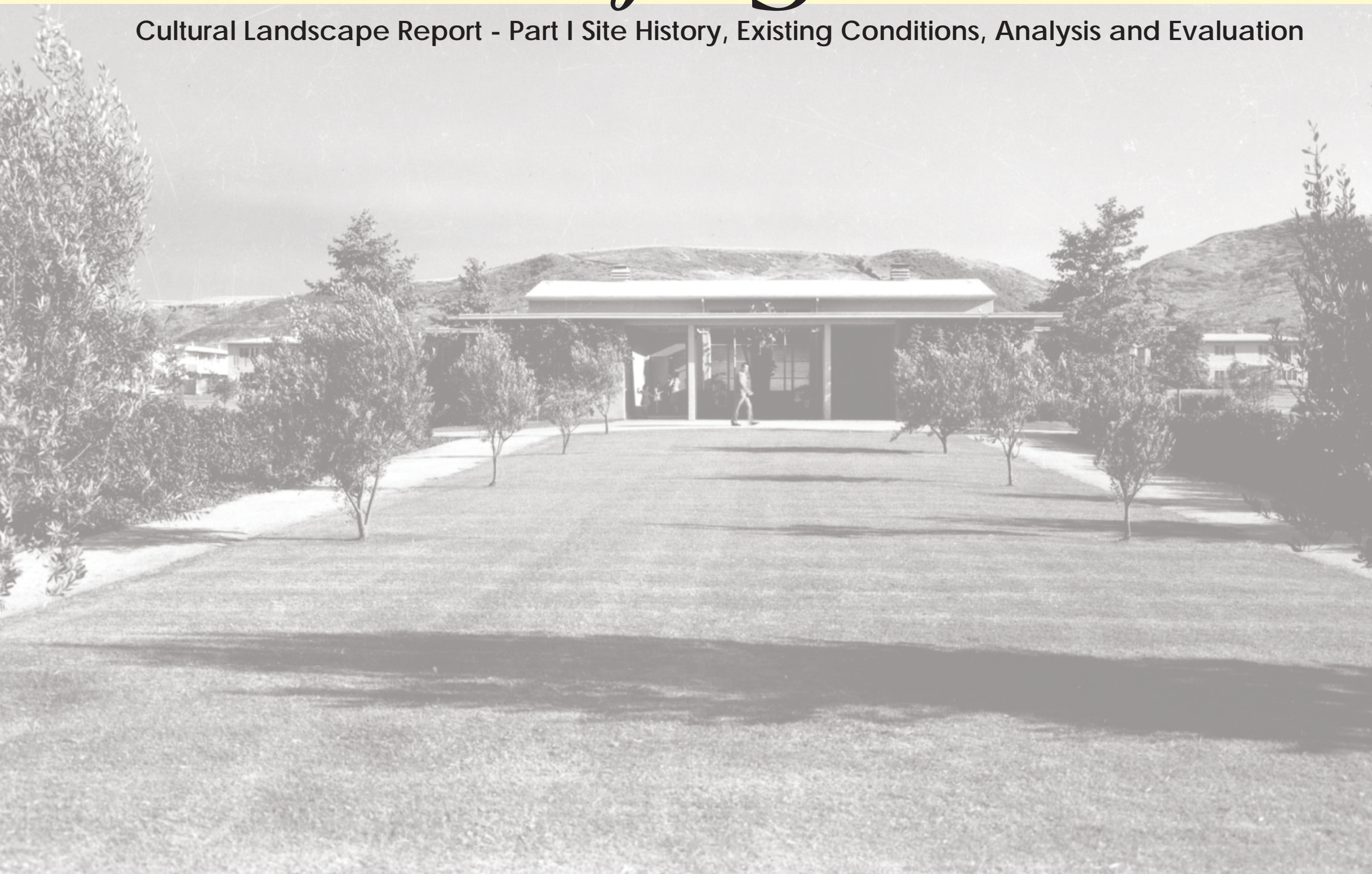


The Village Green

Cultural Landscape Report - Part I Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis and Evaluation



Prepared for
The Village Green Owners Association

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Acknowledgements

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VILLAGE GREEN COMMUNITY

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Introduction



Previous Page: The Village Green Administration Building at the main entrance to the complex, 1944.
(Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

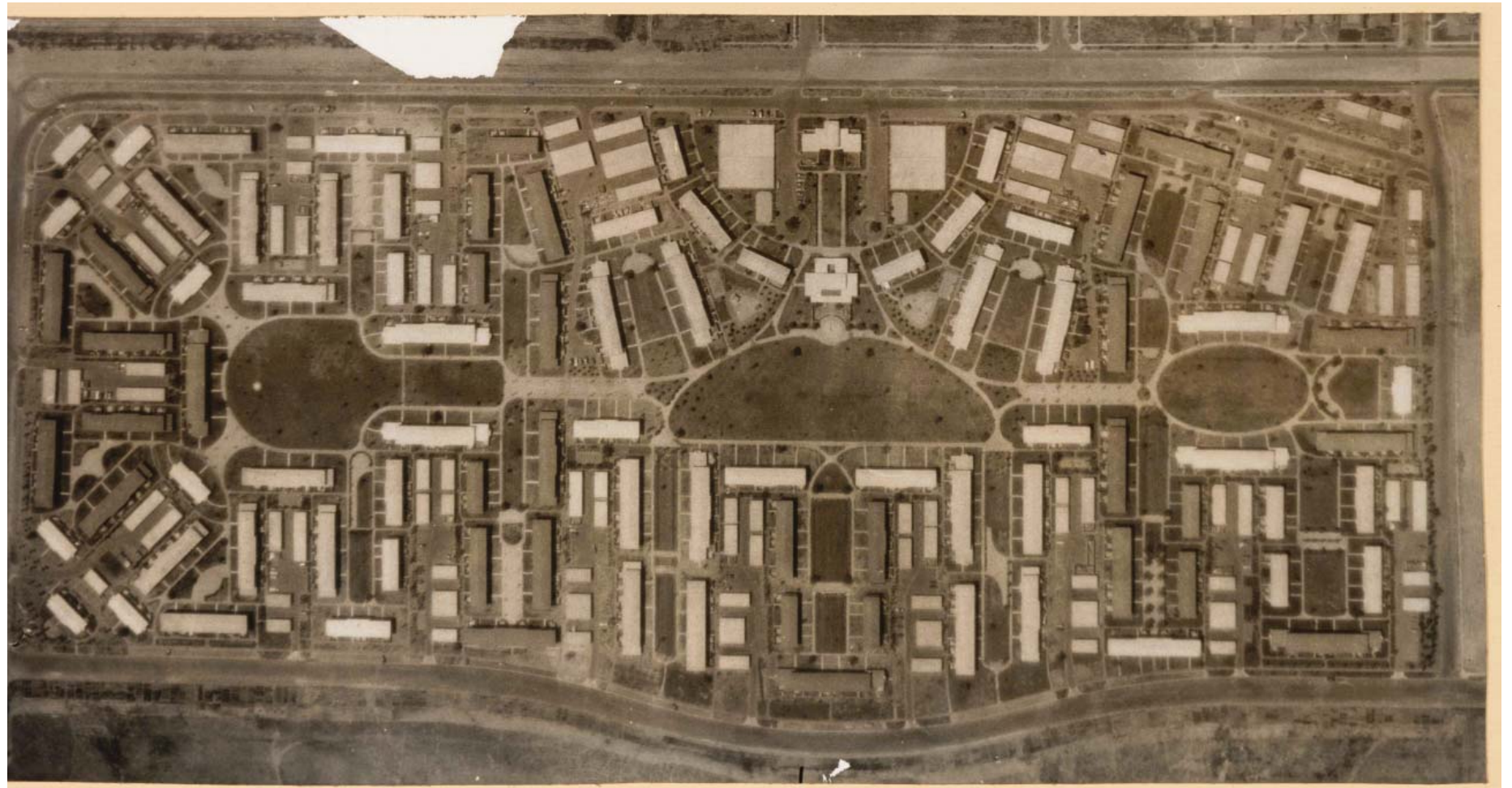
INTRODUCTION

Summary Introduction

The Village Green Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) Parts I and II have been prepared under the direction of the Village Green Owners Association.

The Village Green is a 629-unit condominium complex in the City of Los Angeles that was developed to reflect the urban planning principles of the Garden City movement. It was planned and designed by architects Clarence Stein, Reginald D. Johnson, Lewis E. Wilson, Edwin E. Merrill and Robert E. Alexander, and landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. The Village Green is sited on 67.7 acres, bounded on the north by Rodeo Road, on the east by Sycamore Avenue, on the south by Coliseum Street and on the west by Hauser Boulevard.¹ The complex contains 94 residential buildings, and has been known by three different names: “Thousand Gardens” during early planning and construction, “Baldwin Hills Village” during later construction and up until the conversion to condominiums from 1973 to 1978, when it officially became “The Village Green.” All 629 units are now independently owned. An elected Board of Directors oversees decision-making, budgets and operational matters. A professional on-site management staff carries out decisions rendered by the Board and manages ongoing maintenance, and day-to-day issues.

This historic designed landscape is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001 in recognition of The Village Green’s architectural and historical significance and high degree of integrity. A comprehensive CLR is needed to chronicle the complex’s history of social and physical change over time, to document existing condition, analyze features and systems to assess integrity, and to establish appropriate treatment of the historic landscape and the property’s cultural resources. This CLR is to be used in tandem with the Historic Structures Report prepared in 2010 by Architectural Resources Group, Inc., to guide informed future decision-making.



Early aerial view of The Village Green, circa 1942. (Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



View from balcony towards East Green, seen from landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr.'s balcony at 5218 in Court 3 shows groundcover of honeysuckle, decomposed granite pathways, turf panel; enclosure is provided at the entrance to the court by a large shrub mass and California pepper trees. Circa 1944. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Purpose and Organization of the Cultural Landscape Report

As stewards of this nationally significant property, board members, owners and management of The Village Green are tasked with undertaking planning and management decisions that are sympathetic to the original design intent as well as maintaining the property in a manner befitting its architectural and historical importance while providing for contemporary needs.

This CLR examines the designed landscape and implementation of the original design by Clarence Stein, Reginald D. Johnson, the firm of Wilson, Merrill and Alexander, and landscape architect, Fred Barlow, Jr., which occurred from 1935 to 1948. Modifications due to the subsequent redesign by landscape architect Merrill Winans after the 1963 Baldwin Hills flood, and interim changes made by owners and tenants are also examined.

Part I of this CLR provides documentation of the site history of the landscape within the context of the Garden City movement from the complex's early operation as a rental property through its conversion to a condominium complex. Evaluation of the complex's existing condition and assessment of its integrity are also provided. Part II of this CLR provides treatment guidelines, and long-term planning and maintenance strategies to guide the Board of Directors, management staff and owners in current and future stewardship decisions.

The site history documents the landscape's creation and evolution over time. The Village Green was planned from the beginning as an experiment in Garden City design with the owners and architects having full knowledge that it would be a showcase development. Because of this, a large volume of primary and secondary research and documentation exists including drawings, photographs and correspondence. These sources provide the foundation for the recordation of the early planning and design stages along with the design and installation of plantings by landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. and construction of the original site plan. After the destruction caused by the 1963 Baldwin Hills Flood, new landscape plans

were developed by landscape architect Merrill Winans. These drawings and photographs provide a source for comparison with the original 1942 Barlow landscape plans as well as information on later periods in which growth and modifications occurred. The site history examines the history of The Village Green in detail, and provides a historical backdrop for design choices, building construction, landscape decisions and changes over time.

The existing condition section documents the current site and landscape, and analyzes this condition against the original built landscape to achieve a better understanding of the original design, Winans' design and later changes to the landscape over time. The Cultural Landscape Inventory, performed in conjunction with this CLR, provides an inventory of existing features and their condition.

The treatment guidelines, Part II, provides the current and future management staff, board members, and homeowners with clear and practical direction for maintenance and improvements that will illuminate the design intent of the original landscape and site plan, and will provide information for future decision-making.

Historic Overview

The Village Green is a masterfully designed complex, planned by notable architects and landscape architects of the time and built by the Baruch Corporation on grazing land near the base of the Baldwin Hills. The complex was originally built as upper-middle income, multi-family rental housing. Planning began in 1935 during the Depression years, when a consciousness among progressive architects and planners arose to use their talents to provide better housing. Using Garden City principles first envisioned by Ebenezer Howard in England in the 1890s, East Coast architect Clarence Stein, along with local architects Reginald D. Johnson, Lewis E. Wilson, Edwin E. Merrill and Robert E. Alexander (Wilson, Merrill and Alexander) spent years refining the design for The Village Green. Stein was a leading proponent of Garden City design and had already worked on a number of successful projects by the late 1930s. Alexander was the only other architect on the team who had hands-on experience with Garden City design principles, having spent time working on the layout for Parkchester, a large apartment complex in the Bronx which incorporated many Garden City principles. Because of the combined skills and talents of these men, The Village Green, originally named Baldwin Hills Village, became an outstanding example of Garden City inspired housing that emphasized quality of life along with abundant green space.

Landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. crafted a simple, yet elegant landscape design to complement the architects' meticulous design for the buildings and site arrangement. Barlow's palette consisted of 77 different plant species, from which he devised plant combinations that differentiated each court through the individualistic use of trees, shrubs, vines and groundcover. The integration of architecture, site and planting created a unified residential complex of private and public interaction with outdoor spaces for recreation and relaxation. Barlow's landscape design accentuated the spatial horizontality of the site plan and orchestrated an experience of movement and use characterized by open spaces connected by linear plantings of allées and bosques (tree clusters).

The Village Green (as Baldwin Hills Village) was an early recipient of federal funding through the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) Section 207 loan program. This funding was a product of the Great Depression of the 1930s in which the federal government provided stimulus money to finance new construction and to encourage the hiring of multiple architects to design FHA projects. Baldwin Hills Village was no exception. The Village Green (as Baldwin Hills Village) was designed at a time when there was little work for architects, allowing them more time to refine designs. Construction began in a period where materials were readily available, and was completed at a time when rental demand was high. All of these factors converged to make this multi-family venture immediately successful and also very difficult to duplicate.

Construction began in 1941 with the first units rented on December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. With the U.S. in wartime mode, the scarcity of supplies caused some complications with the original planting plans. However, the buildings were completed and the need for defense worker housing in Los Angeles kept the property fully occupied from the beginning.

In 1949, the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of Boston purchased the property from the original owners. During their tenure, from 1949 to 1961, tenants with children were discouraged and most recreation facilities were gradually removed from the complex.

A disastrous flood in 1963 wiped out nearly all original shrub and groundcover plantings, but spared most trees. This loss necessitated a new landscape plan, and a new landscape architect – Merrill Winans. Winans had designed other landscapes for the then-owner, Baldwin M. Baldwin; however Winans' plan did not incorporate the basic design tenets of the original design, such as an emphasis on horizontality, and a streamlined plant and flower color palette that blended with the simple design of the buildings. Winans' landscape plan was an up-to-date design, but it differed dramatically enough to

constitute a new design approach. Winans' design followed the aesthetic of landscape design in the mid-1960s with lots of color and foundation plantings. Unfortunately, provisions for recreation and community interaction that were fundamental to the original design were limited. Winans' plan added more color and increased complexity in plant species resulting in a higher maintenance plant palette than the original composition. The original vision of a landscape that would encourage and foster community and active use was replaced by one that was more focused on visual pleasure. Implementation of Winans' plan also falls outside the National Historic Landmark period of significance, and is not part of the designation.

The Village Green was converted to a condominium complex between 1973 and 1978. Under individual ownership, the complex has been operated by a Board of Directors, with help from all-volunteer committees, a management team and outside contractors. A period of deferred maintenance during the 1980s and 1990s left much work to be done. A concerted effort by the Board of Directors during a ten year period beginning around 2003 has brought the complex back into better repair by establishing a regular painting and pruning schedule, and by addressing both aging infrastructure and day-to-day maintenance. Greater awareness of the historic nature of The Village Green has enhanced decision-making regarding buildings, structures, features, tree replacements and treatment of invasive species.



View of Garden Court 13/14, 1958. (Shulman collection, The Getty Research Institute)

Previous Documentation and Studies

This CLR benefits from the use of primary and secondary documentation including previous studies, publications, and professional photography that assist in assembling a factual record of the history of the complex. By examining original blueprints, correspondence and historic photographs, a clear record of the design choices made by the original architects is presented. Articles written by notable professors, planners and even the architects themselves shed light on design decisions and the functionality of the property. The Village Green has many of the early blueprints in their archives. These include original construction plans, and others that note changes made during construction such as an “as-planted” plan dated 1942 documenting Barlow’s installed landscape, and Winans’ 1966 planting plans.

Even before The Village Green was built, the architectural community recognized it as a notable project. The project received extensive coverage with articles appearing in industry and trade magazines including *Pencil Points*, *Architect and Engineer*, *PPG Products*, *Arts and Architecture*, *Journal of Housing*, *Progressive Architecture*, and *House & Home*. The collected papers of two of the architects, Clarence S. Stein and Robert E. Alexander, and the contractor, Herbert Baruch Corporation, are preserved in university archives and provide valuable insight into the philosophy and construction of The Village Green.

Well-known architectural photographer Julius Shulman photographed The Village Green in 1958 and again in 1974. Robert Tetlow, a professor of landscape architecture at University of California Berkeley, photographed the complex in 1960. Other early photographers included Margaret Lowe and Richard “Dick” Whittington. Clarence Stein’s 1951 book, *Toward New Towns for America*, included some of Margaret Lowe’s photographs as well as Stein’s retrospective of The Village Green a decade after his involvement in its design.

