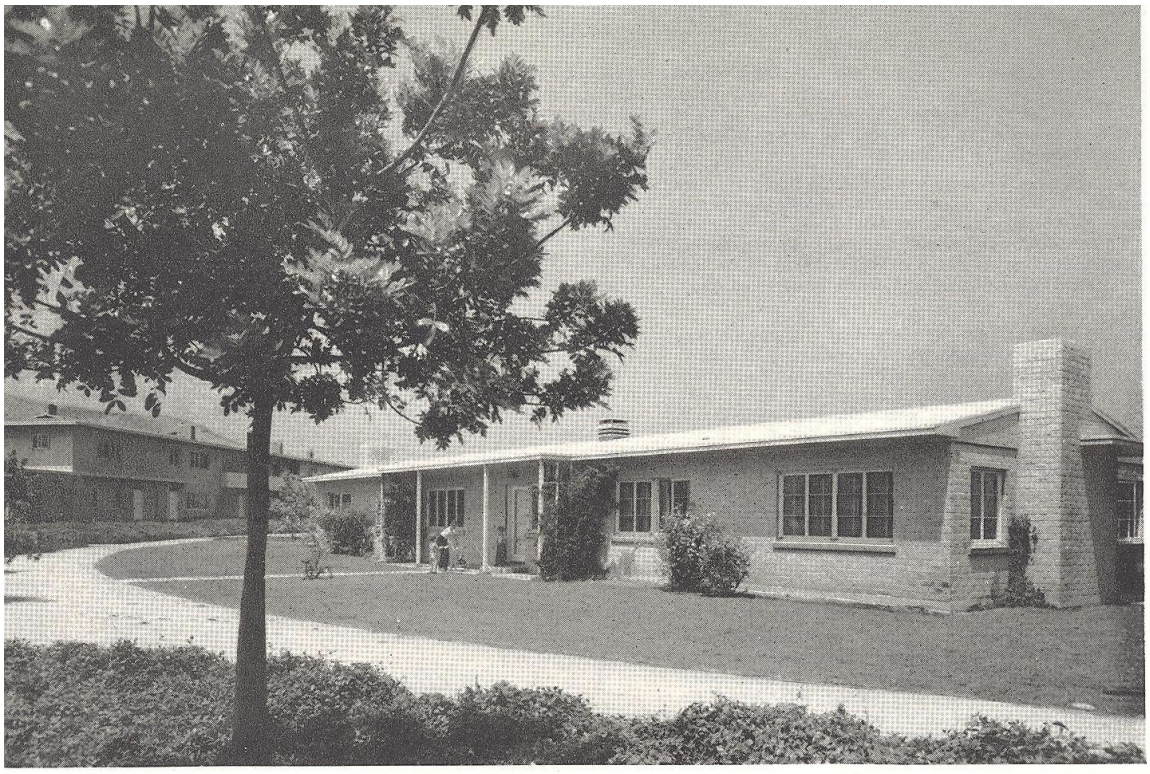
Service Space

Access roads come into seventeen paved garage courts, with individual car-shelters, each with a locked storage bin in the upper part of the rear wall, suitable for trunks and such. (This is the only rough storage provided; it seems satisfactory.)

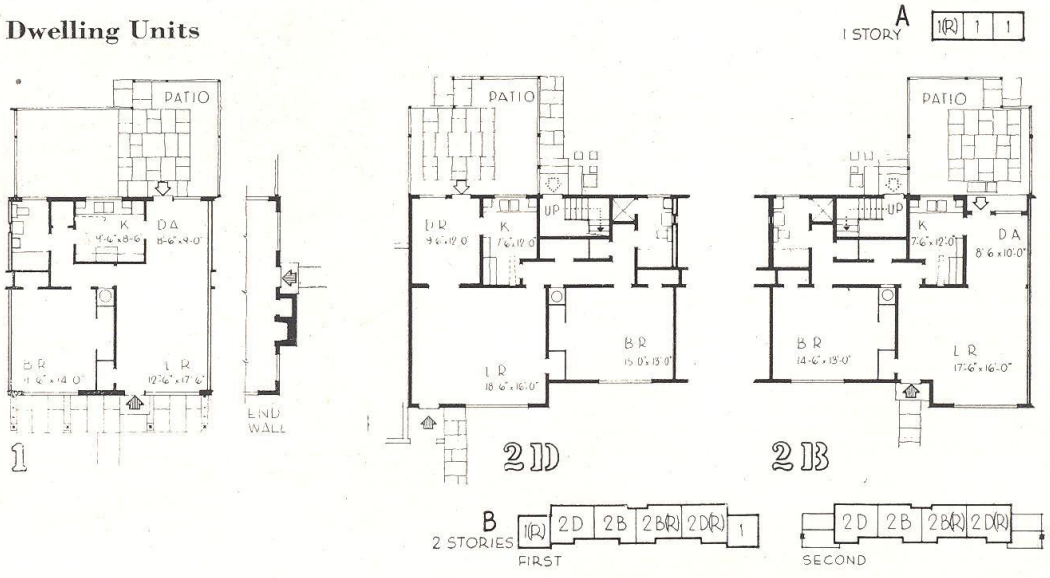


Plot plan (right) is bold, a huge superblock with three separate systems of open space: connecting parks and pathways; service and access courts; private outdoor living areas. Density is very low—about seven per gross acre.