In 1994 The Village Green Owners Association commissioned Land Images, a local landscape architectural and planning firm, to prepare ‘A Long Range Rehabilitation and Master Plan.’ The plan did not receive community support and was shelved.

Dorothy Fue Wong, a long-time resident, took the first step toward national recognition of The Village Green by preparing a National Register of Historic Places nomination in 1993 and a National Historic Landmark nomination in 2000. Both nominations were successful resulting in The Village Green being listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, and designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2001. Resident Robert Nicolais assisted with both efforts, providing architectural descriptions and research. Michael Tomlan, Director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at Cornell University also provided assistance as did other well-respected authorities on Clarence Stein, and Garden City principles and planning.² Much of the initial information used herein is from this work.

In 2010 the Architectural Resources Group prepared a Historic Structures Report to assist The Village Green Owners Association in maintaining and rehabilitating the architecturally and historically significant buildings. Information and recommendations in the Historic Structures Report will be used in tandem with this CLR to ensure a cohesive approach to maintenance and rehabilitation.



Edge of the Central Green, 1958. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)



Note the trellis next to the formal entry, designed to be covered by a vine, original concrete paving stones leading to entry, and groundcover next to building, 1942. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



East Allée, 1958. (Shulman collection, The Getty Research Institute)

Summary of Significance and Period of Significance

The Village Green is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is designated a National Historic Landmark with significance in community planning and development, landscape architecture and architecture. The Garden City influenced design expresses Clarence Stein and Henry Wright’s ideals in separating automobile and pedestrian circulation and showcases their emphasis on indoor/outdoor living. In the site plan, building architecture and landscape, the designers utilized Garden City planning principles to create a housing complex that successfully promoted healthful living, separated the automobile from pedestrian areas, and embodied progressive ideals for multi-family housing.

The design of Baldwin Hills Village was the culmination of the unique talent and collaborative interaction of architects Reginald D. Johnson, Lewis E. Wilson, Edwin E. Merrill, and Robert E. Alexander with consulting architect Clarence S. Stein and landscape architect, Fred Barlow, Jr. Together, these six men spent time during the years of 1935 to 1942 planning, drawing, reworking and refining the site plan, building designs and landscape features that characterize The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village). Notably, all but Stein moved to The Village Green for periods ranging from one to more than 20 years so that they could experience life in the complex firsthand.

The period of significance for The Village Green as identified by National Historic Landmark designation, is from 1935 to 1942 as this timeframe includes the initial concept of a multi-family residential complex, the site selection, a lengthy architectural design for the buildings, site and landscape design, the initial construction, and the early operation of the housing complex. Through additional research and analysis undertaken by this CLR, new information has revealed that some original elements of the design could not be implemented until after World War II when materials and labor were once again accessible resulting in additional planned plantings being completed by 1948. This CLR recommends extending the period of significance to 1948 to include the period of construction undertaken once wartime

restrictions were lifted. The original designers remained involved, and construction was in adherence with the original planning concepts.

Known as Baldwin Hills Village when the first units were occupied, this multi-family Garden City influenced complex is notable as the culmination of design ideas that evolved from consulting architect Clarence Stein’s work in the eastern United States (Greenbelt, MD; Sunnyside, NY; Radburn, NJ; Chatham Village, PA and others). Because the planning process stretched over several years, the architects tested more than 50 building layouts to hone their ideas into the pedestrian-friendly, garden-centric design that is The Village Green. By relegating the automobile to the perimeter and by separating automobiles from pedestrians, the architects created a 627-unit housing complex where residents could walk from unit to unit without crossing driveways or streets. The initial designs intended for the commercial strip to the east to follow this pattern of access, however, the City of Los Angeles required that Sycamore Street be built as a through street.

Considered significant for both architecture and landscape architecture, The Village Green’s (Baldwin Hills Village) original site was a carefully designed landscape. Experienced landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr. was engaged by the original team of architects circa 1939 to tailor a landscape plan to complement their vision for this innovative Garden City inspired complex. The as-planted landscape design incorporated features that emphasized the horizontality of the buildings through the use of long groundcover beds, vines trailing along trellises and across balcony fronts, and low-trimmed boxwood hedges, and shrubbery masses and taller hedges. Barlow introduced groupings of trees within the center of most garden courts to create more intimate spaces, and as transitional spaces between the three large greens. These plantings reduced the long east-west sightlines by compressing the views with two allées between the three large greens. Barlow’s simple plant palette created a cohesive aesthetic while allowing enough variation so that planting schemes were not repeated from one garden court to another, thus allowing each to have a distinct appearance.

Social interaction, one of the Garden City principles, was paramount to the design and was achieved by the inclusion of numerous recreation amenities including play areas, horseshoe pits, tennis and badminton courts as well as a Community Building (known as the original Clubhouse in this CLR) where numerous programmed activities took place. Another notable feature of The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) building design was the inclusion of private or semi-private outdoor space for each unit. For many units this was a patio or terrace enclosed by redwood fences. For others, these were one or two balconies.

Construction ended in 1942. After 1948, when final elements of the as-planted plan had been installed, a few additional modifications were made that contribute to the historic character of The Village Green. Modifications overseen by at least one of the original architects are considered to contribute to the historic character even though they fall outside of the period of significance. These include the enclosure of open rear patio spaces with serpentine brick walls, which occurred by the early 1950s, and the reconstruction of damaged garages and addition of ground floor aluminum framed sliding glass doors in the 1960s installed after the 1963 Baldwin Hills Flood.

Scope of Work and Methodology

In 2003, a group of owners discussed preparing a cultural landscape report themselves in the interest of accomplishing much of the work at a reduced cost. An Ad Hoc Cultural Landscape Report Committee was approved by The Village Green Board of Directors on June 24, 2003. This committee was an all-volunteer group. Historic Resources Group (HRG) principal Christy Johnson McAvoy and staff member Steve Moga in Los Angeles provided initial guidance to the committee and assisted in starting the cultural landscape inventory process.

The following publications were used to inform the CLR process and to maintain the professional standards appropriate for a National Historic Landmark property.

- A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process and Technologies (1998)
- The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (1996)
- National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes
- National Park Service Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes (1994)

During the time it took to complete the CLR, the following people served on the all-volunteer committee: Gordon Brooks, Gabriel Cervantes, Rob Creighton, Mickey Fielding, Steve Haggerty, Holly Kane, Steven Keylon, Sara Loe, Georgia Lumpkin, Ted Lumpkin, Jeffery Mintz, Robert Nicolais, George Rheault, Gailyn Saroyan, Lorraine Secor, Tamorah Thomas, David Weisenbloom, Fred Wilson and Jean Wilson. Many dedicated individuals contributed to the process, and the group regrets the omission of any names.

AutoCAD documentation and drawing was done by Jessa Chiasari, and interns Veronica Cuellar (USC) and April Garbat (CalPoly Pomona). In addition, April Garbat produced many of the Part I graphics.

Under the direction of Sara Loe, Fred Wilson and Ted Lumpkin, committee members along with a group of other volunteers, commenced a plant-by-plant survey of the entire property from 2004 to 2008. Documented as the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI), this work recorded extant trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers. With this complete, committee members commenced with comparing this data to the original plan to identify extant original plantings. The committee also compared this data to documentation of the landscape after the 1963 flood and plantings installed from Winans' landscape plan of 1966 to determine the extent of these plantings that remain as well.

Research on the history of The Village Green was undertaken a volunteer basis by committee members, in particular Holly Kane, Steven Keylon, Sara Loe and Robert Nicolais. Numerous archives were consulted including Cornell University's Carl A. Kroch Library for Clarence Stein, Robert Alexander, and Fred Edmonson archives; UCLA's Baruch Corporation collection and The Benjamin and Gladys Thomas Air Photo Archives; The Getty Institute and Julius Shulman's photographs; The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens for Reginald Johnson's photograph album; the University of California Berkeley's Environmental Design Archive's Robert Tetlow Collection; the "as-planted" landscape plans of Fred Barlow, Jr. and Merrill Winans in The Village Green archives; a myriad of journal, newspaper and magazine articles, as well as personal photographs, documents and reminiscences from people who lived in Baldwin Hills Village including relatives and descendants of the original design team. One resident, Steven Keylon, extensively researched Fred Barlow, Jr.'s life and work and has provided exhaustive research on Barlow's history, philosophy and other projects.

The Cultural Landscape Report Committee then evaluated the landscape and identified significant features and plantings. The committee garnered professional assistance from several cultural landscape preservation consultants for this analysis including Noel Vernon (pro bono), Charles Birnbaum, and JC Miller. Text and graphics were prepared by the committee for Part I including

site history, statement of significance and existing condition, and assessment of integrity. Tina Bishop of Mundus Bishop was then commissioned to prepare treatment guidelines (Part II) to assist The Village Green with its continued stewardship of the historic landscape. Modern day issues such as irrigation, pavement materials, plant viability, suitability for site and growing conditions as well as new diseases that affect some original plant species types were noted with all guidelines complying with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to achieve a cohesive finished document that complies with industry standards.

Reviews of Part I were provided by Charles Birnbaum of the Cultural Landscape Foundation, Architectural Resources Group (ARG), Tina Bishop of Mundus Bishop and Robert Page of the Olmsted Center. Mundus Bishop formatted the entire document.

Summary of Findings

Clarence Stein considered Baldwin Hills Village to be the greatest expression of his Radburn idea, and in the 21st century The Village Green continues to be a livable community with a high degree of integrity, still based on Garden City principles.

Years of working collaboratively on the site design yielded a cohesive vision shared by all the original architects, including Fred Barlow, Jr., the landscape architect. The major underlying motif throughout the design was a strong emphasis on horizontal elements. In the buildings, this included the actual form of the buildings and structures – long and low – as well as the roof overhangs; the horizontal board detail on the second story of Type 2 buildings; the horizontal board work in the patio fences; ribbed glazing in the Administration Building, the original Clubhouse and balcony separations. In the landscape, the expanses of groundcover, the turf panels in individual garden courts, trimmed boxwood hedges, and the retaining wall in Garden Court 4/5 also emphasized horizontality. As part of the design, these myriad architectural details worked as a whole to create a restful uniformity that extended throughout the property. This helped to unify the spaces and drew the eye from garden courts to the larger greens, through allées, and onwards. Base plantings also connected the buildings to the natural environment, and decomposed granite, used throughout the complex for interior pedestrian pathways and central gathering spaces, was earth-like and natural. A scheme of openness and interruptions kept the landscape at a comfortable scale, while creating interest as one moved through it.

Much of the historic fabric remains, especially the spatial and circulation elements. Because the building layout remains the same, with minor changes in use of the original Clubhouse, and the pedestrian and automobile circulation also occupies essentially the same footprint, the site retains a high degree of integrity. Careful stewardship and design decisions based on historic paint colors have maintained the buildings and structures much as they originally appeared.

While some original trees and vegetation patterns remain from the original design, much of the understory layer no longer contributes to the larger historic characteristics. For example, the long linear beds of groundcover that fronted residential buildings are mostly replaced by lawn up to building edges, with random plantings of different shrubs, with differing heights. Other shrubs, possibly original, are badly overgrown and have lost their original design and intent.

Most of the infrastructure meant to promote community is also gone from the landscape. Although community events are held in the former Administration Building (now the Clubhouse) and on the Central Green, the myriad recreational amenities originally included have all been removed. Outdoor “rooms” comprised of benches (never installed) in geometric decomposed granite areas only exist in court 2/3, and not in the original configuration.

Tan decomposed granite pathways are now gray concrete, the former wide decomposed granite allées are planted with lawn between the rows of trees, with parallel concrete sidewalks along the outside, and are no longer used as nor provide the same experience as intended. Nevertheless, experiencing The Village Green by strolling along the internal pathways still gives a sense of timelessness and serenity.

Endnotes

- 1 According to City of Los Angeles ZIMAS website (<http://zimas.lacity.org>) the total of the parcels comprising Village Green is 2,949,435 square feet. One acre equals 43,560 square feet. It should be noted that the original Baldwin Hills Village consisted of 627 units. The original clubhouse was converted to two units resulting in the current number of 629 units.
- 2 See The Village Green National Register nomination form for a complete listing. Dorothy Fue Wong, Robert Nicolais, Michael Tomlan. *NHL Nomination Form, Baldwin Hills Village*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, DC, 2001.



Site History



Timeline

DATE	DESCRIPTION/EVENT
Pre-history	The Gabrielino-Tongva settled up and down the Los Angeles basin coast and inland to the San Bernardino Mountains. Their settlements included a thriving community, Saa’ang na, near the present day location of Playa Vista and the Ballona wetlands, approximately five and a half miles southwest of Village Green.
1542	First Spaniards come to Los Angeles basin when Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a conquistador under the Spanish crown, landed in San Pedro Bay
1781	Pueblo of Los Angeles founded; circa 1795 Sanchez Adobe built on Baldwin Hills
1843	Spanish government granted Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera to Vicente Sanchez
1849	California became part of United States
1874	Andrew Joughins, a blacksmith, purchased 360 acres of the Rancho
1875	Remainder of Rancho sold to group of four men: F.P.F. Temple, Arthur J. Hutchinson, Henry Ledyard, and Daniel Freeman
1875 – 1886	Elias “Lucky” Baldwin gained ownership of Rancho, soon giving his name to the Baldwin Hills
1909	Elias Baldwin died, with the land passing to his daughters; Anita Baldwin assumed ownership of the land that was to become The Village Green
1917	Oil was discovered in the Baldwin Hills and pumping began
1935	Site selection
1935-1940	Planning and Funding Stage
1941	Final Design
1941-42	Building Construction and Landscaping
December 7, 1941-1945	US involvement in World War II
1941-1949	Rancho Cienega Corporation, Owner
1942	First Tenants Move In
1948	Thriftmart opened in shopping area along La Brea
1949-1961	New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of Boston, Owner
1961-1971	Baldwin M. Baldwin, Owner
December 1963	Baldwin Hills Dam gave way, flooding the areas below and causing severe damage
1971-1978	Terramics, Owner
1973-Present	Condominiums

SITE HISTORY

A Grand Vision and the Garden City, 1935 to 1940

The slum housing of America's poor and the effects of the Great Depression inspired activists, writers and planners such as Jacob Riis, Catherine Bauer and Clarence Stein to raise public awareness and to devise methods to improve people's lives by improving their living conditions. Riis' seminal book *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890, revealed horrific living conditions in the slums of New York City. Catherine Bauer, amongst others, advocated for public programs and better housing for America's poor. Clarence Stein and the Garden City movement developed planning principles to create communities in which residents would have improved access to green spaces along with jobs, commercial enterprises, schools and community services.

Upon his reelection by a landslide in 1936, President Roosevelt delivered a moving inaugural address on January 20, 1937 that addressed these ideals as expressed by the following excerpt.

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

I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day.

I see millions whose daily lives in city and on farm continue under conditions labeled indecent by a so-called polite society half a century ago.

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

I see millions lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions.

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

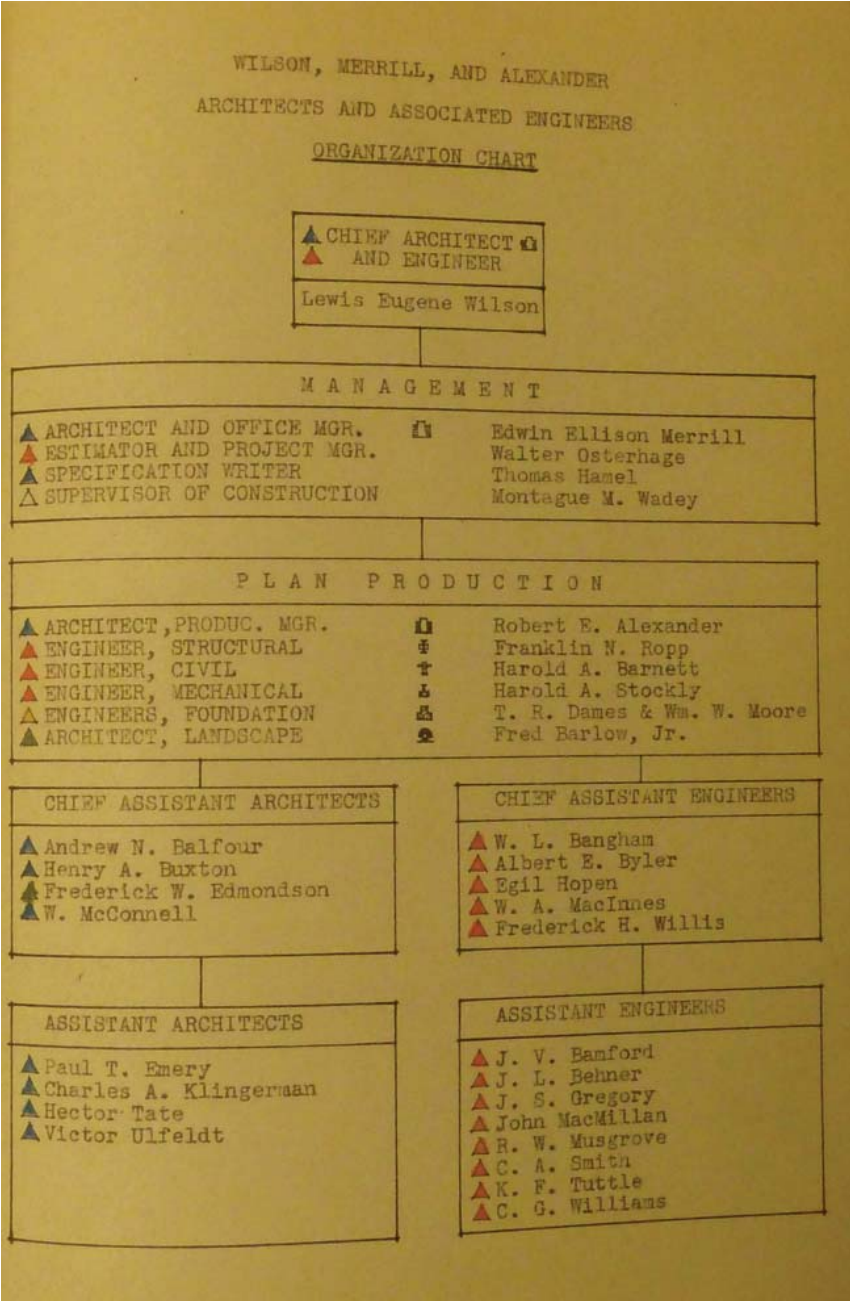
But it is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope—because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern; and we will never regard any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

This address is known as the "One Third of a Nation" speech, as one third of the nation was deeply affected by the Great Depression. President Roosevelt's address was broadcast over the radio, and although it was a new technology at the time, the address was heard by most Americans. His moving words helped inspire many Americans to work toward bettering the lives of ordinary people. In his oral history, recorded many years later, Robert Alexander who was one of the original architects who designed The Village Green, credits Reginald Johnson, Lew Wilson and contractor Joshua Marks as having been inspired by President Roosevelt's concerns for housing.

In an effort to keep as many people employed as possible President Roosevelt created policies to ensure that any public housing project would include a minimum of three architects.¹ The original architects for The Village Green began working on the project in the late 1930s, and were all practicing in Los Angeles. They were Reginald D. Johnson and the associated firm of Wilson, Merrill & Alexander consisting of partners Lewis Eugene Wilson, Edwin Merrill and newly licensed Robert Alexander. East Coast architect Clarence S. Stein was hired as consulting architect to bring experience with Garden City design principles to the project. Reginald Johnson had visited Stein's Garden City developments at Chatham Village, Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn on the East Coast, and had met Stein. When Johnson returned to Los Angeles, he was "convinced that Clarence could help . . . as consulting architect."²



Administration Building looking towards original Clubhouse and the Baldwin Hills, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Wilson, Merrill & Alexander Organizational Chart, circa 1940. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Clarence S. Stein



Reginald D. Johnson



Robert E. Alexander



Lewis E. Wilson (left) is pictured with his mother Antoinette and brother Adrian J. Wilson, another prominent Southern California architect. (Courtesy Wilson family Archives)

Clarence Stein was known nationally for his work with Henry Wright on Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York, Chatham Village in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Radburn in New Jersey. Each development was based on the Garden City philosophy as espoused by Ebenezer Howard in his influential work *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1902). Howard “called for the creation of new suburban towns of limited size, planned in advance, and surrounded by a permanent belt of agricultural land.”³ These garden cities were used as a role model for many suburbs. Howard believed that such developments were the perfect blend of city and nature. The towns would be largely independent, managed and financed by the citizens who had an economic interest in them. Howard proposed self-contained cities that would include commercial and industrial operations along with housing. The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) was conceived as a rental housing project with planned commercial facilities along the strip between Sycamore Avenue and La Brea Boulevard. A second phase, planned but unexecuted, for the south side of Coliseum Street would have doubled the number of units. The architects had hoped to locate an elementary school within this site to serve children living in the apartment complex. With such a centralized location, children would not have had to cross a busy street to access the school. However, the second phase was never undertaken and a school was eventually built north of The Village Green across Rodeo Road, which would become a busy street.⁴

In later years, Stein espoused the design of The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) as the “most complete and characteristic expression” of his Radburn Idea.⁵ His writings in 1951 are particularly enthusiastic about the final design as he was intrigued by a city so focused on the private automobile as Los Angeles clearly was. “There, in Los Angeles, with an average of over one automobile per family, was needed – perhaps more than anywhere else in the world – the combination of complete convenience in the use of the automobile and a peaceful escape from its dangers. And so at Baldwin Hills (The Village Green) all the original elements of Radburn reappear – super-block, specialized means of circulation, complete separation of pedestrian and auto, park as community heart and backbone faced by all houses.”⁶

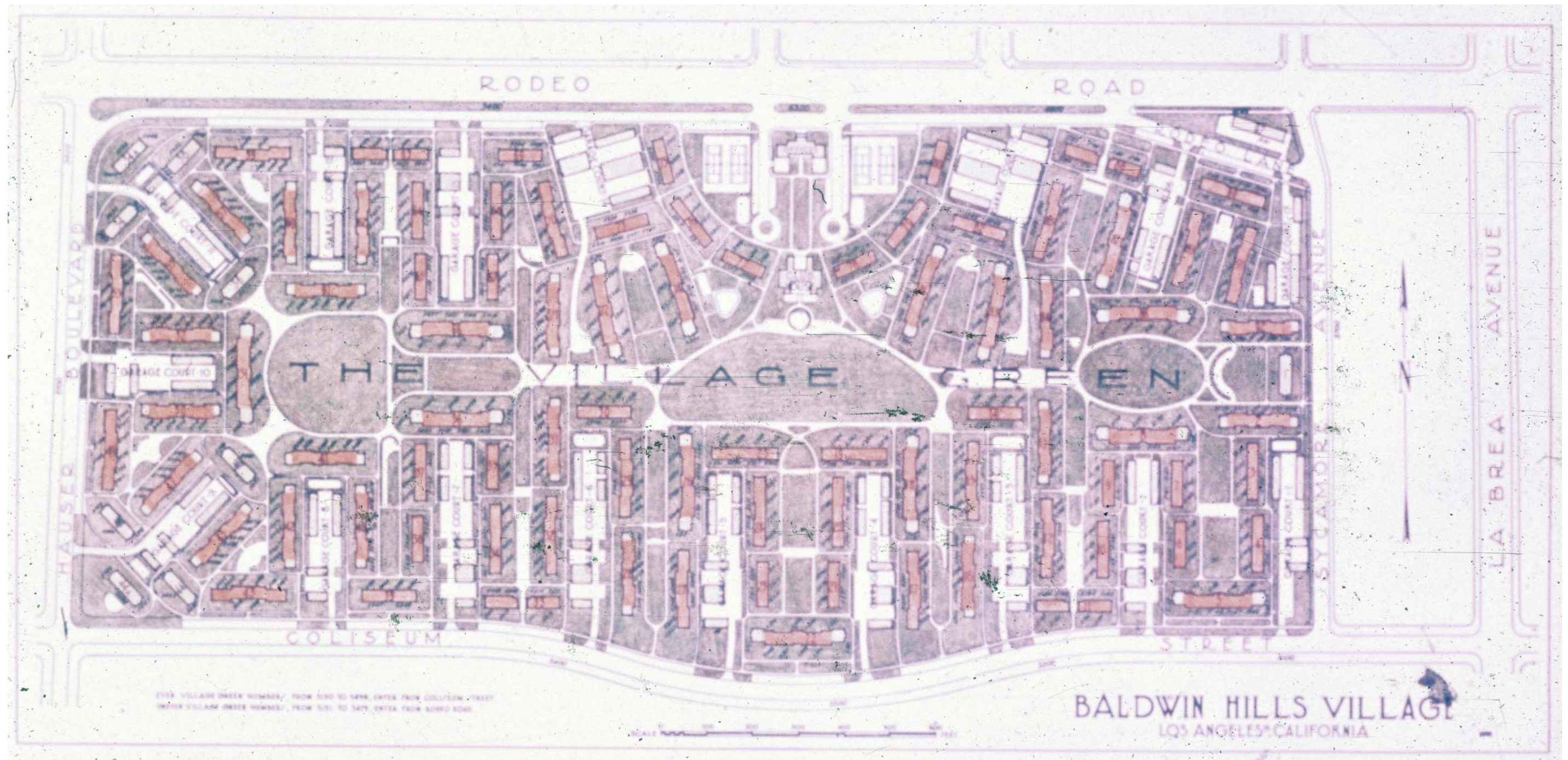
According to Clarence Stein:

It is impossible to divide credit for Baldwin Hills Village (The Village Green) among its architects. Lewis Wilson and his associates did a splendid job in connection with the conception and development of plans. Reginald D. Johnson, in his simple delicate, but dignified designs, surpassed even the great mansions for which he is justly famous. An indication that the architects approve of their own work is that most of them have lived in the village. The Alexanders brought up their children there, and he has his office in the shopping center. The Johnsons and Lewis Wilson have both for a time given up their large dwellings for the simpler life of the Village.⁷

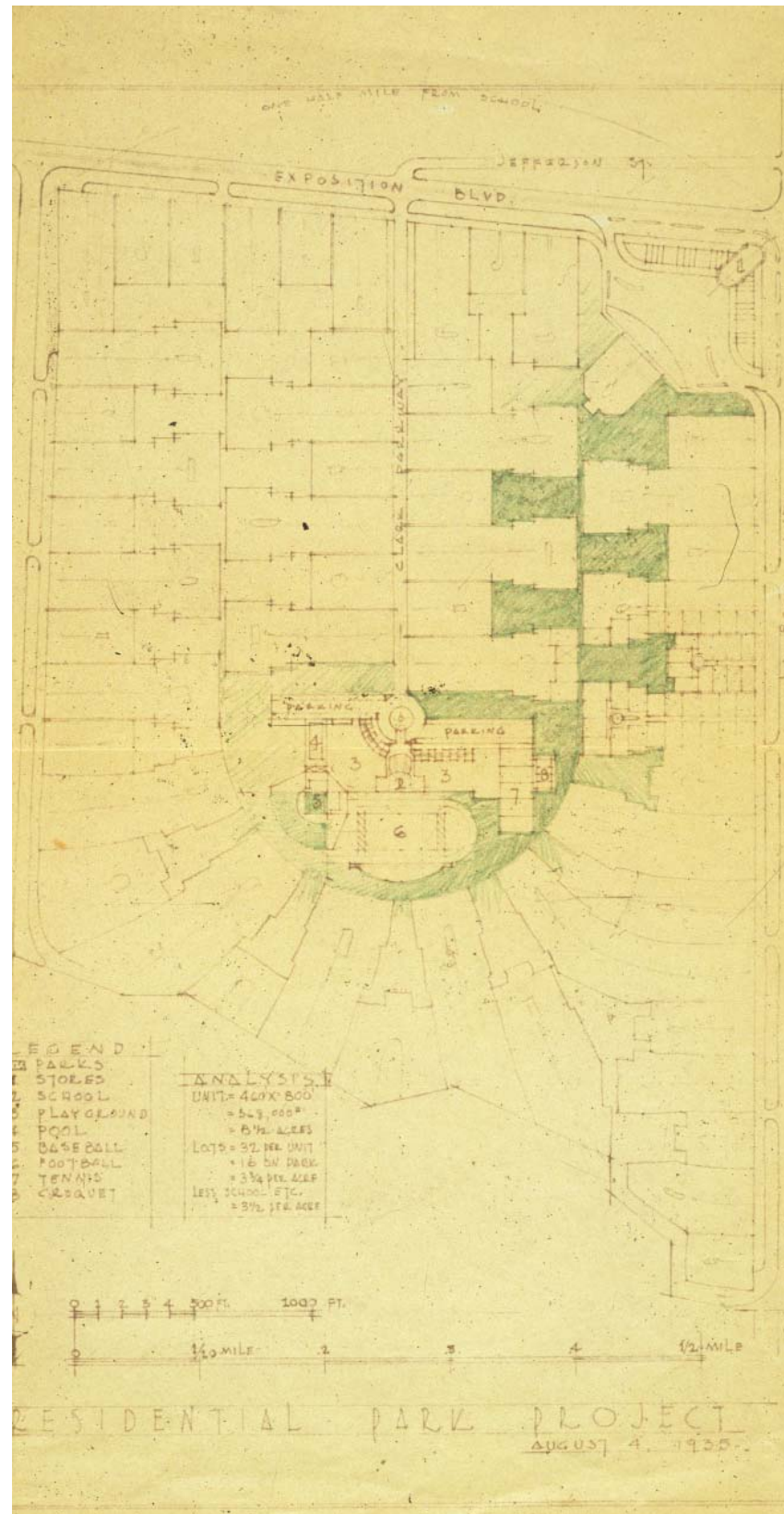
Although the listed architects came together to collaborate on The Village Green, they did not share the same office space, but rather most maintained individual offices in the Architect’s Building. During the 1930s and early 40s, the Architect’s Building was at 816 West 5th Street in downtown Los Angeles. A brochure from the firm of Wilson, Merrill, and Alexander, Architects and Associated Engineers details the company structure and employees who were involved with the design and construction of The Village Green. In the 1942 Los Angeles City Directory, Johnson’s office was listed as 1006, Alexander’s as 903 and Fred Barlow Jr. as 701 in the Architect’s Building. The firm name of Wilson, Merrill and Alexander is listed at 712 West Olympic Blvd in Suite 549.⁸

Choosing the Land, 1935

According to Robert Alexander’s oral history, architects Reginald Johnson and Lewis Wilson became interested in developing a housing project in the early 1930s.⁹ They initially identified a site on Exposition Boulevard, which did not work out. They then involved contractor Joshua H. Marks of Marks-Charde Company, who had worked with the Baldwin family estate on the construction of Santa Anita Race Track in 1934. Marks approached Ray Knisley, manager of the estate, about the possibility of acquiring land for the construction of housing for middle-income families.¹⁰ Circa 1936, Anita Baldwin agreed to make a land parcel available. This turned out to be the same land Marks had reviewed with Clarence Stein in 1935, who had recommended the parcel as a good potential location for housing.¹¹ The land parcel included 264 acres, and extended from La Brea Boulevard on the east to Hauser Boulevard, the current west edge of the property, and from Exposition Boulevard to the base of the Baldwin Hills.¹² At the time, this site was outside Los Angeles city limits and was being used to graze sheep and as agricultural land.¹³ After deciding to build on the parcel, the property owners requested that the City of Los Angeles annex the land, and grant water and sewer access to the project. Arthur Gallion, dean of USC’s architecture school from 1945 to 1960 estimated the real cost of the land at \$2,300 per acre. He credited the low cost as enabling a low-density development.¹⁴



Baldwin Hills Village site plan, white area to the east was planned for shopping, which wasn't built until after WW II. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Alexander's Residential Park Project August 4, 1935. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Planning Stage, 1935 to 1940

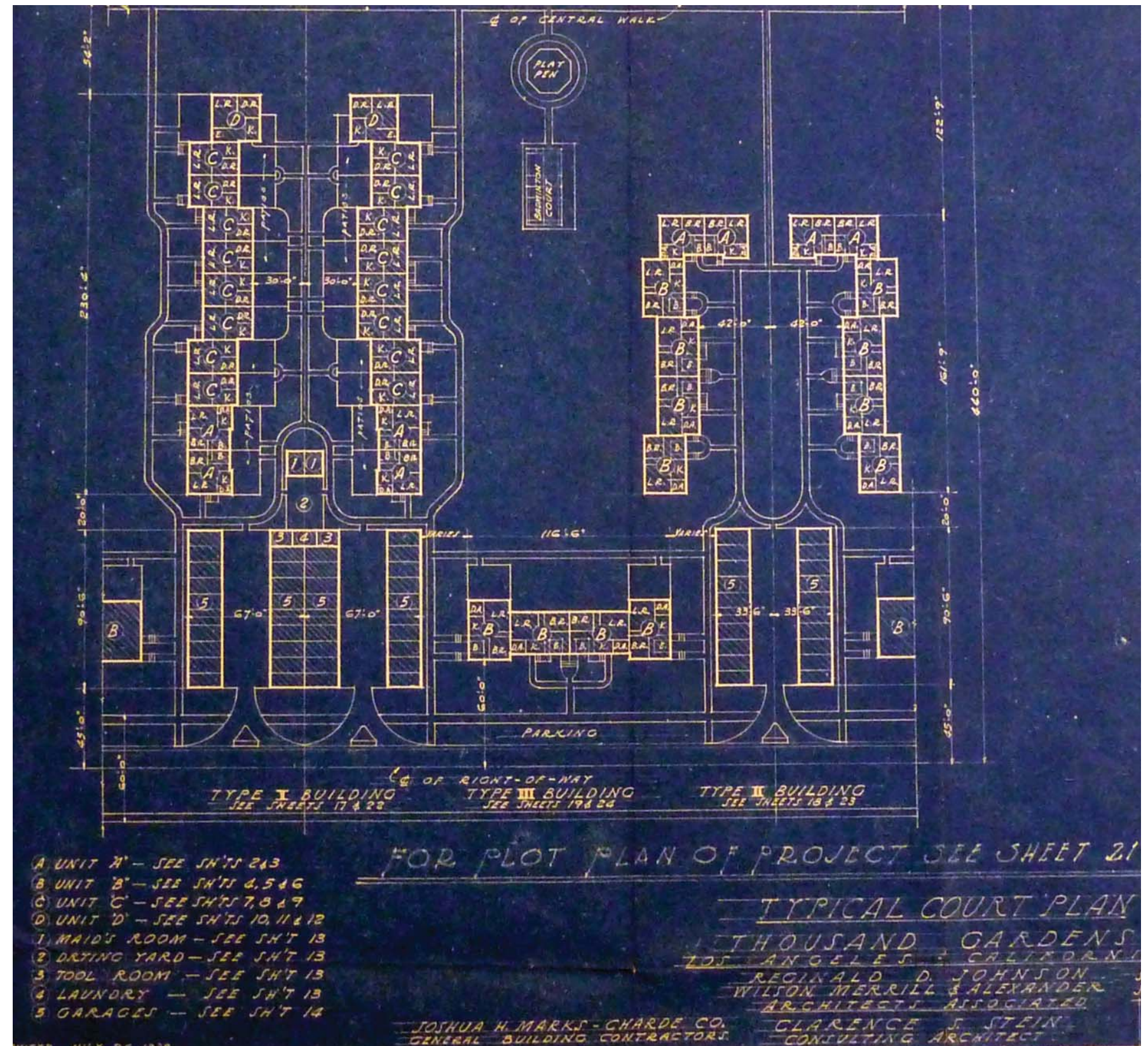
After the site was identified, master planning began. Within the time required to secure funding, the architects were to develop more than 50 proposals for the site plan in which the buildings were redrawn in detail about ten times.¹⁵ During the lengthy planning period, the site was gradually reduced from the original 264 acres to 67.7 acres. By 1937, Alexander noted that the "land area had been reduced to 105 acres including a service drive, a 10-acre shopping center, interior roads, and perimeter single family lots for 'protection.' It was planned to double in size if the first half was successful."¹⁶ Doubling the site plan was planned to occur on the south side of Coliseum Street at a later point; however, this dream was never realized. Alexander's 105 acres was reduced to 67.7 acres when the planned commercial strip along La Brea Boulevard was separated from the residential area when the city required a through street — Sycamore Avenue. When the current site plan is examined, The Village Green is not fully symmetrical since the strip of land extending to La Brea Boulevard is missing. This parcel, originally envisioned to be a connected commercial area, was of a size and scale that would have made the complex symmetrical east to west. The arrangement of the complex remained as it was, even without this parcel as planning had progressed to the point where the architects did not make any further changes. On the ground, the asymmetry of the complex is not readily apparent. The second phase, south of Coliseum Street, was never built. Demand for single-family homes after World War II resulted in the land south of Coliseum Street being developed as a subdivision to accommodate this demand.