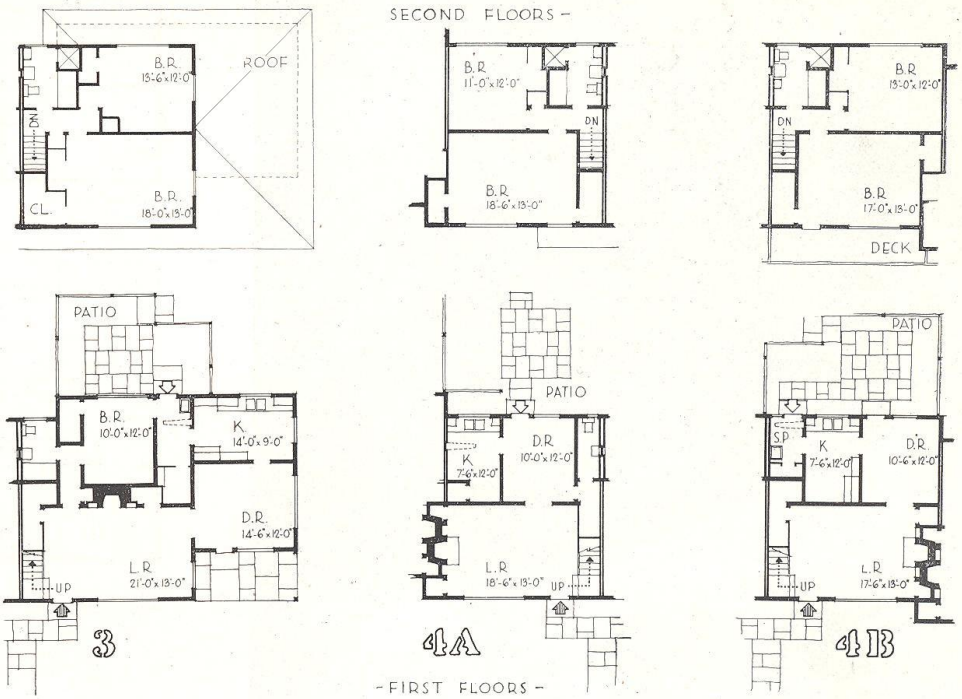


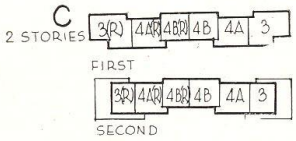


Dwelling Units

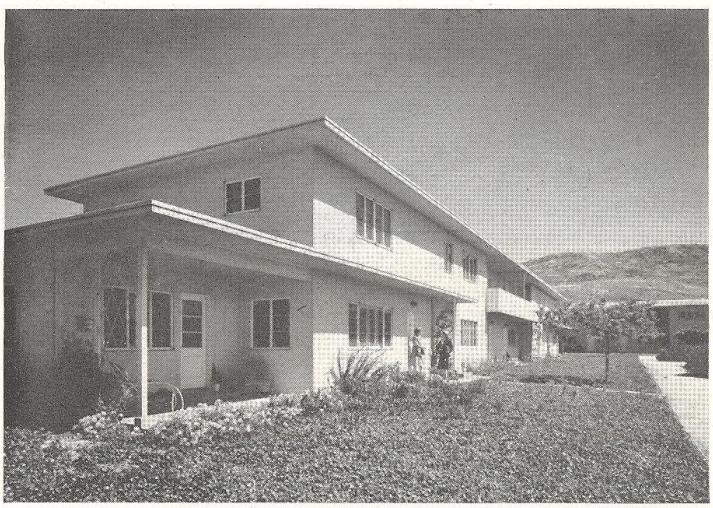


Two-story buildings, 175 to 225 ft. long, predominate, with a few shorter one-story units, and some two-story in the middle stepping down to one-story at each end. (Such "broken" buildings, Catherine Bauer says, always seem rather awkward.) Facades fronting on the central Green are all two-story, all very plain—balconies and patios are in the rear—and the effect, with ivy-ground-cover already up to the lower window levels, is somehow English-at-its best; buildings vary in color: cream, salmon, light green.





Considering the buildings individually, one must admit that while they are contemporary in feeling, relatively simple and honest, they are nevertheless not exactly exciting as "modern" architecture. Connoisseurs of modern design won't find them esthetically interesting, whether or not the essential, bold modernity of the whole is appreciated. Yet this lack of sophistication may have certain values: it helps to emphasize the basic innovations in plan and pattern of living envisioned; and the fact that it does not startle the average citizen with superficial strangenesses may actually increase its worth as an educative force toward good large-scale planning.



Most garages are reasonably close to dwelling units; a few may be up to 150 to 200 feet away, 300 in extreme cases. Years ago, everybody said such a distance would never be accepted in America; yet at Baldwin Hills people recognize that the amenities they get in return for this minor inconvenience are more than worth the price.

One curious fact, demonstrated by two years of experience, is that a walled garage enclosure is more important than roof-shelter. Cars in cubby-holes apparently make fascinating play-dens for children: a bonfire was even built under one. Now the management is gradually closing them in.

Adjacent to all the garage courts are public laundries and drying yards. (Hooks are also put up in garages, for drying in wet weather.) Only the largest dwellings have utility rooms and laundry tubs of their own, and even they must use the public yards for outdoor drying, as this is

DWELLING UNITS, POPULATION, RENTALS

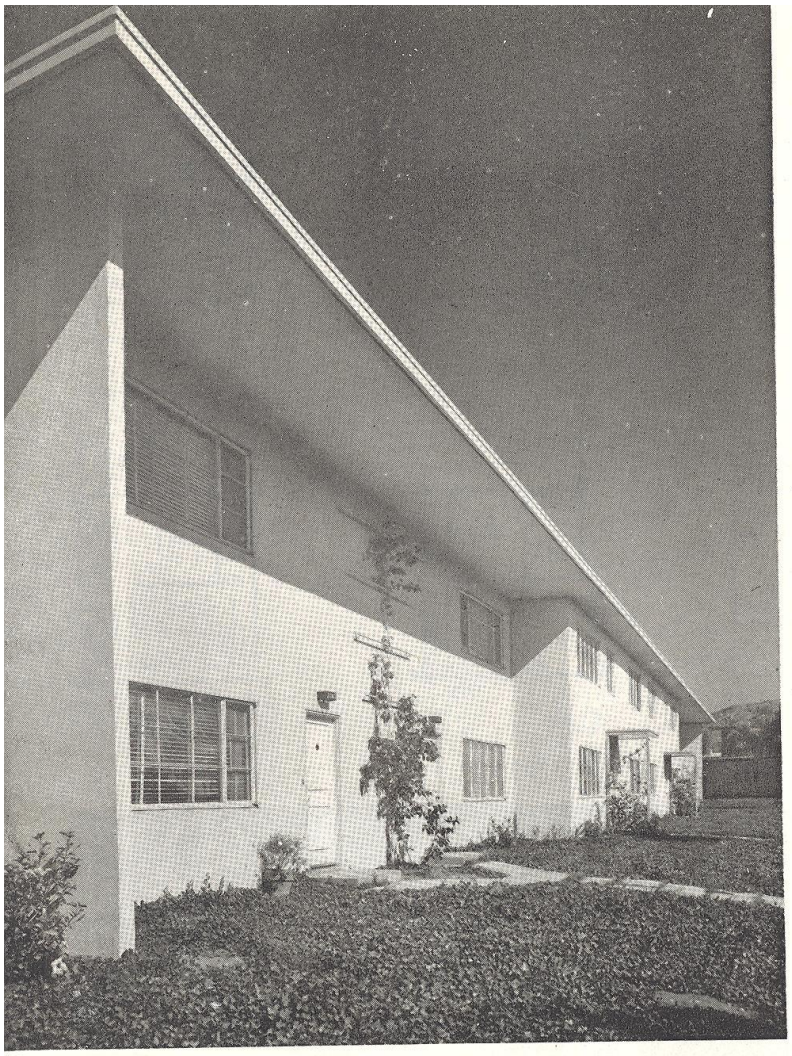
NUMBER OF UNITS		UNITS BY SIZE	
1-story	55	1-bedroom	275
2-story	216	2-bedroom	312
Flats*	356	3-bedroom	40
TOTAL	627	TOTAL	627

* Flats in 2-story units, each with ground-floor entrance.

POPULATION
Total is approximately 2000, of whom 435 are less than 5 years old.

DINING FACILITIES PROVIDED		EXTRA SPACE	
Dining Rooms	356	Patios	450
Dining Alcoves	143	Balconies	126
Eat in Living Room	128	Utility rooms	80

RENTALS
Range is $45 (1 BR, B, LR, K, D; or 2 BR, B, LR, K, Patio) to $80 (3 BR, 2B, LR, K, D, Patio). Average rent: $12 per room, $52 per unit, including water, garage, garbage collection, excluding heat and light.



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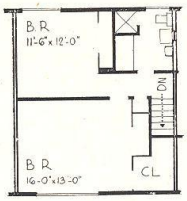
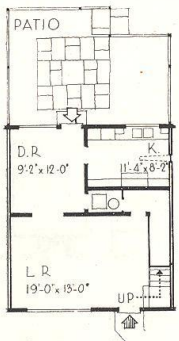


SECOND FLOOR



4 FIRST FLOOR

Dwelling Units (cont'd)

Interior spaciousness is relatively as great as exterior: Average area per dwelling unit is 1,080 sq. ft., average room count, 4.3 per unit. Permanent public projects in Los Angeles area average 750 to 850 sq. ft., with higher room ratios. Net living space per 2-bedroom unit in Baldwin Hills (excluding halls, stairs, closets) is 44% greater than in Dana, 67% than Channel Heights, 93% than Normont (all public projects).