As soon as funding for the project became available, the tract was annexed to the City of Los Angeles so that city utilities could be accessed. However, this also meant that city engineers could insist on extending their planned city streets through the project's interior.¹⁷ Reportedly, the struggle to limit streets extending through The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) proved to be difficult. The City Engineer and City Planning Board ultimately agreed to eliminate all through streets since these north-south streets would end within a few blocks at the base of the Baldwin Hills. Unfortunately, they were not as flexible with Sycamore Avenue and demanded it be extended. This separated the

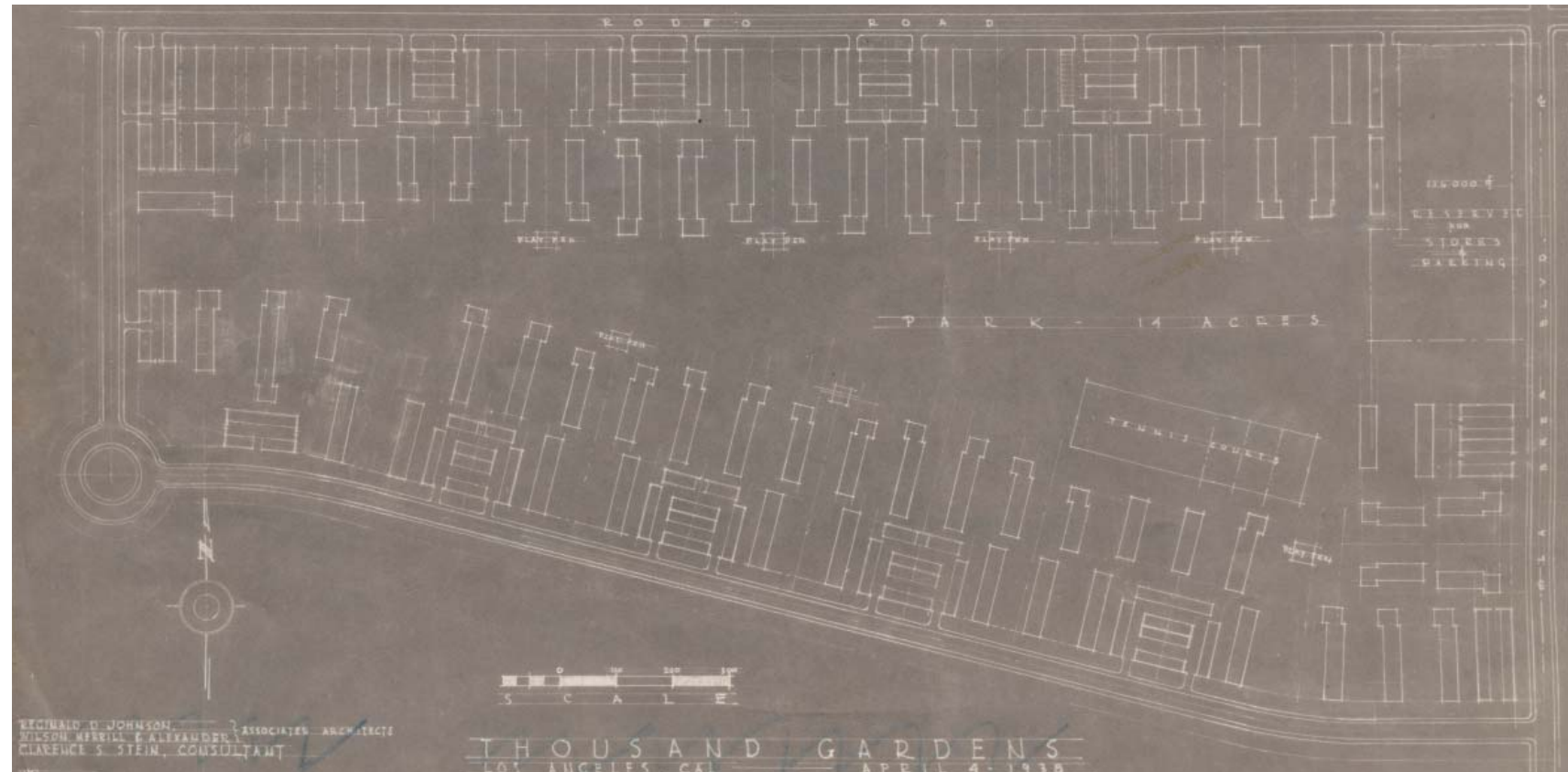
planned shopping area along La Brea Boulevard from the residential complex, necessitating residents to cross the street to reach the commercial area, rather than allow the integrated and landscaped transition into the shopping center as originally envisioned.¹⁸

Robert Alexander prepared the first sketches of this grand project, simply known as "A Residential Park Project," dated August 4, 1935.¹⁹ He later noted, "[t]he site plan of 'A Residential Park Project' then included about 264 acres, extending from La Brea to Hauser Boulevard as it now does, but also from Exposition Boulevard to the base of the Baldwin Hills, since Rodeo Road and Coliseum Street had not been projected. It contemplated a shopping center at the northeast corner and a major educational, cultural, athletic complex at the center within less than one-half mile of the entire community, approached by a long cul-de-sac."²⁰ He described the basic land unit as "a cul-de-sac serving an eight and one-half acre area 460 feet by 800 feet containing 32 lots, 16 of which would face a park or 'common' averaging three and three-quarter dwelling units per acre. Deducting for schools, recreation, commercial land, and roads, there would be three-and-one-half dwellings per gross acre. An interior system of common traffic-free walk-way parks would inter-connect every home with the commercial and the cultural educational-sports center."²¹

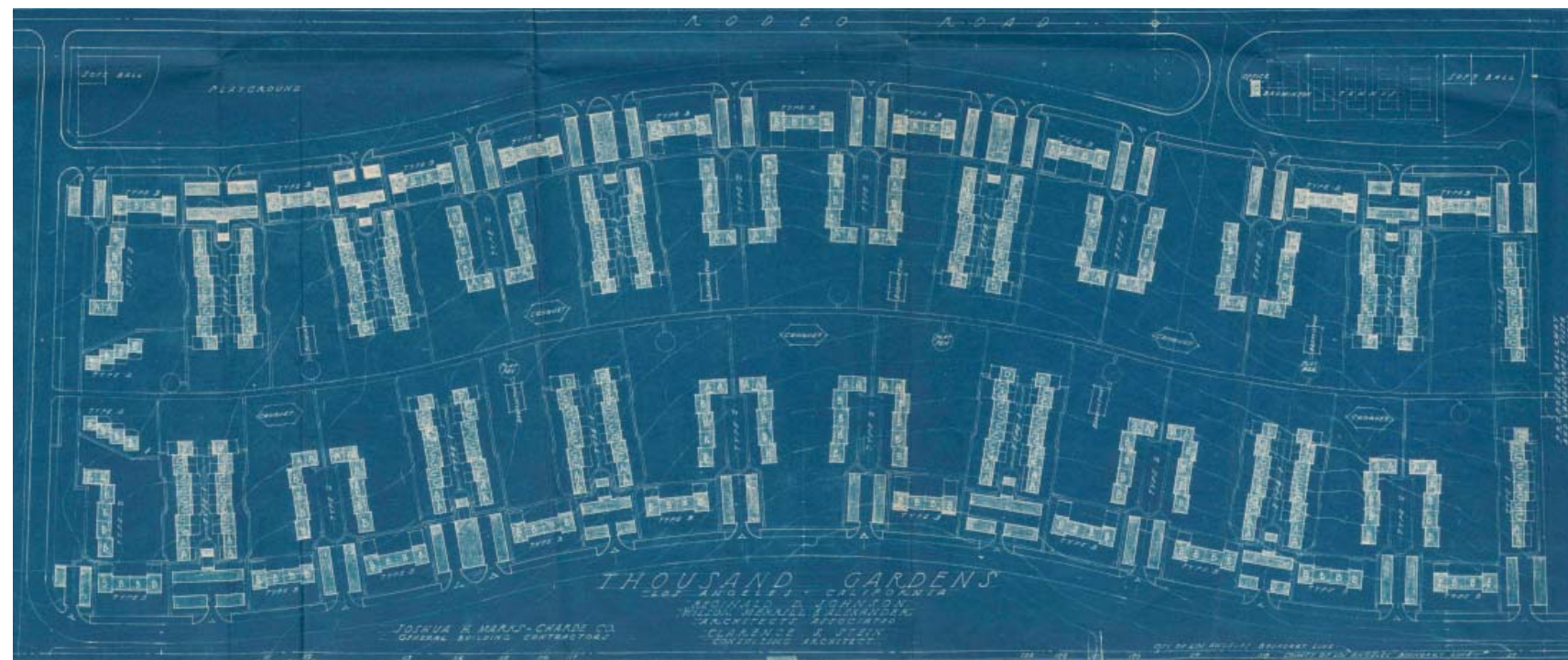
As the project took shape, it was known as "Thousand Gardens," purportedly based on the idea that there were originally one thousand units planned and each was to have its own private garden space. The initial plan proposed single-family dwellings, however this changed in response to available funding. In an effort to create affordable rental housing for a nation recovering from the effects of the Depression, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) created a program to finance multi-family housing projects called Section 207. "Over a period of three years, Ed Merrill, one of the architects, made countless financial "setups" for successive applications for FHA insurance, while the other architects kept tinkering with the design."²² Apartments in The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) were initially rented at \$12.27 per room per month.²³



Early drawing of court detail, July 26, 1938. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Early Thousand Gardens blueprint April 4, 1938. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Thousand Gardens blueprint July 15, 1938. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

The first layouts for the site showed the Central Green as one large, unbroken area; later plans evolved this single “village green” into three distinct greens of “different shapes and sizes.”²⁴ Alexander credited architect Lewis Wilson with the initial inspiration for what became the final organizing site features. Wilson’s concept “gave focus to a single entrance center and defined three great green areas which previously had been continuous and out of human scale.”²⁵ The site plan dated July 15, 1938, showed the interior green space as an unbroken curvilinear feature with individual garden courts extending from the north and south sides. To minimize the space that is typically “unused” between buildings, the architects settled on a scheme that interspersed two-story row houses, two-story apartment buildings and single story bungalow buildings. The final density of the project was just over nine units per acre; only slightly higher than the five to seven units per acre of the adjacent single family housing developments.²⁶

The built complex is similar in many ways to the 1938 site plan. In particular, similarities are in the arrangement of the buildings, the concept of keeping automobiles confined to small motor courts (garage courts) near the perimeter streets, a variety of unit types and buildings, patio space for some units and open space for others, and a central axis extending to the south. The most notable difference between this plan and the built complex was in the accommodation of the automobile. The number of covered and open parking spaces increased more than two-fold in the final design along with the garage courts being extended inwards so that most residents could easily access their parking from the rear of their unit. Recreation facilities were mainly arranged along Rodeo Road with smaller areas for badminton, croquet and “tot lots” uniformly noted in the interior green space.

In August 1938, Alexander went East for a two week vacation and ended up taking a job with the Metropolitan Life Board of Design at the urging of Clarence Stein. Alexander spent a year in charge of floor plan production for Parkchester, a 12,000-unit housing project in the Bronx.²⁷ He credits this influence for the addition of the single story buildings in The Village Green (Baldwin



Early perspective drawing Thousand Gardens. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



1939 perspective ("How Huge Housing Project Will Appear," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1939)

Hills Village). During his time at Parkchester, Alexander met Fred Edmondson and the two who later collaborated on the circulation system for The Village Green.²⁸

When Alexander returned to California in August 1939, he once again became involved in the project. Alexander explains his contributions to the design process at the time.

[I] insist[ed] that about 10 percent of the coverage should be one-story high, to give a more human, Southern California scale. I redesigned the building containing two three-bedroom units, overlapping at the center of the buildings, placing these units at the ends of the building with one-story kitchens and dining rooms. I added one-story brick one-bedroom apartments at the ends of two-story flats, and added a one-story building type.²⁹

Alexander credits Stein with keeping the planning process "on the basic track of making the automobile a servant rather than a master of the planned environment."³⁰

As noted earlier, the designers were not able to incorporate the commercial area and grade school within the housing project. City officials insisted on having a secondary street, Sycamore Avenue, separate The Village Green from the commercial area, and they located Baldwin Hills School across Rodeo Road. In their ongoing post-occupancy evaluations of the built complex, Alexander and Stein continued to lament the fact that these areas, especially the grade school, were not incorporated onto The Village Green complex.

Final Design, 1940

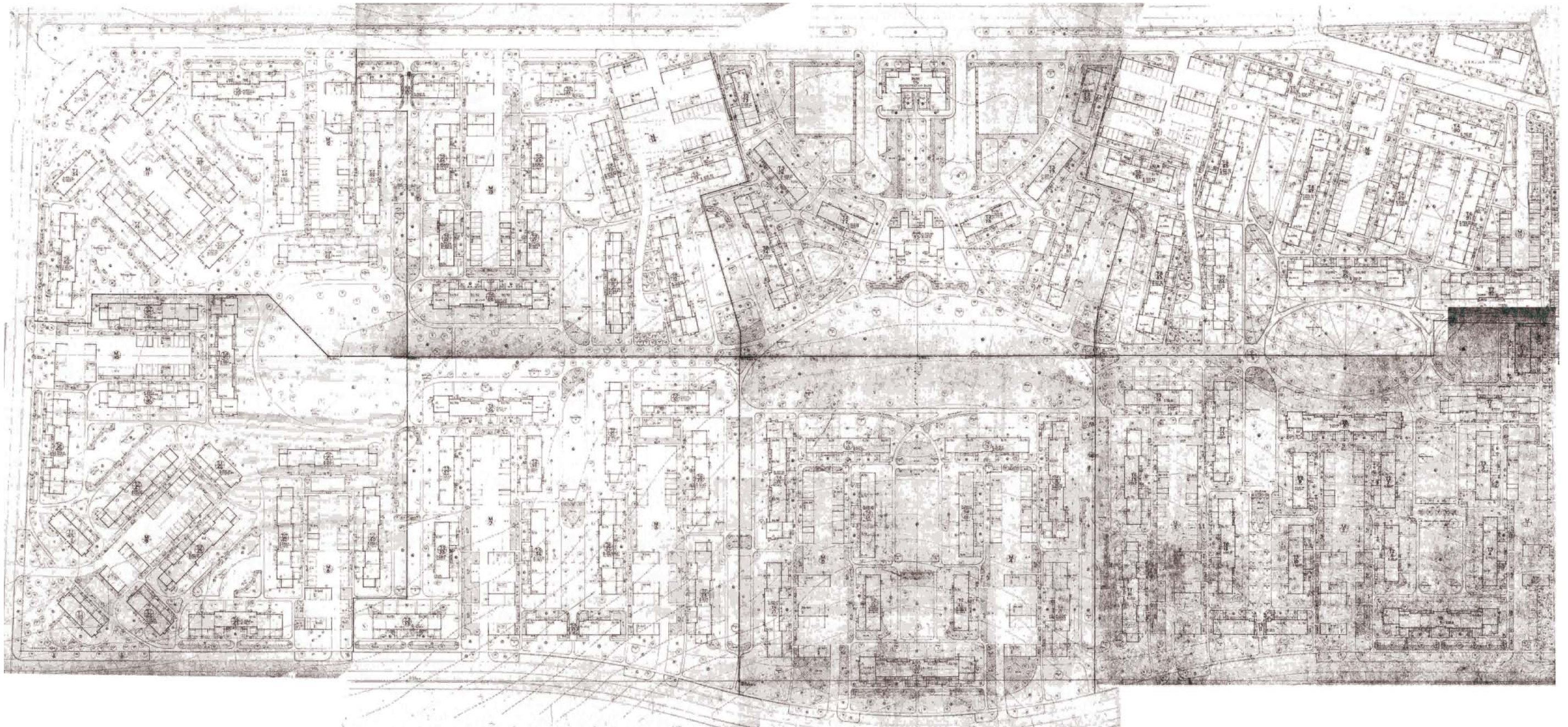
The site plan for The Village Green has a formal arrangement of two intersecting axes. However, on the ground these two organizing axes are not so apparent, and seventy years after completion, the landscaping obscures most of the underpinnings of formalism. Instead, most spaces are on a comfortable human scale and invite exploration – in experiencing the layout, a modern visitor makes a series of "discoveries" while moving through the landscape. Pass-through buildings yield glimpses into the interior, garden courts offer serenity at a comfortable scale, and the larger central greens show park-like expanses. Even Clarence Stein, commenting in 1951, noted that:

The general plan and the air view may suggest that the central axis is overemphasized and out of harmony with the unpretentious urban quality of the rest. This apparent formal monumentality is more evident in the drawing or as viewed from the air than in reality. The individual on the ground sees only a small picture at a time, and he is not likely to observe the main axis, excepting in the relation of the two community buildings at either end of the charming formal garden court.³¹

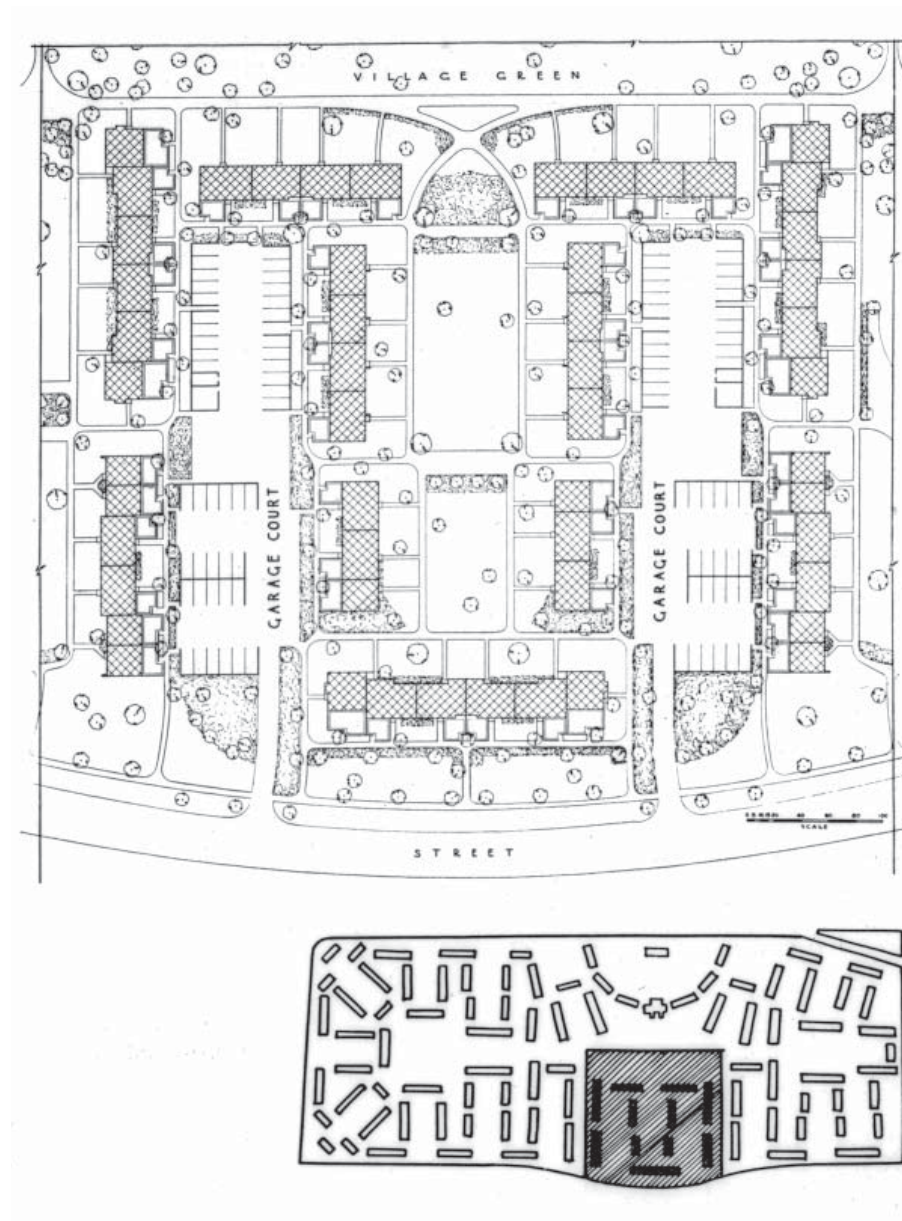
Buildings in Plan

The final plan consisted of 97 buildings. Of these, 94 contained rental units, and the other three served as Administration Building, Community Building and Rubbish Disposal and Storage Building. In addition, 85 garage structures were built in the garage court with enough parking spaces for each unit to have one space.

The Administration Building was centered in the formal half circle adjacent to Rodeo Road and served as the entry point to the complex for potential tenants and visitors. To the south, across a lawn flanked by rows of olive trees, the Community Building welcomed residents and served as the heart of community social life. Views from the south side of the Community Building, opened into the broad expanse of the Central Green and towards the Baldwin Hills the patio. The Rubbish Disposal and



Baldwin Hills Village As-Planted Plan



Final plan detail showing Garden Court 4/5 and Garage Courts 4 and 5. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Storage Building was strategically located in a utilitarian corner of the property, at the intersection of Rodeo Road and Sycamore, and was screened from residential buildings by trees and a service road.

Residential buildings contained three to ten units each, with an average of six units per building.³² Individual units had between three and six rooms. Alexander explained that the architects "developed standards based on subjective observation, such as +/- 100 feet minimum between two-story 20-foot tall buildings, 20-feet between building ends, etc. Johnson suggested two places where we might pierce buildings with broad pedestrian passages and two places where the passer-by could look into the project from outside."³³

The residential buildings were arranged so that the interior spaces of the super-block were automobile-free. Tenants could drive into garage courts from perimeter streets, find their assigned covered parking space and proceed to their apartment. For most units, the service side (kitchen, bathrooms and laundry rooms) faced the garage courts, while the living rooms and larger bedroom (in units with more than one bedroom) faced onto green spaces. Exteriors were Modern in style with little ornamentation, painted in varying hues that added interest in a landscape that was newly planted. In 1944, Catherine Bauer noted, "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."³⁴

Architectural critic Lewis Mumford noted, "... there is a maximum provision of continuous green space, framed by long rows whose restful horizontal planes are differentiated only by their colored walls."³⁵ Colors are cleverly applied to avoid any uniform appearance and varied landscape schemes added to the effect.

All townhouses and first floor units were designed with front and back doors. Units on the second-story had only one entrance in which the unit was accessed via stairs from the main door,

located on the garage court side of the building. The project was originally planned to have the front doors for every unit face the garage courts and to have these main entries be off the landscaped walks behind the garages. This made sense in that residents would typically be arriving by car "and would use the nearest access to his home as the entrance."³⁶ However, the FHA required 'prestige entrances' that would face the park spaces. The designers complied by orienting living rooms to face the garden courts to provide this formal entry. Only the second-floor flats had no entry from the 'park' side of the building. The required relocation of the front door also meant the enclosed private patio spaces moved from the garden court side of the buildings to the garage court side, dramatically changing the relationship between the unit, private outdoor space, garage courts and garden courts from the original concept.

Green Spaces and Outdoor Rooms

The landscaped grounds allowed residents wonderful open space with many options for recreation and respite. According to Robert Alexander, "it was intended that the kids would play ball with their Dad in the center green and this would be a real living place. The kids could pitch tents out there and play cowboys and Indians and whatnot."

Clarence Stein wrote,

Although the Management leaves the great central parks freely open for recreational use, they look empty much of the time. Many of the youngsters seem to find the smaller proportions of the garden courts, which form bays off the central greens, more congenial. They are nearer home, and the little ones love to use shrubs as hiding places."³⁷

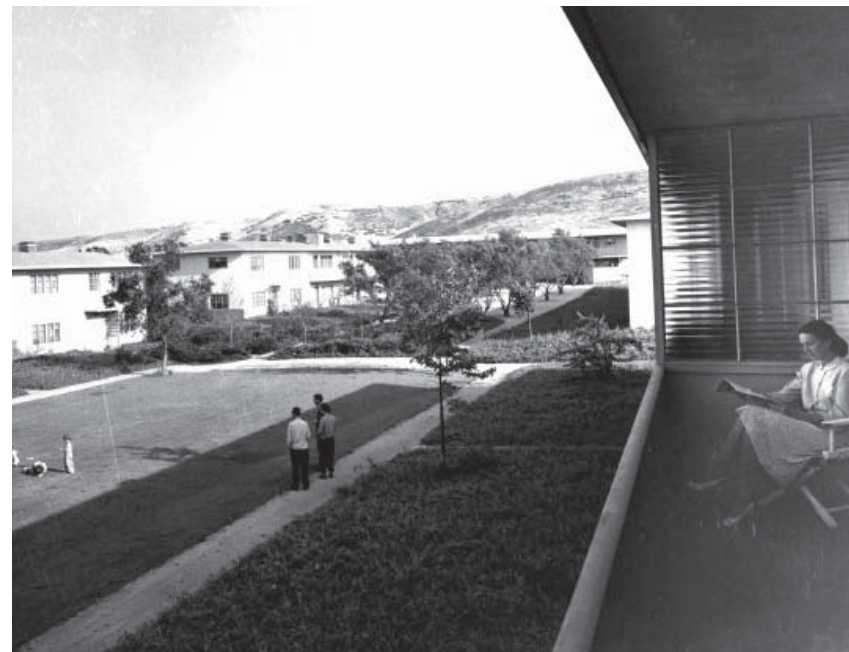
The original plan called for at least one "sitting-out area" within each garden court. Designed by landscape architect Fred Barlow, Jr., these outdoor rooms had low shrubbery walls, de-



Garage Court side of building showing enclosed patio and open space, early 1940s. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Garage Court showing some enclosed stalls, others still open, circa 1945. Note drying yard between garage structures. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Garden Court side of building with lady on balcony, early 1940s. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Garage Court side of building, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

composed granite floors, were to be shaded by trees, and were intended to have benches for seating. These gathering spaces were meant to draw residents into the garden courts to gather and to enliven the landscape. The FHA did not approve the 94 benches planned for by the design team, resulting in these gathering spaces never being fully realized. The hedges and decomposed granite pavements were eventually replaced with turf.

Another innovation in The Village Green landscape was the inclusion of private outdoor spaces for most units. Of the 627 original units, 450 included private patios. Most ground floor units originally had patios walled in by redwood fences. The exception was the two-bedroom one-and-a-half bath units in Type 7 buildings, which had small hedges separating their “patio” space from the garage court sidewalks. These patios ranged in size from 250 to 400 square feet and were accessed from either the dining room or kitchen. They provided tenants with space for lounging, outdoor dining or other pursuits. One hundred twenty-six of the second-floor units included outdoor balconies, and of these, 40 included patios as well.³⁸ Starting in 1949, after New England Mutual Life purchased the complex, the open patio areas were enclosed with serpentine brick walls.³⁹ These walls provided a complementary color and texture to the original painted wood fences. Residents were free to plant whatever they wished within the confines of their patios.

At the time of construction, the inclusion of private outdoor space in the individual unit plan was unusual. As Catherine Bauer noted in her 1944 Pencil Points article, “balcony, walled patio, and landscaped central green typify one extraordinary provision: that for outdoor living.”⁴⁰ Alexander noted in his 1947 assessment of the project that “the enclosure of patios is successful. Privacy and a chance to maintain a little ground as he wishes appeals to the average tenant.”⁴¹

The Garage Courts

By the 1930s, Los Angeles already had a strong tradition as a car culture, and providing accommodations for a large number of cars was an important aspect of planning for circulation.⁴² A notable addition to the site plan was the inclusion of one private, covered parking space for each unit, as well as surface parking for an additional 770 cars. Similar East Coast row houses seldom included space for cars as residents were expected to use public transportation.⁴³ The parking provisions “seemed outrageous to the FHA staff who had processed applications only from East Coast cities. Garages and parking were arranged to minimize the view of cars from the street and from the interior.”⁴⁴ A main focus of the site plan was the separation between vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Cars were restricted to garage courts at the perimeter of the site leaving the interior spaces free for pedestrians and play areas. Stein noted both the safety features of the design as well as the aesthetic value in this quote.

The dangers of too direct access to the paved courts do not exist at Baldwin Hills (The Village Green). There is entrance only at the ends. A child running out of the house will be stopped by a high wire fence or plantings. The view of cars is hidden, or at least lessened by the vines that overgrow the fences, as well as by the interval planting. This also serves to decrease the annoyances of auto sounds and smells.⁴⁵

Stein nicely summarized the importance of the car to Los Angeles culture and its place at Baldwin Hills Village.

A new form has developed and come of age. Here is realistic modern functionalism replacing outworn traditionalism. Within the court is one garage for each home around it; also parking space for one car per family or its visitor. There remains adequate space for maneuvering, turning, backing into garages. The automobile – arriving, departing, at rest, in storage – has all the

room needed. Its local functions are not interfered with by through circulation.⁴⁶

In addition to providing areas for parking, each garage court included a trash center, laundry, and clothes drying yard. Because a majority of the buildings were completed during wartime, restrictions were in place, resulting in the space for drying yards being increased as laundry wasn’t as easily sent out for cleaning. After World War II, some of the space dedicated for drying yards was converted to parking.⁴⁷ Stein comments in his book *Toward New Towns* that New England Mutual Life Insurance Company planned to build more garages after they purchased the complex in 1949.⁴⁸

The most important objective of the site plan is evolving in the form of community spirit and character. No organization has been urged by the management. The arrangement of buildings and the character of the Village have led to a natural neighborliness. The mutual use of facilities has brought people together resulting in organizations varied to suit interests and tastes.⁴⁹



Spence Air Photo, circa 1941. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Building Construction, 1941 to 1942

Work began on The Village Green on March 25, 1941.⁵⁰ Although, Los Angeles builders Marks-Charde Contractors had worked with the architectural team throughout the planning stages, they had left the project by the time construction began. The general contractor on record is the Herbert M. Baruch Corporation, a well-known company that completed numerous buildings in California including the multi-family housing complex Ramona Gardens.⁵¹

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed, ushering America's entrance into World War II and impacting the availability of both materials and manpower. The flipside of the materials shortages were the thousands of defense workers streaming into Los Angeles looking for work and housing. Occupancy rates for completed units hit 100 percent almost immediately and stayed there. The total cost at completion was \$3,500,000.⁵² Catherine Bauer, in her article in Pencil Points, reported the overall construction cost per unit was \$4,911 and the cost of site improvements, landscaping and utilities was \$637 per unit.⁵³

During construction, the on-site topsoil of clay and peaty-clay proved to be a challenge as it was too unstable to build on without drilling expensive caissons. If undertaken, the cost of construction would have been prohibitively expensive. Dames & Moore, the foundation engineers, undertook an extensive study and determined that the site could economically be excavated under each structure to remove the unstable soil, sometimes up to a depth of 14 feet, and that a suitable backfill, found on-site, could be used. Each excavation extended approximately 5 feet from the edges of the foundations.⁵⁴ Clarence Stein noted that the peaty soil, though undesirable for building, was "overcome by the use of floating foundations."⁵⁵

More than 50 companies supplied materials and/or labor to the project.⁵⁶ Construction was standard wood frame and plaster, except for the one-story apartments the used reinforced Groutlock brick for exterior walls. The building exteriors were painted varying colors including cream, salmon, light green, canary yellow, rose pink, apricot and turquoise.⁵⁷ The roofs were finished with colored

gravel aggregate, which alternated court by court from green to tan, with white used in specific locations.⁵⁸ The windows were steel casement with redwood surrounds. Original patio fencing and building trim was also redwood. After 1949, originally open patios were enclosed with serpentine brick walls, adding a contrasting texture to the painted redwood surrounds.

In another innovative aesthetic decision, the architects managed to conceal utilities. "All utilities are underground, an unusual feature of its day, bargained for with the power company in return for 50% 'all electric' dwellings."⁵⁹ The other 50 percent of residential units were provided with natural gas supply lines for stoves, water heaters and fireplace starters.



Fairchild Aerial Surveys, 1948. (Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Detail in Court 4/5 showing the low terrace, an original feature that emphasizes horizontality, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



Building 18, Court 4, circa 1945. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Design Influences and the As-Built Landscape

This was a project with unusual benefits: the investors owned the land free and clear, and it was a nearly level, clean site. Other Garden City plans, such as Chatham Village and Greenbelt, had to consider both topography and existing trees. The site for The Village Green was covered with scrub vegetation and some agricultural use prior to grading and construction.⁶⁰ Another, less apparent benefit to the investors was the lengthy delay caused by the FHA and city planners. This fortuitous stretch of time, coupled with a scarcity of work during the end of the Depression years, gave the architects ample time to refine design plans. As Clarence Stein explained, “Baldwin Hills has an organized unity of over-all pattern This is in large part the result of its being conceived and built as a single related operation with adequate time for thorough study, simplification and integration of the various parts.”⁶¹ This cohesive design differed from the process at Sunnyside and Radburn, where the projects continued to be modified as sections were built.⁶²

Clarence Stein, in a retrospective on Baldwin Hills Village published in 1951 noted the following.