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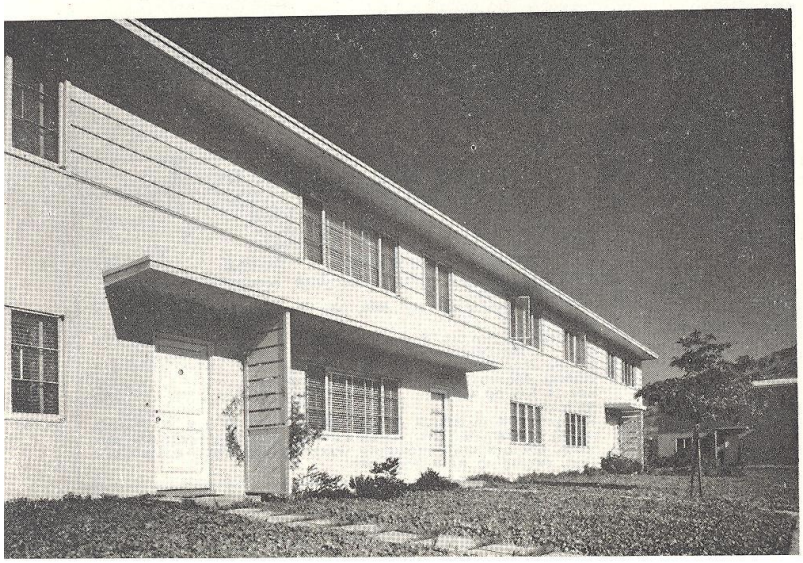

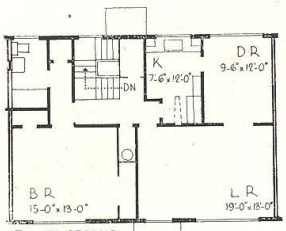

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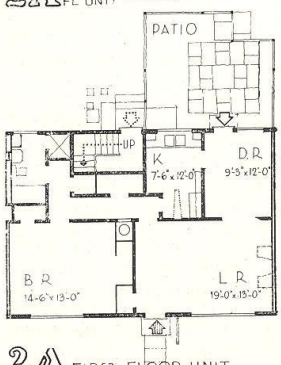
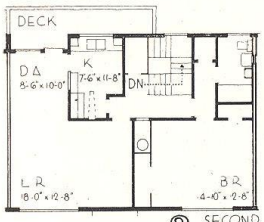


2A FIRST FLOOR UNIT



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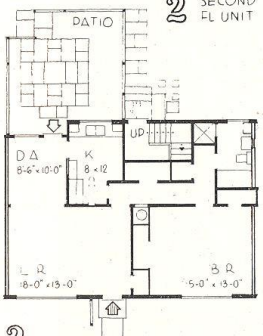
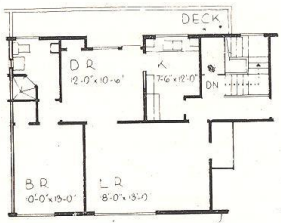


2 FIRST FLOOR UNIT



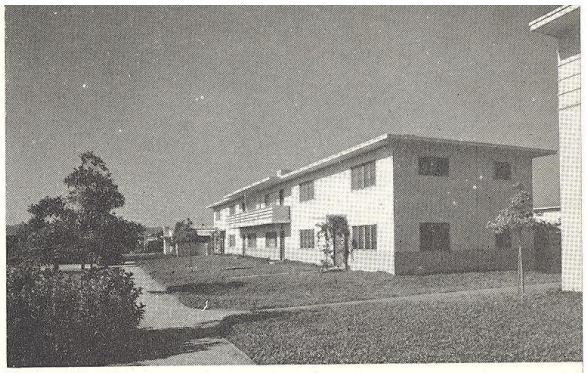
2C SECOND FLOOR UNIT

rigorously prohibited in patios (on the grounds, rather unconvincing to me, that second-floor living rooms should not have to look down on wash-lines). Laundries have nickel-in-the-slot wash machines and space for privately owned machines. Schedules are carefully worked out for use of both laundries and yards, the latter considerably larger in the non-adult sections. Apparently this is one unsolved problem—or perhaps the wartime volume of home laundry and shortage of help are aggravating factors, particularly at this income level. But almost everyone felt that the only ideal solution would be a utility room or porch, and drying yard, for each home, though that would add considerably to costs. It was originally expected that most laundry would be done commercially, and perhaps, after the war, this will be the case.

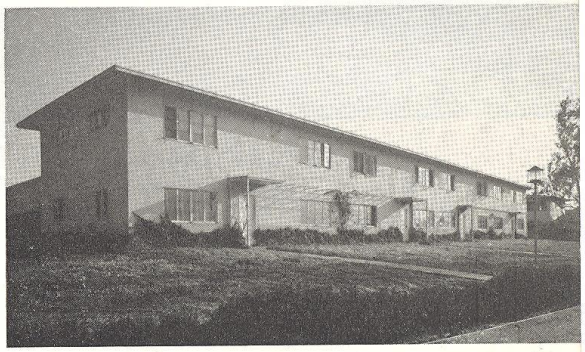
Private Outdoor Space

Of the 627 dwellings in the Village, 450 have private patios, most of them enclosed by 6-foot walls, the rest by hedges. It is now agreed that practically all should have walls, and that almost all dwellings should be supplied with them. This whole principle seems to me one of the things we should try to get accepted as a *minimum* standard.

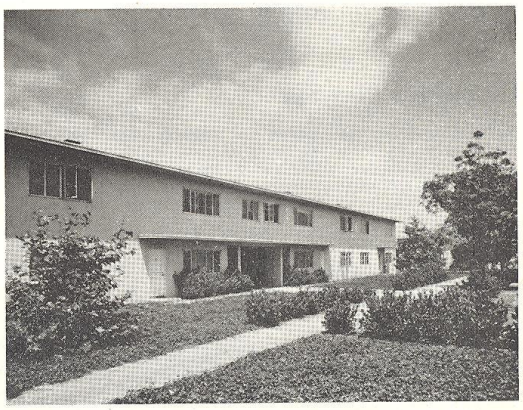
In plan the patio is simply an old-fashioned, enlarged back porch, opening off the dining space near the kitchen. Its outside door is really the service entrance, and opens on a narrow path walled or hedged off from the garage court. In area the patios range from 250 to 400 square feet. When I first saw them, under construction, I felt they might be rather cramped, particularly as they are in part service yards as well as outdoor living rooms, and include meters and sunken garbage-pails. But on seeing them again after two years of use I changed my mind. They seem to offer adequate if not luxurious leeway for outdoor eating, sunbathing, infants' play, and varied, if small-scale, gardening . . . though obviously not all at once. The patio would



F 2 STORIES



G 2 STORIES



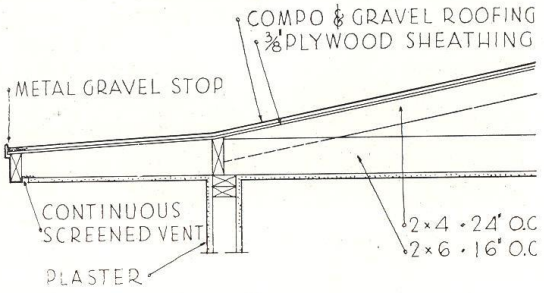
H 2 STORIES FIRST SECOND

Typical Room Areas, Baldwin Hills Village:

Living Room ...255 sq. ft.	*Kitchen ..... 98 sq. ft.*
1st Bedroom ...208 sq. ft.	*Dining Area ...120 sq. ft.*
2nd Bedroom ..132 sq. ft.	*Bath ....68 and 48 sq. ft.*

This is really optimum *standard space: a living room in a $60 unit takes a grand piano easily.*

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. Long unit above occurs only at four exterior walk entrances, emphasizes the feeling of entering a protected retreat. Like other buildings it is long and low, with 2½-ft. overhang at eaves.



TYPICAL CORNICE DETAIL 0 3 6 9 IN

Children's Play Space

Several enclosed play yards are scattered through the community. In these, mothers of families are getting organized to spell each other for group supervision. Apparently this kind of cooperation doesn't come very easily, perhaps particularly in this upper-middle economic and social group.

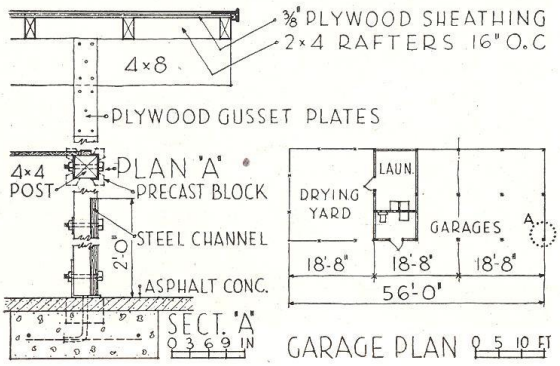
have been more serviceable as an extension of indoor living area had floor-to-ceiling windows been used at this point.