The resulting design of Baldwin Hills Village is dominated by long restful horizontal lines and planes; long green courts paralleled by long low buildings. This horizontality is accentuated by the unbroken line of the delicate cornice and the deep shadow cast by its overhang, which is sometimes three feet wide. The horizontality is emphasized by the thin parallel line of porch and entrance roofs and the flat surface of balcony fronts.

The forms of the buildings are all simple. There is no extraneous ornament or moldings. Adequate and rhythmic pattern is secured by means of the organization and grouping of the simple, straightforward essentials: windows, doors, 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.

In spite of the harmonious unity of its horizontal treatment Baldwin Hills is never monotonous. It has a simple, decided rhythm. The big composition, that follows the dominating line of the flat ground, is relieved by the contrast of the long curves of the brown hills that form a background.

There is no waste motion, no pretense about the design. It is straightforward and entirely serviceable The individual houses plans are integral parts of the community plan. They all open out to its expansive beauty; living rooms and principal bedrooms face towards the greens, while kitchens, though convenient to the service side, open to the patios. In these houses and the surrounding open spaces it is easy to live the kind of life people in Southern California seek in the present time. This, it seems to me, makes the buildings contemporary architecture far more than could any veneer of stylized ‘modern.’⁶³

Stein summed up the design intent:

The more leisurely, less tense rhythm of walking or loafing in the parks of Baldwin Hills calls for a greater variety and for a less rigid setting. Flowing paths; variety of width of open greens, of direction and length of building masses, of color and planting; even the



Original Community Building, circa 1942. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

calm repose of long horizontal lines which unifies and give repose to this variety is softened by the trees and the background of rolling hills.⁶⁴

The landscape architect for The Village Greens was Fred Barlow, Jr., whose partner was Katherine Bashford, though she did not work on the project.⁶⁵ Fred Edmonson, nephew of Los Angeles architect Myron Hunt, and a Cornell-trained landscape architect assisted Robert Alexander in planning the paths, and was later hired by Fred Barlow, Jr. to serve as an assistant landscape architect for the project.⁶⁶ R. W. Hamsher, an accomplished nurseryman and Beverly Hills fixture, supplied the trees from his tree nursery in Beverly Hills at 9760 W. Pico, a block east of Roxbury Drive.

In an article written in 1944 for *The Villager*, an informational newsletter distributed to residents, Fred Barlow Jr. described his design objectives for the landscape at Baldwin Hills Village.⁶⁷

- a. Provision of maximum open spaces for freedom of movement and recreation;
- b. Patios to ensure privacy and individual garden areas;
- c. Character of planting, given by trees and shrubs, while color notes are provided by vines on buildings;
- d. Groundcovers were used to provide a background for flowering shrubs and vines and to insure privacy for tenants by restricting play to central lawn areas;
- e. Lawns were concentrated in central areas large enough for play;
- f. Various shaped gravel areas will in time be shaded by trees, which with benches placed will provide “sitting-out” sections.

In *Homes for Moderns*, published a few years after the completion of The Village Green, Barlow stressed the use of native plants and the use of turf only where necessary, and where it made the most sense. He also cautioned against the use of too many colorful flowers.⁶⁸

Lawn areas in general, particularly in the more arid regions, should be confined to a minimum. A good rule is to plan only enough lawn for your actual use. Too many homes are set back from the street behind deep expanses of lawn that are costly to maintain and serve no purpose for any but the admiration of the passing public. There are many ways in which such an area can be treated other than planting it to lawn. Groundcovers are suitable where the area will not be walked on; paving of decomposed granite, water-bound and tightly packed, when tree shaded is very effective; and the use of some of the easily maintained native grasses and cover crops has much to recommend it in more rural settings.

Flower borders, rose gardens and rock gardens are other places where the beginner is apt to go overboard. These look beautiful in color pictures in magazines and seed catalogs but are a delusion and snare for the amateur gardener. Here again, determine on the type garden you wish to have and then restrict your flower and color plantings to a minimum. Annuals and perennials take lots of work if kept looking at their best and require frequent replanting. It is usually safer to have your color restricted to definite areas, either in beds or to spots in the shrubbery border, for then the labor of caring for them will not become burdensome.

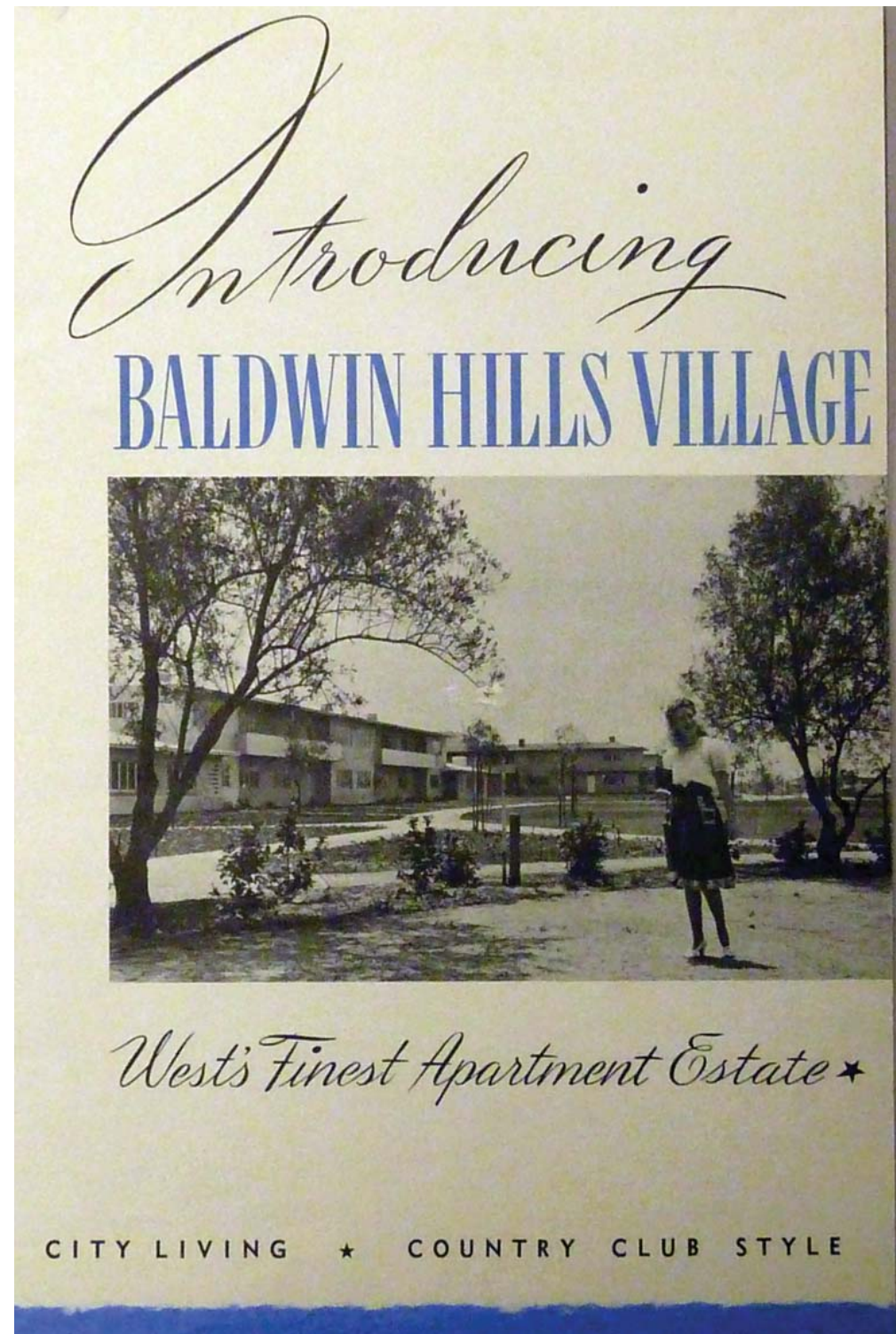
Barlow also emphasized simplicity in a landscape plan when he noted that “It’s what you leave out that is important. The fewer number of plants you have, the more satisfactory will be your final product.”

Steve Close, an early Village resident, shared memories of his childhood landscape experience at The Village Green.

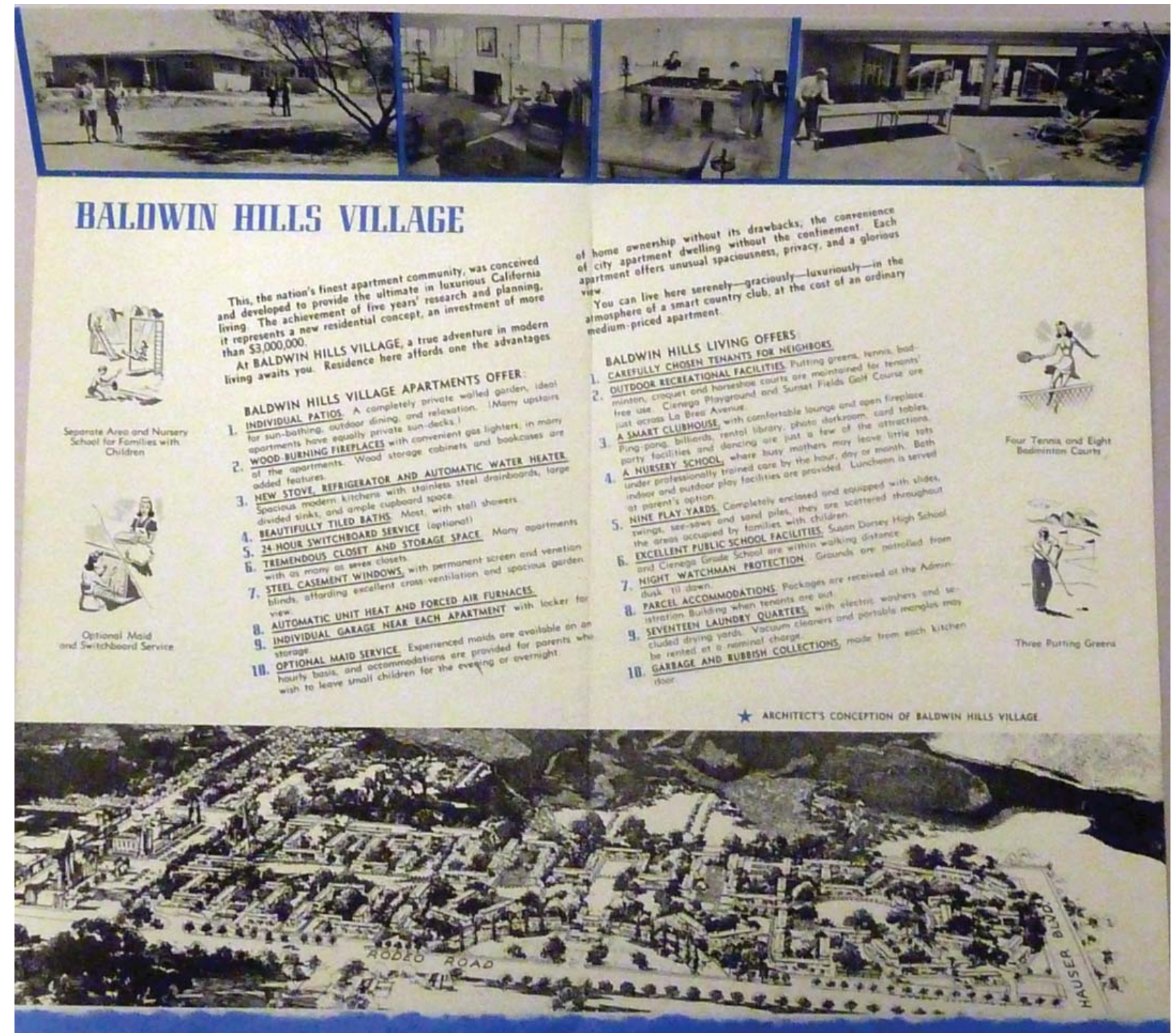
The memories and adventures are countless: serpentine gravel pathways, olive trees, shady archways, expansive greens...the little playground in our own court, our private patio...snakes in the ivy, friendly little pathway lights. And the courts were all different; each pathway held a new surprise and delight.⁶⁹

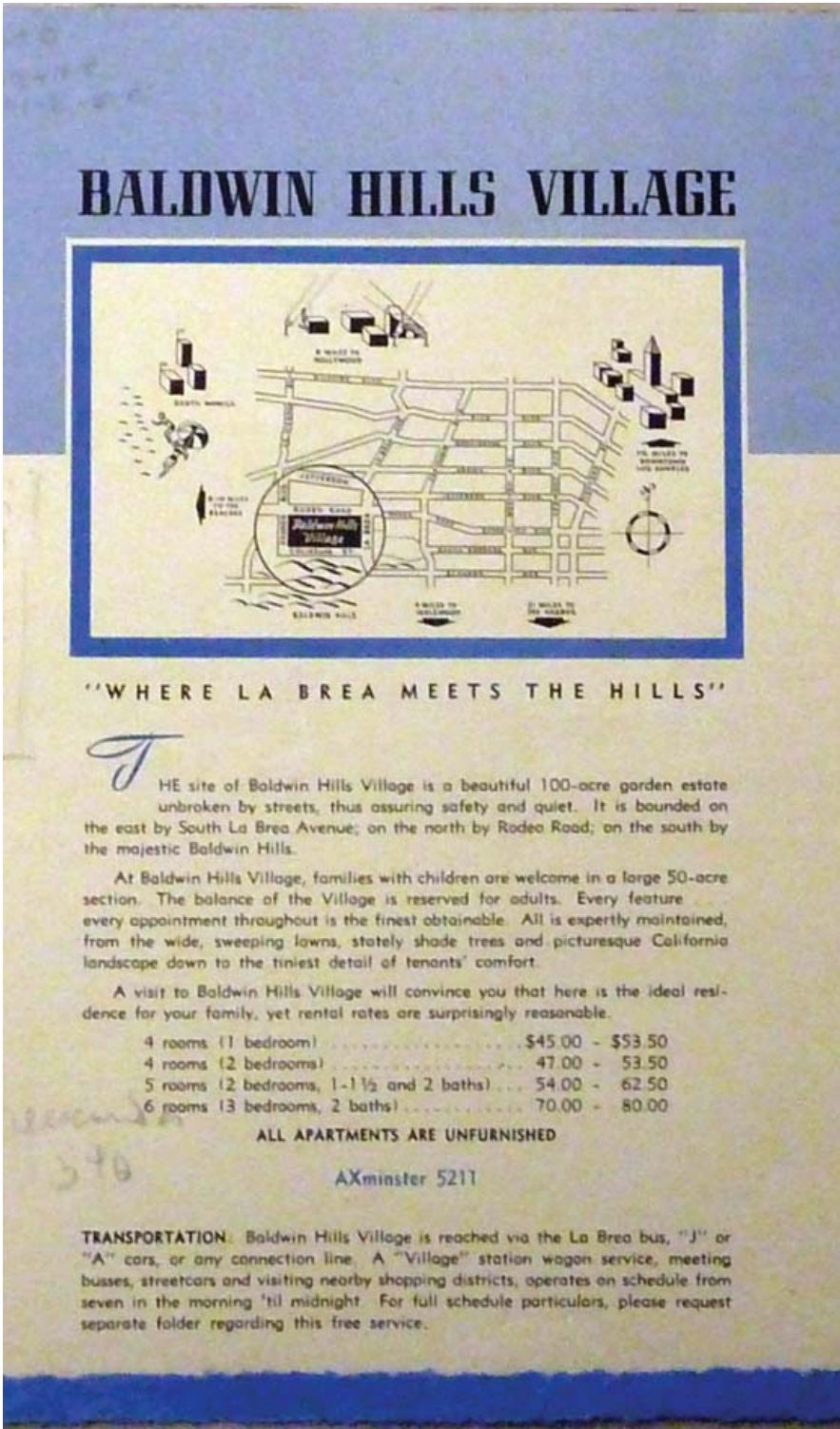
Timothy Alexander, son of architect Robert Alexander, lived in unit 5549 with his family from 1942 to 1951/52. He also reminisced about Village life.

The landscaping was exotic, varied, some of it edible, most of it accessible, all of it hardy enough, and except for the ‘greens,’ xeriscaped to survive the climate and sprouts who played in it. Who would ever dream today of an apartment complex with loquats, pepper trees, olive groves? Before some rule was passed, Mediterranean families came to shake the bitter black olives onto ground cloths for further processing. Varieties of eucalyptus, bougainvillea, birds of paradise and other goodies adorned its public spaces, like the Community Center. And a patio accompanied each apartment, where we grew flowers, but the Drabneys [neighbors] grew artichokes (some kept for thistle show). Not surprisingly, I love gardening, and have pursued a career whose central themes are geography, environmental management and resource conservation.⁷⁰



Baldwin Hills Village brochure, no date (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)





Rancho Cienega Corporation, 1941 to 1949

The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) was owned and operated by Rancho Cienega Properties, Inc. during its first eight years of occupancy. The list of stockholders shows that most of the principal contributors associated with the project were also shareholders: Robert Evans Alexander; Baruch Corporation; Fred Barlow, Jr.; Anita Baldwin’s estate; F. Wesley Davies; Reginald D. Johnson alone and in association with Wilson, Merrill and Alexander; Edwin Ellison Merrill; Rancho Cienega Corporation; Southwest Land Co.; Clarence S. Stein; and Lewis Eugene Wilson.⁷¹ Some surprising names on the list include Ralph J. and Norman Chandler along with their company, the Times Mirror Co., owner of the *Los Angeles Times*. The Chandlers were known to be shrewd and influential businessmen and their association was likely extremely beneficial to the project. Indeed, numerous articles in the *Los Angeles Times* kept the reader updated on the planning and construction progress, all with glowing details.