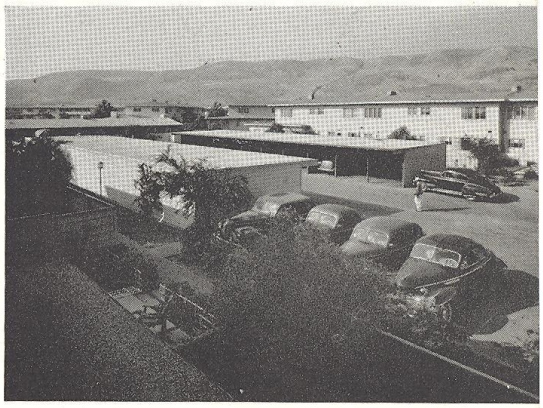
Refuse is collected by the management from every patio or rear entrance twice a week, and brought to a central station for city collection—a rather expensive process. Incinerators were originally considered, and opinion is divided as to whether they would be better than the present system.

Balconies afford outdoor living space to most of the upstairs flats. 126 units have balconies, some 40 of them patios as well, and some have 2 balconies. They are large enough for eating and sitting but, although they are greatly in demand, seem to a casual eye seldom used except for baby carriages or play pens. We have never in America taken to balcony life as they have in Europe; whatever the reason, it is generally agreed that a balcony is no substitute for a patio.

Perhaps a word should be said about the "front" and "back" situation. Here much the same problem exists as in Radburn and many public projects. The front door, theoret-

Garages





ically, opens from the living room into the public gardens and Green. Yet this is rarely used; anyone arriving by car will naturally come in from the garage court, entering usually by the patio and dining space. Perhaps this is quite okay, but I am not entirely satisfied that dwelling plans yet quite recognize that the "service" door *is*, in actuality, THE main entrance.

One theory, which has had considerable currency among the planning intelligentsia, I am glad to see blasted anew: namely, that in the interest of scientific orientation all dwellings must face the same way in a modern plan, thus disposing of any difference between one side of a row and the other. The invidious distinction between Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann backs was thus to be liquidated. Actually, there never was a time when the functional difference between recreation space and service space was more necessary than it is today. If necessary, differentiation in use and treatment of courts would have to take precedence over orientation. Variation of floor plans from one side of a court to another will usually take care of problems in room orientation.

Building Masses: Construction and Architecture

Construction is of standard Southern California frame and plaster, except that 9% of the apartments have reinforced brick exterior walls. All buildings rest on two slabs of concrete with membrane waterproofing between. Second floors, when different apartment units are on top of each other, are of floating construction for noise isolation. A few minor cracks have developed on the outside, probably less than would normally be expected, and none whatever on the interior. Windows are steel casements with two or three horizontal panes and are simple and quite large if not particularly dramatic. Permanent screens and venetian blinds are included. Heat is furnished by gas-fired, forced-warm-air, unit heaters. Many units have wood-burning fireplaces. Ground story floors are oak finish.

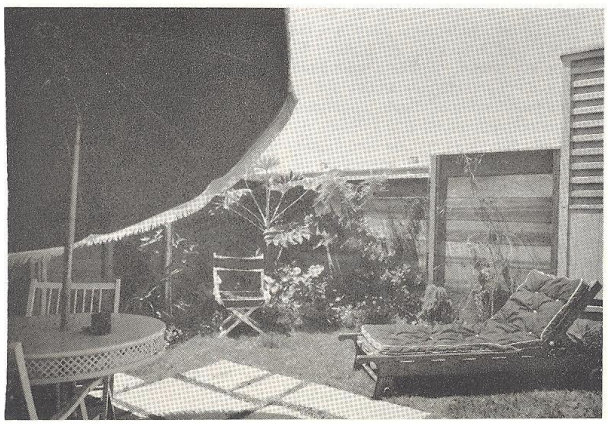
Colors are pastel, and to this eye seem a little too pale to have much effect on the pattern of the ensemble, although this may be due partly to post-Pearl-Harbor paint. One also misses the bright flower-masses originally planned, but omitted for lack of maintenance.

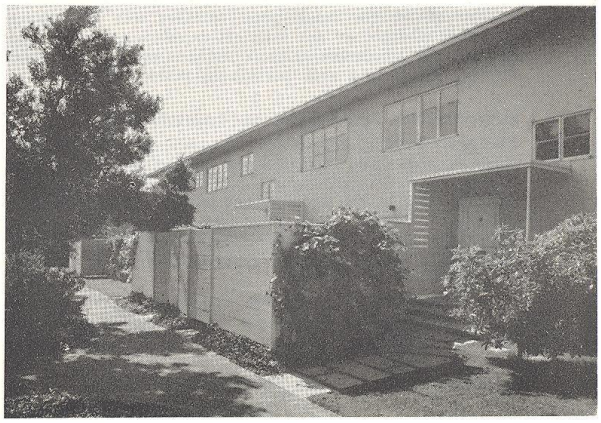
The community group—2-story green administration building and apricot club-house with a broad terrace—is on a strong central axis which bisects the Green. They are set in bright formal gardens, crisp with massed geraniums, low hedges, rows of olive trees, grassed squares, and gravel paths. A pool, waterless until someone figures out a way to keep babies out of it, lies toward the Green.

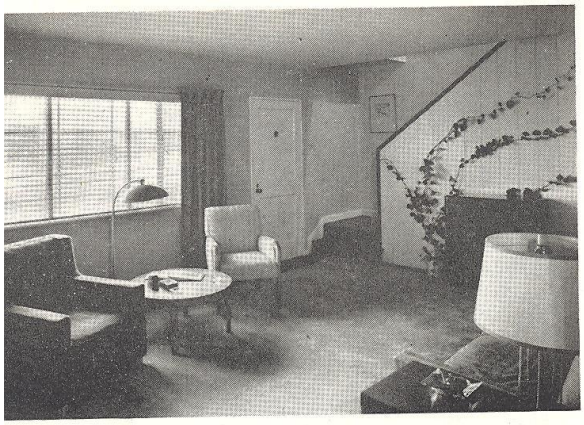
The emphasis on the central axis seems to me curiously out of key. Not merely unfashionable, it implies a monumentality completely belied by the entire spirit of the undertaking. Prime factors for unity and harmony are the long, low buildings and the standard roof design, with its 2½ to 12 pitch curving down into a flat 2'-6" overhang, very light and almost Oriental. The "architecture," if it isn't striking or exciting, is nevertheless sound, pleasant modern vernacular, much better than if it had been pretentious and failed.

One fact-of-life about large-scale housing design has further proof in Baldwin Village, as its architects are happy to acknowledge. Minor variations for variety's sake are quite meaningless in anything so large. Special refinements in plan can usually only be appreciated on paper or from an airplane: on the ground they are either invisible or tend merely to cause slight confusion. Subtle variations in building design or landscaping are often even less effec-

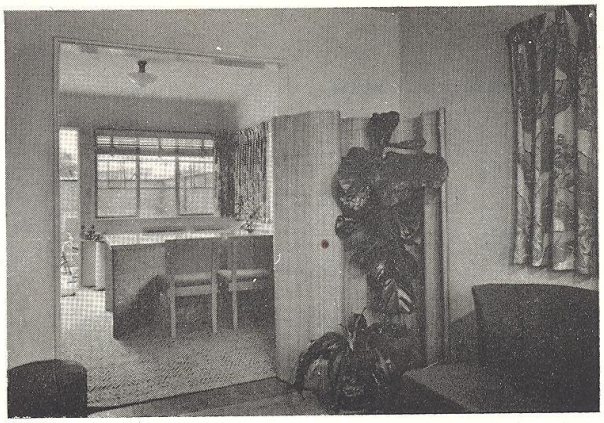
Private Outdoor Area







Typical living room



Dining area

tive. Only bold contrasts really count. Real variety and visual interest is perhaps most likely to come from big simple rhythms: the *dick-dick* and *dock-dock-dock* of repeated standard dwelling forms punctuated by the *Bong!* of buildings designed for special purposes. A well designed nursery school, or a new building for neighborhood services, or a swimming pool, would greatly enrich the Village.

As for preferences in dining space—i.e., whether it should be a separate room, an alcove off the living room, or merely extra space in kitchen or living room—there are as usual no clear-cut conclusions. In 80% of the units there is either dining room or dining alcove making an ell with the living room . . . with few vestigial inches of partition framing the opening. There is no eating space in kitchens except in a few of the largest units. In 128 smaller units, dining is in the living room.

This seems satisfactory and the architects feel they hit it about right. However, the able manager, Mrs Jennings, thinks that many families would like kitchen dining space, and that some would give up a separate dining room to get it, *if* they had a living room large enough for fancy dinners. Probably the typical Baldwin Village arrangement is the best general solution. But I do believe that ideally efficient kitchens should include some extra space, for eating, comfortable sitting, a play-pen, or just elbow-room.

One change the architects would make if they were doing it over would be to have more 1-story structures, and fewer flats one over the other. People like to be at ground level, more could have patios, and they would be more private. Also, with all the insulation between floors, noise still gets through. The greater ground coverage from more 1-story structures could easily have been absorbed at this low density.

The error (or what seems an error at this time) for which FHA was primarily to blame was too many 1-bedroom units (40%). A prime purpose behind the enterprise was to provide good rental housing for families with children, yet FHA's conviction that rental units are usually temporary lighting places for small adult families was too strong. Actually, whether or not wartime experience is a fair indication, the 1-bedroom units are least in demand and many families apparently seek permanent residences.

Village Facilities: Pros and Cons on "Community Living"

The central office, in addition to receiving packages, telephone messages and such, provides one unique service: even in wartime, it maintains a pool of maids, who are paid on a monthly basis by the management and may be employed by tenants for 60¢ an hour. This seems to me, in its opportunity for professionalizing domestic service, to offer the rudiments of the only sensible future answer to the "servant problem."

On the social side the children's angle may be considered first. A temporary elementary school with complete athletic and playground facilities lies across Rodeo Road, and the excellent high school is within easy walking distance. Inside the Village, the nursery school, which occupies two remodeled dwelling units, takes care of about 30 children at a time. A large enclosed playground a few yards away has sand-boxes, a large shelter, swings, etc.

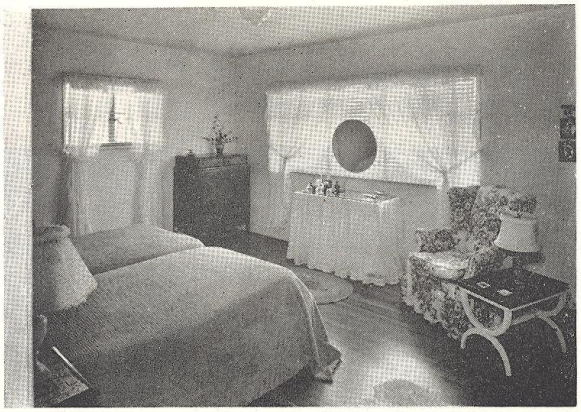
Administration of the nursery school has gone through three stages. At first it was run by the management, on a concession basis; later it was taken over directly by a tenants' organization, the Children's Center Association, and it was finally decided to arrange to put the school under the Lanham Act, which reduces the cost for full daily care and makes it available to all working mothers, whether in a war-industry or not, regardless of income. On this basis the school's enrollment could be trebled overnight, but part-time care cannot be provided. If Lanham Act developments are a sign that sooner or later nursery schools will be part of the public school system, or receive public assistance, the problem of integrating their sites into neighborhood patterns will be more important than ever.

There seems to be a general conviction that the Village works perfectly for infants. For children from the age of about 4 to 8 or 10, however, there is some feeling that an old-fashioned back yard still has advantages over the limitless Green. To offset part of the difficulty, a tenant group is sponsoring the employment of a professional recreational director for the summer to supervise the school playground across the road.

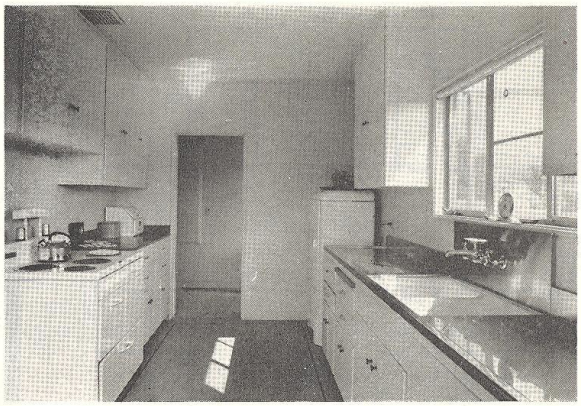
Every tenant is automatically a member of the "Villagers," an organization without dues, which initiates much of the social activity and publishes a neighborhood news sheet. Entirely independent of the management, the Villagers have stuck to social matters. There is, however, a "Committee of Three" which handles "little gripes" with the management. Presumably if a major issue arose the existence of a responsible well-established tenants' organization would help.

Not many, I think, object seriously to the rules and regulations, which are as a matter of fact very few. Initial policy regarding pets was to charge $2 a month for a dog, $1 for a cat. Now, however, they are trying to eliminate dogs entirely and keep cats at home. For what they are worth, I have my lonely doubts about such regulations as the following: "Tenants are asked not to air or sun their babies at the front door of their apartments . . .in order to maintain the character of the Village. . . . Tenants are reminded that laundry must not be hung from balconies or in patios." Another, much larger, question, in which I am probably even more alone, is this matter of "careful selection" of tenants. I have a strong chemical reaction against everything this phrase implies: racial discrimination, and the conscious effort to create a one-class community of nice, conforming, socially acceptable people.

On the other hand, one must be realistic if one believes in gradual progress. I might not choose to live in *any* select middle-class neighborhood, planned or unplanned, but a great many of the very people discriminating enough to



Bedroom



Kitchen

appreciate the physical advantages of Baldwin Hills Village will also demand neighbors as much like themselves as possible, rightly or wrongly. If they were organizing a cooperative to produce their own housing, they should certainly have the privilege of getting together a congenial group. So why can't that principle be extended to the selective process in a development like the Village? Perhaps this is all a Bohemian hangover, a matter of my own personal taste.

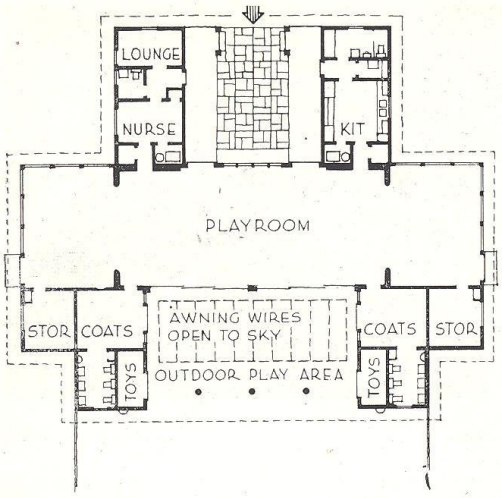
And yet, discrimination and class-segregation are somehow more positively crystallized when they are practiced in such an efficient, official, wholesale way than when they develop accidentally and imperfectly. To proceed from the latter to the former is hardly gradual progress: it's moving backward. I don't know the answer—and it's almost as difficult in public housing. But perhaps one can hope for a group of hardy cosmopolitan souls with positive ideas about democracy in each and every community development, to persuade the rest gradually that the most interesting, stimulating, mutually enriching communities are made up of *different* kinds of people . . . and that anyway, people aren't nearly as different as they are sometimes made out to be.