Stockholder	No. Shares
Robert Evans Alexander	40
W. J. Boyle, Jr.	100
Louis M. Boyle	250
Baruch Corporation	1330
Fred Barlow, Jr.	56
Executors of Estate of Anita M. Baldwin, Dec’d	2178
Ralph J. Chandler	50
Norman Chandler	11
Kenneth E. Carpenter	100
Dextra Baldwin Derx	650
R. Wesley Davies	25
Roger Goodan	11
Henry M. Harris	80
Reginald D. Johnson	205
Reginald D. Johnson, Lewis Eugene Wilson, Edwin Ellison Merrill and Robert Alexander	566
Loury B. McCaslin	80
Edwin A. Meserve	100
Shirley E. Meserve	50
Meserve, Mumper and Hughes	25
Edwin Ellison Merrill	80
Ralph Phillips	8
Rancho Cienega Corporation	675
Southwest Land Co.	11
Clarence S. Stein	50
Times Mirror Co.	65
Howard A. Topp	20
Williamson, Hoge and Judson	25
Frederick W. Williamson	11
Lewis Eugene Wilson	80
Lenore L. Winter	50
Total	6982

Rancho Cienega Properties, Inc., Schedule of Stockholders, As of March 31, 1942⁷²



Rose garden in Garden Court 12/13, Building 65 shown, 1958. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)

James R. McGonagle was the first apartment project manager. His position was announced in the *Los Angeles Times* on November 2, 1941, though his name is linked with the project from at least 1939.⁷³ After serving as Captain McGonagle for the U.S. government during the war, he returned to The Village Green in February 1946.⁷⁴ The article noted that "Approximately 200 apartments out of a total of 627 will be ready for occupancy in the near future."⁷⁵ One third of the complex was reserved for adult only tenants, in Buildings 17 to 51.⁷⁶ The buildings where families with children lived covered two-thirds of the complex and included Buildings 1 to 16 and 52 to 94. "The segregation and concentration of families with children within certain areas is considered advantageous by both classes of family. It provides quiet for couples and playmates for children. However, since this was not contemplated until after construction, laundry drying facilities and playgrounds are considered inadequate in the children's areas."⁷⁷

Rental units were made available as they were completed and as construction continued on other buildings within the complex. In keeping with the 'living in a country club' image, four model units were furnished by Bullock's Department store, an upscale Los Angeles retailer.⁷⁸ Construction began with Building 2 and moved clockwise around the property, with units being occupied as they were finished. It is interesting to note that the floor plans of the Type 3 buildings changed from Court 1, Buildings 3 and 4 to those constructed later. The flats in Buildings 3 and 4 each had one bedroom and a dining room, later buildings had two bedrooms, but no dining room, possibly a later design alteration to suit market preference.⁷⁹

Just as the first rental units were becoming available, Pearl Harbor was bombed, bringing the United States into World War II. Los Angeles became a center for the defense industries, and workers poured into the city from all parts of the country. Numerous additional wartime housing projects were instituted to house this mass influx. By December 1942, The Village Green had 97% occupancy.⁸⁰ Rents ranged from \$45 to \$80.⁸¹

It is clear that the aesthetic and amenities of The Village Green catered to a more well-to-do renter than the average rental housing complex. A negative side to this intent to appeal to a more affluent tenant during the 1940s was the management practice of "careful selection of tenants," language used to assure discrimination. Advertisements for new tenants, such as the one published in the *Los Angeles Times* classified section on March 8, 1942 promised that one could "live in the smart atmosphere of a country club, among carefully selected neighbors. . . ."⁸² A color brochure described life in The Village Green and prominently promised "Carefully Chosen Tenants for Neighbors."⁸³ Like the rest of the country, Los Angeles was not immune to racial discrimination and The Village Green dealt with its share.⁸⁴ Residents reported that the rental policy was strict about keeping out 'people of color' and possibly also those of Jewish descent. One current resident, recently noted that he was the second black person to live in The Village Green but he did not move in until 1973, after the condominium conversion began.⁸⁵

Architect Robert Alexander was an early tenant, and he reported that "In general, the tenants are thoroughly sold on living in the Village and appreciate the advantages provided. Some consider it ideal wartime living, some consider it ideal for children, others prefer it until they can afford to support some of the luxury it provides on their own 'estate,' and still others would not trade the care free existence it provides for a mansion."⁸⁶

Stein summarized Bauer's 1944 article to extol the virtues of spending a reasonable additional sum in the construction of The Village Green in contrast to much of the defense and public housing projects built during the same period.

Excluding land, the cost per unit of Baldwin Hills Village is \$4597, and the average for the four public projects is \$3547 . . . 23 percent lower or a difference of \$1050 per family.

No resounding generalizations should be drawn from these figures . . . But perhaps it would be reasonable to claim some evidence



Resident on patio, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



Model Home, c. 1942. (Cornell University Library)

that, excluding the land and location factor, permanent community housing of “decent, safe and sanitary” but minimum standards cost 20 to 25 per cent 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 . . . there is evidence that even 10 per cent more leeway in the costs and standards of “minimum” modern housing might bring a social return much greater than 10 per cent in more space, more amenity, 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.⁸⁷

Rationing during World War II affected the early life and operation of the complex. The proposed public bus, which had been initially approved by city officials to carry residents to the nearest transportation line, was forbidden by the War Production Board. This necessitated that a private station wagon bus be made available at no cost to the residents by the management.⁸⁸ Individual telephone lines were restricted during the war effort, resulting in an exchange being set up in the Administration Building and operated by the management on a 24-hour basis. An informational handout for new tenants noted that pay phones were installed in Courts 3, 5, 8, 12 and 16 as well as in the southwest patio of the Clubhouse.⁸⁹ This occurred prior to 1946, during the time of the switchboard when private lines were installed.

Due to wartime restrictions on construction materials, building of the proposed commercial area at La Brea Boulevard and Rodeo Road was not permitted. To compensate for this, the management modified additional units just to the west of the Community Building as a lunch counter, barber and beauty shops, and a general market. These businesses, naturally, were called Village Beauty Studio, Village Café and Village Commissary.⁹⁰

The Community Building, originally planned as a childcare center, was quickly converted to an adult recreation center when the impact of the war was realized.⁹¹ With gas rationing people spent more time at home and the Clubhouse became the hub of the complex’s life. The “Village Reporter” kept everyone “aware of square dances, card parties, tournaments, forums, dances, and occasional ‘follies’ or even two-day Olympics, as well as Village gossip.”⁹² In 1949, Stein reported that the Clubhouse consisted of:

a great room some 90-feet long, that can be divided into three sections; also an adjoining kitchen, space for a darkroom, and a small lending library.



Large playground located in Central Court East, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



Building 46, Court 9, a bungalow, circa 1944.

There are weekly dances. Until just recently, when a church was built nearby, non-sectarian services were held there every Sunday morning. On weekdays it is used for parties, gatherings, committee meetings and general loafing. On its large terrace, shaded by awnings, badminton and other games are played.⁹³

An article in *The Villager* touted the advantages of living at The Village Green during the war years.

New life injected into our community activities by the thorough organization of the Villagers into various action groups throws a strong spotlight on the many splendid recreational facilities provided by the Baldwin Hills Village management. Numerous Villagers have enjoyed the advantages provided for the exclusive use of tenants of this deluxe apartment development. Such features include the four fine tennis courts, our free bus service, the Clubhouse with its well furnished meeting rooms, library ping pong and pool tables, bridge tables and sun patio, badminton and croquet courts, the nursery school, maid service, telephone switch boards, and the administration building to care for tenants needs. In addition, there are the landscaped surroundings, lawns and play yards, the walks and open vistas, and similar attractions found in no like area anywhere.⁹⁴

Because of the large number of children living in Baldwin Hills Village, a nursery school was a necessity. To meet this need, management designated two ground floor rental units in the building just to the east of the Community Building and adjacent to the large playground, to be remodeled into a Lanham Act nursery school.⁹⁵ The Lanham Act provided government funds to finance childcare during the war years so that mothers could work outside the home to support the war effort. The nursery school accommodated 30 children and included an enclosed play area

close to the Clubhouse.⁹⁶ In 1944, Catherine Bauer reported that of the approximately 2000 people living at the complex, 435 of them were less than five years old.

A few clues about the landscape's design and appearance during the war years were gleamed from an article by the head gardener at the time, John Campbell, who wrote that, "Each of our courts has a different type of landscaping with distinctive plants and ground cover. Hibiscus has been blooming in various places . . . and the white wings hibiscus with its magnificent flowers will bloom this Fall. Next Spring you'll see the flowering purple leaf plum trees (*Prunus pasardi*) making a grand display of large white blossoms. Honeysuckle has been bearing attractive blossoms in many places and other vines are now in bloom." However, in the same article, Campbell also warned that some trees and plants had been damaged or killed by children. "Many trees and shrubs have been severely damaged and destroyed where a few youngsters have thoughtlessly skinned away the bark or broken them down. Some of our eucalyptus trees particularly have been ruined by young 'hatchetmen.'"⁹⁷

"The \$100,000 landscaping development in Baldwin Hills Village, including more than 2,500 trees and 12,000 shrubs of every variety, gives us our pleasant, pictorial surroundings."⁹⁸ These surroundings had originally included plans for 94 benches. Though deleted from the completed development by the FHA, the management purchased some second-hand benches in 1944 for use by those waiting for the bus, and, most likely, for mothers watching their children at the playground.⁹⁹

In addition to wartime shortages and restrictions, another factor affected the appearance of the early landscape — labor shortages due to the war effort. The Villager notified residents in August 1943 that management was looking for names of prospective gardeners and asking tenants to recommend anyone they knew. Since professional gardening was considered non-essential to the war effort and a labor shortage existed due to the immense growth in jobs in the defense industry, it was difficult to find gardeners.¹⁰⁰ One of the traditional ethnicities involved in garden-

ing, landscaping and farming in Los Angeles, the Japanese, had been removed to internment camps in 1942.¹⁰¹ A desperate management even suggested that tenants consider pulling weeds.

Each week well-known people from all over the country are coming to see Baldwin Hills Village. From every point of view we believe it pays to keep up the grounds. It's not only good business, but has direct effects toward making tenants happier — especially our children. We have had fine cooperation from tenants. Many have voluntarily lent a hand at weed pulling and watering, and we greatly appreciate this attitude. Statistically speaking, if each tenant happened to pull up one weed a day we would have 360,000 fewer weeds at the end of the year.¹⁰²

After the war ended, management worked toward completing the landscape plans designed by Barlow. Catherine Bauer noted, in her 1944 article that "one also misses the bright flower-masses originally planned but omitted for lack of maintenance."¹⁰³ By the late 1940s, there were patches planted with flowering plants enclosed by low boxwood borders.

In October 1943, a group of housing planners from Great Britain toured the U.S. to study housing developments in anticipation of post-war planning in England. This notable delegation included The Village Green in their visit. The Villager reported that they made "a thorough study of our unique, deluxe rental apartment community."¹⁰⁴ A few years later, Reginald Johnson wrote a letter to the editor of *The Villager* reporting that he and his wife had moved back to their home in Pasadena (after experiencing life at The Village Green for a few years) and that Baldwin Hills Village had been mentioned in a book, *Rebuilding Britain* — a Twenty Year Plan.¹⁰⁵

Another war effort practiced by many residents was the planting and maintenance of victory gardens. These small plots were intended to supplement fruit and vegetable production, cut

down on the need for commercial transport of foodstuffs so that transportation facilities could be directed toward the war effort as well as to boost morale by giving the folks at home a task to contribute to the national effort. As was common across the nation, unused land was appropriated by the residents for their victory gardens. The Villager guided residents in their new agricultural attempts, stating "Gardens may be planted only on the south side of Coliseum Street from Sycamore to Hauser, and on the west side of Sycamore. The gardens are 15 feet on the front and 30 feet deep with a two-foot walk between each. There are 124 lots along Coliseum Street, skipping the rocky ledge opposite Court 4, which is unsuitable for planting."¹⁰⁶ The June 1943 edition of The Villager reported that "approximately 160 victory gardens flank[ed] the Village" and that "very few" suffered neglect.¹⁰⁷ The war officially ended September 2, 1945 and by 1946 life was returning to a degree of normalcy.¹⁰⁸ Victory gardens on the south side of Coliseum Street were replaced by the construction of single-family homes – part of the massive growth in Los Angeles to house returning veterans and their families.¹⁰⁹

Peacetime portended positive changes to the landscape at The Village Green. Barlow's original planting plans, while nearly completed before the advent of the war, were not fully implemented until 1946.

Beginning on March first, a program will be started to overcome landscape deficiencies caused by wartime shortages and to restore the grounds of the Village to their originally planned attractiveness. Some areas will receive almost complete renovation while other (sic) will require only spot treatment (sic). It is expected that this work will extend over many months. Because it is necessary to include all areas of the Village in this program, it will be necessary to discontinue victory gardens within the Village grounds, (except within the walled-in patios of individual apartments).¹¹⁰

Other changes influenced The Village Green, some positive, others less so. Bus service was extended to the complex on July 1, 1946. Applications for private telephone service were being taken by Southern California Telephone Company beginning March 1, 1946. Management announced that the garage door company notified them that wood was now available for any tenants wishing to have wooden garage doors installed. After the war, the government discouraged women from working, preferring to open up jobs for returning veterans, therefore the Lanham Act, which funded daycare for working mothers, was discontinued. And locally, management reminded tenants that pets were not allowed, except for those permitted prior to June 1942. This rule later resulted in the eviction of Robert Alexander and his family when they reportedly adopted a stray cat.¹¹¹

In April 1946, two French architects toured the complex with Robert Alexander and Clarence Stein. "Philippe Mondineau and Jacques Brunell, members of the French Architectural Mission, [came to] study American architecture, especially housing planning . . . having visited most of the large cities of the U.S., they stated that the Village was the best fitted for the community of any they had seen."¹¹²

When The Village Green opened in 1941, the Sunset Fields Golf Course, a 36-hole public field, was located east of the complex, across La Brea Boulevard. It ran roughly from Coliseum Street up the hill to Stocker Street. The Rancho Cienega O' Paso de la Tijera adobe (ca. 1795) served as the clubhouse. The adobe still exists but has since been modified. After World War II, this area was subdivided resulting in the large apartment buildings that exist today. This area was one of the most concentrated areas of postwar Garden Apartment communities in Los Angeles. Land to the south and west was ploughed for crops. A small subdivision of single-family houses was built across Rodeo Road near La Brea Boulevard. Otherwise the land along Rodeo Road was mostly undeveloped until after World War II. After armistice was declared, a population boom occurred with returning veterans moving to Los Angeles. The city continued to grow up around the complex with single-family homes filling in nearby land and portions of the adjacent hillsides beginning to be developed in 1946.



Reginald D. Johnson takes Sir Ernest Simon of the British Housing Authority on a tour of Baldwin Hills Village. The man on the right is Jack McGovern, the local FHA Area Administrator, and another Baldwin Hills Village resident, 1944.



Under New England Mutual Life Insurance Company's management, landscape maintenance suffered, 1954. (Photo by John G. Ross, Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Building and landscape maintenance during New England Mutual Life Insurance Company's ownership, 1954. (Photo by John G. Ross, Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



New England Mutual Life Insurance sign, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection, 1960)

As memories of rationing and shortages faded, some of the planned commercial and civic buildings were finally constructed. The Thriftmart a "new quarter-million dollar super-market, being the first major commercial development located at the La Brea-Rodeo Road intersection" opened in April 1948. In May, Robert Alexander finished the plans for a permanent building for the Baldwin Hills School, which opened in 1949.¹¹³ The Baldwin Hills Theatre, designed by architect Lewis Wilson, opened in August 1949, providing residents with local entertainment near the complex, a portent of changes to come.

In 1944, negotiations began with the Baldwin Estate on property north of Rodeo Road for the creation of a neighborhood playground. In 1949, the Baldwin Estate donated 13 acres to the City of Los Angeles with the provision that the land be used solely for recreational purposes. A new fully equipped playground and recreation center was created soon thereafter at Hauser and Exposition."¹¹⁴

Post-war housing construction continued to fill the nearby hill-sides putting the end to any thought of expanding The Village Green.¹¹⁵

New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of Boston, 1949 to 1961

New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of Boston purchased the complex in 1949 from Rancho La Cienega Corporation, and owned it until the end of 1961. The purchase closed on July 1, 1949 with a sale price of \$4,500,000.¹¹⁶ A company official commented for an article in *House & Home* magazine in 1956 that "we (New England Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Boston) think this is the best thing in the country, it is always 100% rented."¹¹⁷ J. R. McGonagle, manager of Baldwin Hills Village, had resigned April 1, 1949 to work on the development of the new stores and buildings along La Brea Boulevard. He returned on July 1st at the request of the new owners.¹¹⁸

In appearance, New England Mutual Life ran The Village Green in a more formal, businesslike manner than had Rancho La Cienega Corporation. Indeed, the complex was purchased because of its potential for economic return, and many of the changes that were instituted during the insurance company's tenure reflected corporate decision-making. Under this ownership, use of the Clubhouse was discouraged and in 1955 it was converted it into two large apartments, each renting for \$300 per month.¹¹⁹ Management preferred to rent to childless couples and a policy was quietly formulated to exclude children. Robert Alexander recollected later that "after the New England Mutual Insurance Company bought the thing [Baldwin Hills Village], I saw the head gardener bring in a truckload of trees and place them in a way that it would be impossible to play ball out there anymore. The gardeners were instructed that if they saw any kids playing out there that they were to turn the sprinklers on."¹²⁰

Beginning in the early 1950s, many of the community's recreational facilities were slowly eliminated. The smaller tot lots, badminton courts, horseshoe pits, tennis courts and croquet courts were all removed, and additional garages or parking spaces were typically built in their place. The only remaining recreational area was the large children's playground just east of the Clubhouse. By the early 1950s the private nursery school had closed, and the playground was open to all children living in the complex.