Optimum versus Minimum: the Cost Differential between "Good" and "Decent" Housing

If Baldwin Hills Village is in many ways the most attractive, livable rental community in the country, how much does this extra degree of amenity cost? Some of it comes from good modern planning techniques, of course, and costs nothing but sense and sensibility on the part of the planner and entrepreneur. And cheap land facilitated great openness. But a lot of the attractiveness of the Village derives from standards of space, facilities, and equipment meas-

Interiors

Below, living room. Storage space is better than in many tailor-made expensive homes. Some apartments have 7 closets, most have 5, with 25 to 30 ft. of pole. Each master bedroom has a whole wall of closets faced with painted vertical boards. The kitchens, large, ordinarily have no eating space, but are equipped with stainless steel drainboards, large divided sinks, ample cupboard space. Most of the tiled baths have stall showers.



FLOOR PLAN 0 10 20 FT

Club House

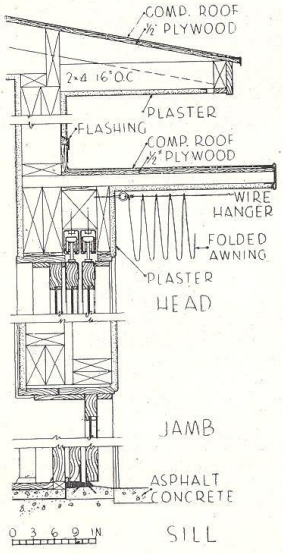
This building was first intended for a nursery school; now it houses facilities for games, rental library, darkroom, kitchen, parties. In the village are courts, etc., for several types of games. Nearby are four public golf courses; a playground adjoins.

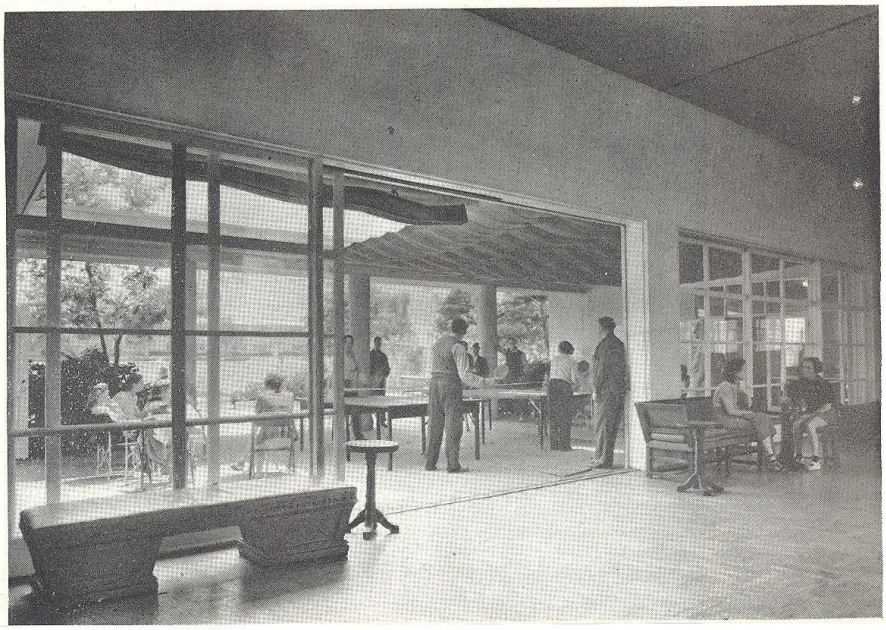
urably higher than those in other large-scale housing, public or private.

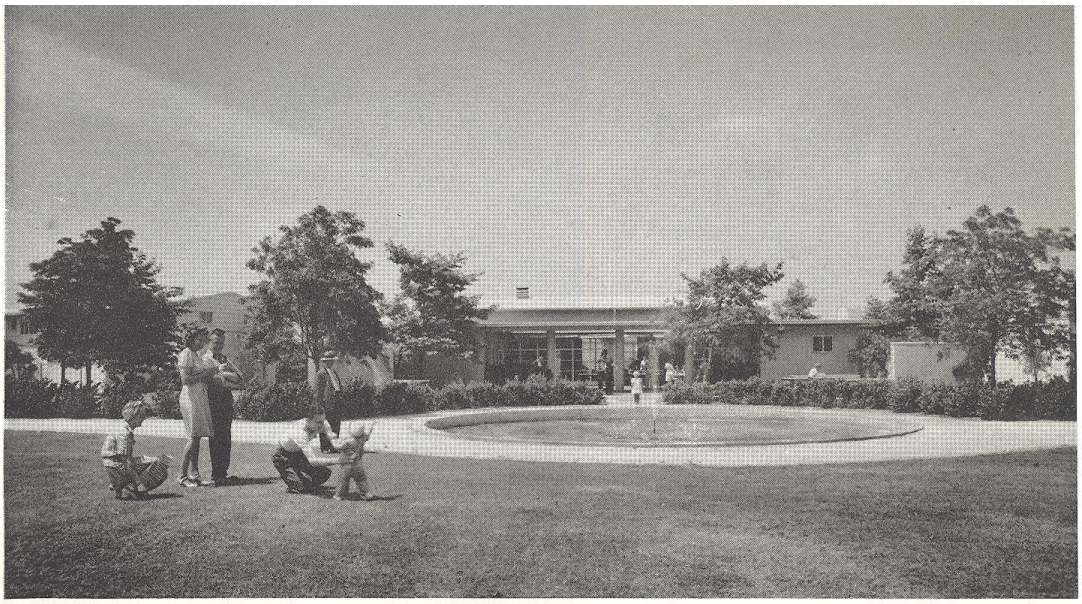
It has always seemed to me that the minimum standards developed by USHA for permanent public housing were in some respects too low— particularly in the matter of space, exterior and interior. Since much war housing has necessarily pared even these standards down still further, the whole subject requires fresh, careful study.

All housing costs are subject to varied conditions dependent on time and place. And in the early 1940's other fluctuating conditions entered the picture which make any rigid comparison difficult if not impossible. Nevertheless the Los Angeles City Housing Authority, an efficient agency which employs good architects and has achieved about the highest local level of public housing quality in the country, did build a number of projects at about the same time as Baldwin Village. And perhaps it may be worth while to set down a few figures on some of these projects next to the figures for the Village, to see what suggestions they offer. (See table.) I would have liked to include the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's Los Angeles project, but figures were not readily available.

The overall cost per dwelling unit for Baldwin Village is $4911, and the average for the five public projects is $4385—11% lower, or a difference of $526 per family. This is not a fair comparison, however, due to the high cost of central sites and slum clearance for three of the public projects. From a planning point of view this is very significant, of course, and these few figures indicate difficulties in the way of any central redevelopment which includes modern amenity and decent space standards. They also tend to show that use of cheap outlying property entails land costs relatively so small that density can be very low indeed—lower, in many instances, than the old USHA prescriptions. For a







". . . pool, waterless until someone figures out a way to keep babies out of it . . ." was designed for children to wade in.

closer comparison it seems desirable to eliminate the land factor and also, because its peculiar site resulted in abnormal land development costs, to exclude Channel Heights entirely. Excluding land the cost per unit of Baldwin Village is $4597, and the average for the four public projects is $3547 . . . 23% lower, or a difference of $1050 per family.

No resounding generalizations should be drawn from these figures, which are only roughly comparable. But perhaps it would be reasonable to claim some evidence that, excluding the land and location factor, permanent community housing of "decent, safe, and sanitary" but minimum standards cost 20% to 25% less than community housing of luxury standards in Los Angeles in the early 1940's. What does one get for this extra $1000?

Landscaping and outdoor recreational and service areas much more highly developed than in public projects, and covering about twice as much open space per family;

Garages; lawn sprinkler system; laundries with enclosed drying yards; enclosed playgrounds; athletic facilities;

Private patios and balconies;

Much larger rooms, particularly living-dining areas; luxurious storage space;

Better heating and hot water systems, plumbing and electric installations;

Oak floors, tile baths, stainless steel drainboards, Venetian blinds, etc.;

Many fireplaces, some extra bathrooms.

This is a lot, and few would feel that *all* of it is necessary in public housing . . . or in cooperative or other forms of enterprise to meet the needs of that famous "middle" group. But surely there is evidence that even 10% more leeway in the costs and standards of "minimum" modern housing might bring a social return much greater than 10% in more space, more amenity, and more convenience.

Perhaps the most significant single item is the cost of site improvements, landscaping, and utilities. The cost per unit for Baldwin Hills Village is $637, for the public projects (excluding Channel Heights) $403 . . . only $234 difference, although the Village has only half the density of population, and open space far more highly developed for varied use and beauty than do the public projects. (Some allowance should probably be made on the other side, however, for the extra cost of footings and such in clearance projects.)

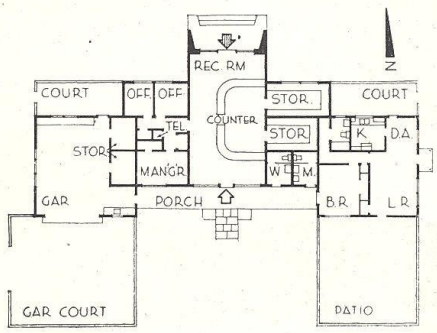
Some discrepancy appears, it should be noted, in the item on Community Buildings, since the figure for Baldwin Village does not include the cost of the nursery school, shop,

COSTS PER DWELLING UNIT

Project	BALDWIN HILLS VILLAGE	PICO GARDENS	ALISO VILLAGE	ROSE HILL COURTS	HACIENDA VILLAGE	CHANNEL HEIGHTS	AVERAGE COST FOR PUBLIC PROJECTS
Sponsorship	Private, FHA Insured	Los Angeles City Housing Authority; mostly for war workers, but all "permanent," all but Channel Heights built under U. S. Housing Act.					
No. Units	627	260	802	100	184	600	
Construction	Stucco, wood frame (ex. 9% masonry)	Stucco, wood frame	Some masonry; some stucco, wood frame	Stucco, wood frame	Wood, stucco, wood frame	Wood, stucco, wood frame	
Families per gross acre	7	16	19	16	10	9	
Height	2 story, some 1	2 story	2 and 3 story	1 and 2 story	1 story	1 and 2 story	
Rooms per unit	4.3 (FHA count)	5.2 (FPHA)	4.3 (FPHA)	4.4 (FPHA)	4.3 (FPHA)	4.2 (FPHA)	
Contract awarded	Feb. '41	Jan. '42	Feb. '42	Dec. '41	Nov. '41	May '42	
Completed[1]	Oct. '42	Aug. '42	Mar. '43	June '42	July '42	July '43	
COSTS: Land	$314	$1311[2]	$1022[2]	$796[2]	$279	$103	
Site impvmt.[3]	637	407	437	357	412	1163[4]	
Dwelling construction[5]	3730	2977	3441	2912	2704	2825	
Garages	138	none	none	none	none	none	
Community buildings	92[6]	107	132	165	138	236	
TOTAL PHYSICAL COST PER UNIT	$4911	$4802	$5032	$4230	$3533	$4327	$4385
TOTAL, EXCLUDING LAND	$4597	$3491	$4010	$3434	$3254	—	$3547[7]

NOTES: Figures include: Contractor's, architect's, engineer's fees; supervision. Excluded are carrying charges, pre-occupancy, administrative, or financial expenses.
[1], occupancy often earlier. [2], including slum clearance. [3], including utilities and landscaping. [4], extremely rough site. [5], including equipment. [6], including administration, club, and laundry buildings, but not dwellings now used for nursery school, etc. [7], excluding Channel Heights.

Administration Building



FLOOR PLAN 0 10 20 FT

All administrative functions are carried on in this building, whose area seems adequate even for such abnormal functions as the telephone exchange (required because of war conditions). The central hall, where most tenant business is carried on, is high and airy, with clerestory light coming in over the entrance doors through ribbed glass. The lower part of the opposite wall is clear glass (see photo, page 44) and through it one can look across a formal garden to the Club House. Above the glass is a mural by Rico Le Brun.

etc. temporarily transformed from dwelling units while some of the public projects include these facilities.

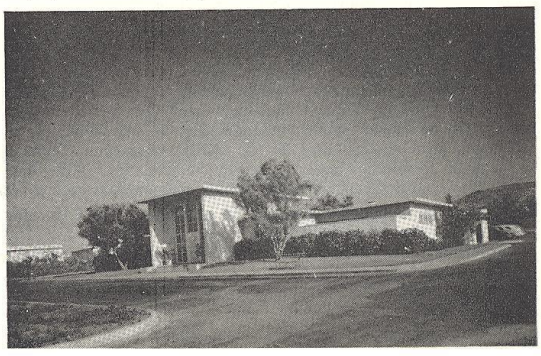
If these few superficial figures help to stimulate some organization to initiate a thorough cost analysis, from the angle of standards and quality, of our vast and varied experience with large-scale housing, public and private, they will have served their purpose. Such an analysis should of course go much farther than a mere breakdown of capital costs. In annual costs—which are what tenants and owners actually pay—operation, maintenance, and repairs, interest and amortization rates, are just as important as first costs. Some figures before me seem to indicate that there is surprisingly little difference between the operating and maintenance costs of Baldwin Village and that of public projects. But they require much more exact definition.

To summarize the improvements upon "minimum standards" which seem to me most vitally needed:

1. Lower densities. (On cheap land this can be achieved with little, if any, added cost. Expensive central sites will require special subsidies toward land acquisition—already recognized as the heart of Urban Redevelopment policy.)
2. Bigger rooms and more storage and utility space.
3. Space for *private* outdoor living for every family, whether in patios, enclosed gardens, or good-sized balconies.

Baldwin Hills Village leads the entire housing field in all three of these qualities. That is the basic reason for its markedly greater livability and attractiveness.

Reception Room



Exterior from Rodeo Rd.

Perspectives

A Head, Heart, a Soul, and a Purpose:

Robert Evans Alexander

Editorial Note: We asked Larry Perkins of the Chicago firm, Perkins, Wheeler, and Will, to do a piece on his friend, Bob Alexander, one of the architects of Baldwin Hills Village. In the course of reviving memories and getting up to date, Larry received from Bob a long, revealing letter on the stationery of a famous aircraft company where Bob is now a departmental executive. Part of the letter follows:

"As you know, I was hired by Vega—now Lockheed, Factory A—in 1942, and haven't been found out yet. I have been in the Production Control Division during this time, and have lost plenty of hair off my head in the process. This has been compensated for by a corresponding growth on my chest. At present, I am engaged in what some call Industrial Engineering—finding ways and means to produce more and better service for less cost . . . (For a while) I was in a fury of work . . . Things have cooled off noticeably since we overcame the problem of multiplying production by five. The planes are rolling out as fast as ever, but with one-third less effort . . ."

The key to Bob as an architect is contained in these phrases: "more and better service for less," and "the planes are rolling out as fast with one-third less effort." Notice that he landed in production control—probably after vigorous persuasion to stay out of plant maintenance drafting. He is where he can apply a flaming creative imagination to the problems of "one-third less effort." I seriously doubt that he hasn't been found out yet; nor does the manpower shortage account for his continuing where he is. What more logical place could there be for a mind trained to plan, visualize, and act than in improving methods of doing things? This job Bob holds is a distinct contribution to a profession which is fighting out from behind the impractical dreamer reputation; for, make no mistake, this is no hybrid "Architectural Engineer" or practical man. In the old sense he would be considered a plain, straight designer and a red hot one at that.

Robert Evans Alexander is concerned with beauty—he draws fast and accurately—his sketches are vigorous and brilliant. Here he is applying an ability to analyze and synthesize a set of conditions (as we all tell our clients we do) not related to building—and it works! Well—so it should; but the public and the profession can absorb such object lessons as this one to advantage.

Organizing a production situation to get high results at low cost is not a new experience for Bob. Lakewood Village, for which he was one of the architects, made one of the unsung contributions to the "Construction Industry" (quotation marks at request of R. E. Alexander). This was built as war housing near Los Angeles. Its significance is that a varied and interesting city was created out of—if I remember correctly—seven basic plans. The most impressive thing about the drawings was a series of schedules for each component of the building. Nearly the whole project was in code. House 3 on location 215 had its two-car garage in position 5. It had roof R3 and entrance E2. It had basic color 17 and trim color 12 on material 4.

This keyed back to a mill set up on the site. When a trainload of lumber arrived, the operator knew that he could cut 376 studs, 8′-16″, and 48 facia boards, size so and so. Bob could and did organize mass production economics right where they counted most: at the site. The foundation man could organize and repeat; ditto the plumber and painter. The advantages hoped for in prefabrication were here largely realized with the sky for a factory roof. Very low costs were achieved, and in my opinion it was because the original design, in which Bob had a leading part, was conceived around repetitive, mass-produced parts for everything.

This schedule was also simple enough for a real estate salesman to understand and use in selling. With the key schedule photographed down, he could consult his notebook and tell the prospective customer: "This hole in the ground will have plan C, the one that fits your needs. The garage will be in this location (position "C"), the entrance #4 will look like that one over there, and furthermore it will not be a repeat of anything else here. It will be *your* house." In short, the well composed themes and variations in color and form were as apparent on the schedule charts as the harmonies and movements in the score of a symphony.

This impressive performance (which led, I presume, to the present aircraft job) was no isolated outburst. As a member of the firm of Wilson, Merrill and Alexander, associated with Reginald D. Johnson, Bob was very active in the work on Baldwin Hills Village. This project started toward life under the name "Thousand Gardens," which Bob promptly corrupted to "Lots O' Plots." In spite of this irreverent attitude he carried entire charge of working drawing production, both architectural and

engineering, as well as taking an active part in the site planning and unit design.

Bob is a man to act on his convictions. When he was a new partner in his firm and could have justified a feeling of having arrived, he decided that he didn't know enough about housing, so he took a year's leave to go back to New York to work on Parkchester for Metropolitan Life's Board of Design. It took some nerve to go back on a salary after denying himself and his family plenty to get the position he had won. His own description of his duties connected with Parkchester is: "Set up and ran production of building plans, unit plans, and coordinated these with other departments." R. H. Shreve was his boss, Irwin Clavan, the Office Manager, and Walter Graydon, Chief of Production.

From 1939 to 1942, in the firm of Alexander, Risley, Witmer and Watson, he worked on the Estrada Courts housing project in Los Angeles. I shall not soon forget the ingenuity of the detail of that job. For instance, the little balconies derive stiffness for their supports by taking advantage of the compressive qualities of the plaster inside the wall. Bob has done plenty of other work but this is not the place for a catalog.

Bob is 37 years old, married, and has two children, a girl, 9, and a boy, 5. In the seventeen years I have known him, in school and since, he has not bored me once. He is an enthusiast. He was an ardent air raid warden. He had fun playing football at Cornell, where he not only won his letter on the varsity team, but earned his Bachelor of Architecture degree. I remember a hostess who has not forgotten a series of flying leaps from the arms of a fragile chair in pursuit of a circus inspiration. I remember many fevered discussions of politics and architectural philosophy against a background of highballs and the Franck D Minor Symphony. I once worked beside him all night when I didn't have to, rather than miss the show.

After Cornell, Bob worked in offices in both California and New York. In the summer of 1930, he accompanied Garrett Van Pelt on a European trip that took them to France, Spain, and Italy.

Being too serious has never been one of his faults. In response to some probing questions he supplied the following: *"As to habits, you know I smoke too much and have other habits which I shall not define as good or bad. I do have the bad habit of hanging my head, but not in shame. It started when I was a rather tall little boy. My best friend was a little shaver who made me feel out of place if I stood up straight. Rather than walk on my knees* all *the time, I broke my neck, slightly. This was abetted by several years of saxophone playing and given the coup by sleeping on drafting boards.*

"I like any *kind of fishing and intend to do just that at Ensenada August 1st to 12th. I like Leiderkranz cheese and strong black coffee (just had some). Read Time, Life, Readers' Digest, Arts and Architecture, and the new Journal of the A.I.A."*

Bob becomes wholly serious when discussing the status of the profession, the things he believes that it not only could but should do. *"Architecture* can *supply the greatest need in our culture today—creative thought,"* he asserts. To accomplish this task, he feels it is incumbent on the wiser heads to devote more time to serious study of all phases of human endeavor, and to insist that architectural education be realigned for this broader approach. *"Teach two generations how to analyze, visualize, and plan*—nothing more," he advocates. *"Readjust State laws and professional society by-laws to recognize the new ideal. Take architects to the people. Make 'Architect of the Peace' no empty phrase."*

With adoption of this bold, affirmative philosophy, Bob Alexander foresees an ever-widening field for the architectural man's talents. If the profession and the individuals that make it up will view their opportunity enlarged to this scale, Bob confidently expects to find architects holding rightful places on City Councils, in State governments, and in Congress; architects in food dehydration plants, in helicopter factories, on land-reclamation authorities; more architects of airports, dams, and canals. *"I am quite serious when I say that this country may not survive unless such a program is carried out by some profession. The element of creative thought must be developed, expanded, and introduced into government and industry.*

"Architectural training has the advantage of a head start in the right direction and could *supply it,"* he concludes. *"I believe it will."*

As to Bob's hopes for the future of architecture and building, again let him speak for himself. (I can't add to it except to comment that Bob's unabashed idealism has not kept him from effective positions on important work in the past. I think he will continue to cause things to happen.)

"I hoped to learn something about industrial methods which could be applied to the so-called 'Construction Industry' (sic). I believe I know now what is ahead of us and what it takes to remove the laugh from this phrase. I know what could *be done if even a handful of the great companies in this field got together with labor and government* now, *when resistance to change is at low ebb. But I am just as sure what* will *happen if we delay our planning until the heat of the battle of peace is upon us.*

"Today, the grand strategy of the 'industry' should be planned. More can be done in two years before peace than in twenty years after. There never before was an opportunity like it and it won't knock twice. All objections to the industrialized house vanish when you assume the lower third income bracket moving into the middle third range and the house cost cut in two, three, or more. I'm sure it's coming, but it has little relation to 'reconversion.' It is not even conversion. It is revolution, or creation of something which never existed before.

"You probably gather that I don't give a damn for the Big House, the Small House, the Country House or the Town House. I want the Best House and the Most House for the Best People, i.e., the Most People, the 80% we never touched before. And it must be unobtrusive as a house, the little house that isn't there. You are living on a bit of earth. The inside is the outside and vice versa. Your house is not a burden, financially or physically. It protects and comforts and helps you live.

"But you *know the form of the house is absolutely unimportant. In the field of form, the community plan is the only important thing. It must have size and shape, a center, a head, heart, a soul, and a purpose. Which reminds me—I just read Thomas Wolfe's 'You Can't Go Home Again' and I recommend it as the best criticism of city planning yet. He knew what the score was and called it every time. City planning is my main dish, so I won't elaborate on it.*

"As to clients, I've seen 'em all, and I give up with one exception. Tomorrow's client is the people *and it is not a beast. From the little experience I have had with such, I believe the clients with whom I can talk the most sense and really get down to earth in the future are the labor unions, cooperatives, and like woolly characters. We must take architecture to the people and vice versa or kiss the boys good-bye."*

LARRY PERKINS