During this time, two notable, but improbable, trees were added to the landscape at Baldwin Hills Village. Dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) from the Sichuan-Hubei region of China were planted and still exist today in Court 11.

Baldwin M. Baldwin, 1961 to 1971

Baldwin M. Baldwin, the grandson of E.J. 'Lucky' Baldwin purchased the property in 1961, bringing The Village Green back into the ownership of the Baldwin family. Baldwin died in 1971 with ownership passing to his estate. Unfortunately for both Baldwin Hills Village and for Baldwin M. Baldwin, a disaster occurred soon after his purchase that shook the entire city and caused catastrophic damage to the complex.

In the Baldwin Hills above The Village Green, on the site of the present-day Kenneth Hahn State Park, was an earthen dam reservoir. This \$10 million reservoir, dedicated April 18, 1951, was designed to hold 293,000,000 gallons of water in an 18-acre lake.¹²¹ Due to the rapid population growth of Los Angeles, city officials built the reservoir as both a reserve water supply and as a tool to help maintain water pressure.

Historically the Baldwin Hills area produced oil, which continues today. Due to the extraction of oil, an undetected subsidence occurred within the ground, weakening the earthen dam. The *Los Angeles Times* headline on Sunday, December 14, 1963 cried "Dam Bursts With Death, Destruction."¹²² A leak was discovered at 11:38 am on December 13th, and the earthen dam gave way later in the afternoon, unleashing 292.4 million gallons of water. "In less than two hours [the dam break] caused more than \$10 million damage and at least two deaths."¹²³ The majority of the damage occurred in the streets above The Village Green. However, floodwaters rushed into the complex with the most damage in Courts 5 and 6. Even now, homeowners repairing ground floor units have found mud deposits in spaces behind cabinets.¹²⁴ The waters reached as high as the tops of the garages in some garage courts, ripped the ends off of Buildings 32 and 33, and damaged parts of Buildings 30, 31, and 35. Garages in Court 5 were damaged beyond repair and in Court 6 they were completely



Lush groundcover in front of a building, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection, 1960)



Bungalow, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection, 1960)

destroyed. Replacements were made, and can be identified today by stucco exteriors as opposed to the original wooden exteriors. Los Angeles Mayor Samuel W. Yorty declared the area a major disaster area and “an aide for President Johnson promised full support from the federal government.”¹²⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* noted, “Fourth Victim Reported: Archie V. MacDonald, 70, executive director of the Los Angeles Furniture Mart, was reported missing Monday and is presumed dead. MacDonald was snatched by the swirling flood water from under the eyes of his wife, Marie, who was clinging to the wall of their home at 5410 Village Green.”¹²⁶ Five lives were lost in total.

In later years, Alexander recalled the flood damage and the course owner Baldwin M. Baldwin chose to take. “. . . I thought he would seize on this disastrous occasion to fill in the great open spaces with apartments if not high rises. I was gratified to see he did nothing of the kind, but restored it and even improved some aspects such as installing sliding glass doors in some flood-destroyed walls where the FHA had originally turned them down.”¹²⁷ Baldwin hired Alexander to faithfully reconstruct the damaged residential buildings and the destroyed garages.

The landscape and plantings suffered extensive damage. While most trees remained intact, shrubs and groundcover within the path of the floodwaters were swept away or buried. As a result of the extensive damage, Baldwin hired landscape architect Merrill Winans to update the landscape design. Winans had worked for Baldwin on a number of other projects including Hody’s Coffee Shop, the Baldwin Hills Theatre and the Baldwin Hills Shopping Center. Winans’ son, Larry Winans, collaborated on all aspects of the landscape update for The Village Green. In 2000, Larry described their work in a presentation to residents during a visit to The Village Green. Larry owned a contracting business and moved his operations to The Village Green for the reported 2 ½ years it took to rehabilitate the landscape. Larry reported that his father focused on adding lots of textures and colors, with one “signature” plant unique to each court. Some of these signature plantings included canna lilies and the magnolia tree allee.¹²⁸ While the majority of trees were undamaged, much of the lower-



A triangular planting bed and a sycamore allee, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection, 1960)

story plantings were washed away. Most groundcover and shrubbery that survived was bulldozed as the property was re-graded in preparation for the new landscape. The rebuilding process took over two years. Because the flood had damaged the water mains for the irrigation system, new eight" fiberglass transite lines were installed, with new valve vaults, lateral lines and sprinkler heads.¹²⁹

Following trends in landscape design of the time, the original 1941 landscape designed for active use by residents was replaced by a more picturesque, traditional landscape. The original restrained plant palette and functional landscape became more complex, with higher maintenance needs and an emphasis on masses of bold color and comparatively thirsty plant species. A greater variety of tree species were added including liquidambar, shamel ash, sequoia and deodar cedar. A greater variety and more complex palette of sub-tropical shrubbery was introduced as foundation planting, and a greater emphasis was placed on masses of showy color. Several rose gardens were planted and more trellises were added to buildings for flowering vines. One similarity between the original plantings and Winans' new design was the intent to maintain each garden court with its own distinctive character. Winans provided signature species such as canna lily and bird of paradise. Winans' design was in step with his contemporaries' notions of a fashionable 1960s landscape that was attractive to look at. However, this approach did not complement the austere modern style of the buildings as the original plantings had. Where Barlow had partially screened off the entrances to garden courts to provide a more human scale, Winans exploited views and vistas, opening up sightlines and framing views, taking care to plant a foreground as well as provide a terminus on which the eye would rest. According to Larry Winans, "one of the things we wanted to create was a series of constantly changing vistas, so that the individual courts were not sealed off from the greens, so that they would open onto one another."¹³⁰

In contrast to the original plantings, Winans' design did not emphasize the horizontality of the buildings nor did it include

recreation areas. What had formerly been play areas became large turf areas, sprinkled with trees.¹³¹ Traditional foundation plantings dominated instead of the wide beds of groundcovers used in the original design, which organically "tied" the buildings to the land and emphasized horizontality. These changes echoed the philosophy established by New England Mutual Life Insurance to encourage up-scale tenants, preferably without children. With the exception of a small play areas in Courts 12 and 17 that survived the flood, all remaining recreation spaces such as tot lots or badminton courts were removed. The original designers' vision for a functional landscape intended for the active use of the residents was replaced by an attractive though high-maintenance suburban landscape meant to be enjoyed from apartment windows or while strolling the sidewalks.

Though Winans returned periodically to advise the management on landscape maintenance, by the time of the condominium conversion, plant material had been allowed to become overgrown, and Winans' landscape vision was eventually diminished.¹³²

During this period, USC Assistant Professor of Architecture and Planning Richard Berry described those who lived The Village Green – upper middle class, more educated, professional/managerial people.

The residents themselves, over time, have come to represent a narrow band of upper middle-class attributes: about a \$10,000 median income in 1960 This is 40 per cent higher than the metropolitan median. The "Villagers" also have more education than the middle-class average for the city at large (12 per cent more school years) and their employment falls predominantly to the professional, managerial, technician category. In age, too, they manifest a greater maturity, with a statistical median of over 50 years The total number of tenants approximates 1170, which averages less than two persons per dwelling unit, and less than 10 per cent of that total are children under 18.¹³³



A tot lot in Court 12, circa 1967. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Landscape, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)



The Winans' plan put an emphasis on color and texture in the landscape, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)



Foundation plantings, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)

Terramics and Watt Industries, 1971 to 1978

Terramics, Inc., a investment firm based in Century City who specialized in apartment and office buildings, purchased The Village Green from the estate of Baldwin M. Baldwin in 1971.¹³⁴ Within a few years, they formed a joint venture with Celanese Real Estate Development Corporation called Cela-Terr, Inc. and proceeded to convert the apartments into condominiums.¹³⁵ In 1963 the first legislation in the U.S. was passed to legalize condominium ownership, marking the 1970s as the period where condominiums became mainstream.¹³⁶

Adding additional units to a rental property offered a tantalizing source of greater income to projects with buildable space. Although it was apparently considered, Cela-Terr decided to proceed with the conversion in lieu of constructing rental units in the greens. According to Robert Alexander, "another crisis arose after Baldwin's death three or four years ago when his estate, again at a profit, sold the Village to Terramics, Inc. At their request I made studies of alterations for security and of converting small apartments into big ones as well as adding units with minimum impact on the environment. Happily they were convinced to retain the inherent values of the Village, and are in the process of converting it into condominium units" ¹³⁷ Jerry Karis (or Kar-ris), a principal with Watt Industries, told resident Bernie Altman, that Watt had wanted to construct high-rise buildings in the three large greens, but was denied permission.¹³⁸ Included with the city's approval for the conversion was a clause in the Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions that no additional buildings may ever be erected on the site.

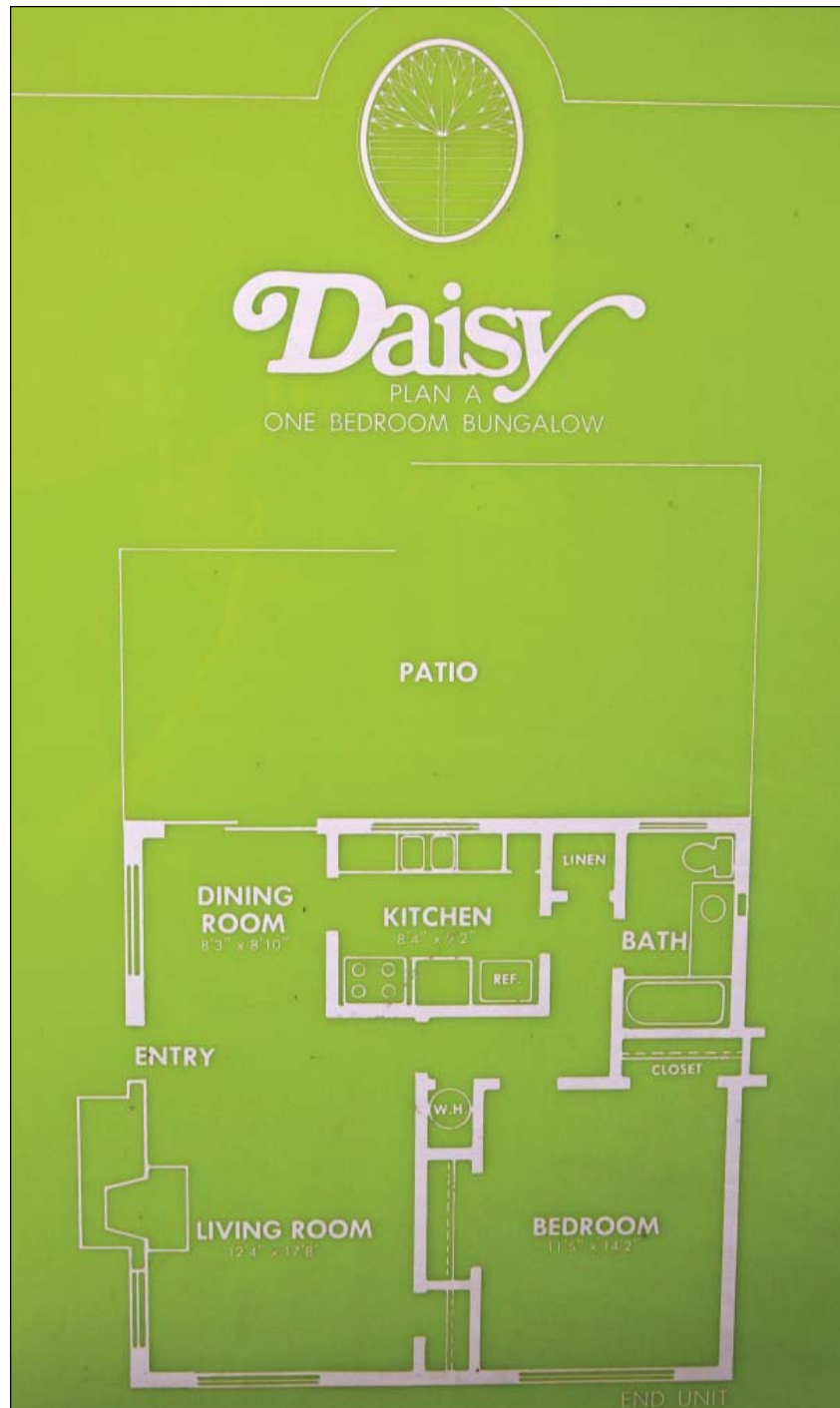
Long-time resident Bernie Altman explained that "The condo conversion took place in about seven phases, starting west to east, and ending in approximately East Circle. Model units were in Buildings 78 and 81. The central space in the Clubhouse was the sales office, decorated in a neo-Spanish style (tile floor, iron chandelier and glass-topped tables, etc.) by the developers."

As part of the conversion process, Cela-Terr offered units to tenants first. They also offered optional upgrades to unit interiors including new Formica kitchen countertops, linoleum flooring over tiled bathroom floors, wrought iron stair rails, sliding glass patio doors and the replacement of tongue and groove closet doors in the bedrooms with sliding mirrored doors. During the condominium conversion, most of the milk delivery boxes located in the exterior kitchen walls were covered. In the spirit of the 1970s, each unit plan had a "flower" name. Units were priced from \$19,500 to \$34,500. Of the first 100 or so units sold, existing residents accounted for more than half of the sales.¹³⁹

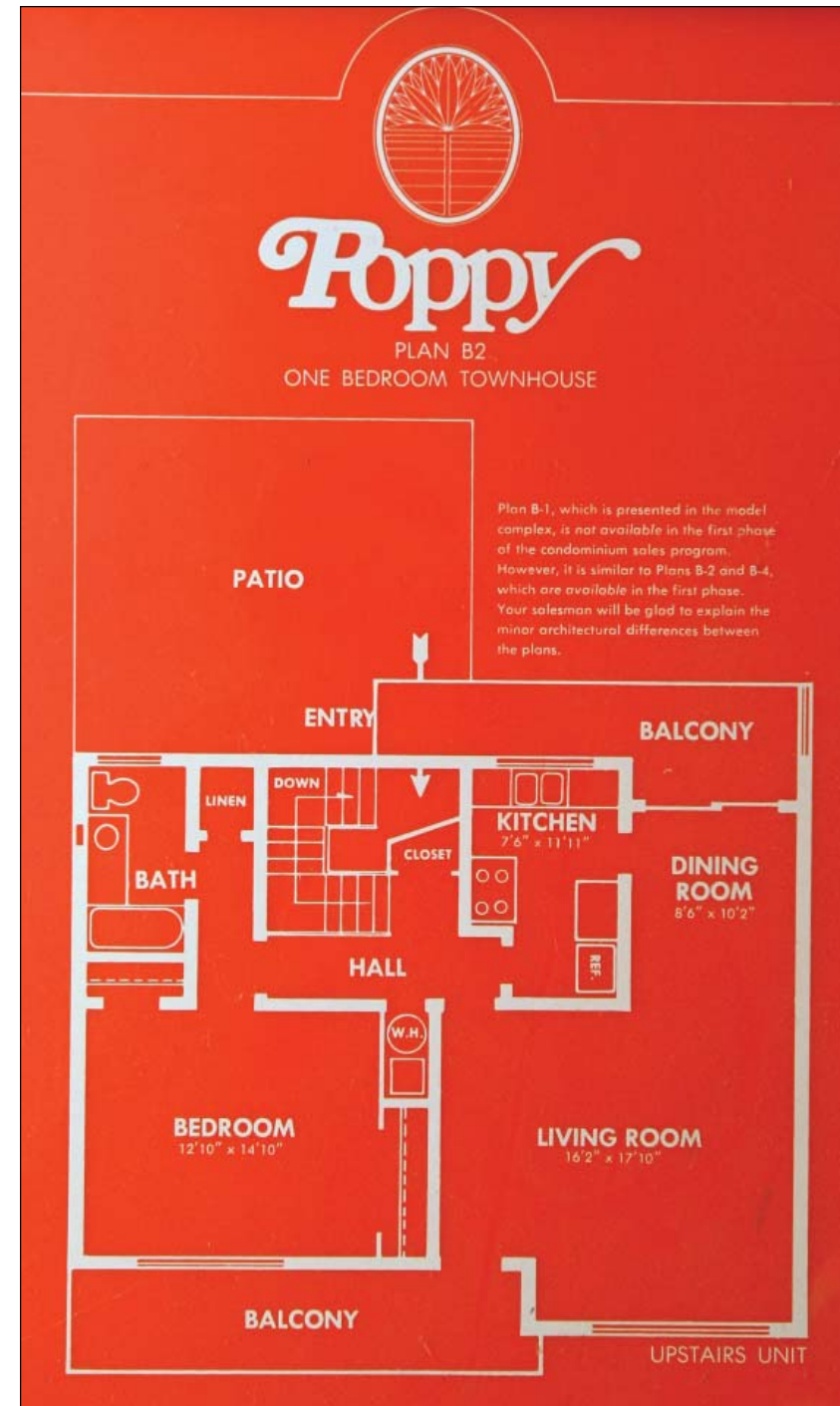
Upon conversion, Baldwin Hills Village formally became The Village Green.

Soon after Terramics' purchase, the American Institute of Architects awarded The Village Green its prestigious 25-Year Award. This rare honor, bestowed on properties at least 25 years old, is a recognition of "architectural design of enduring significance." The only other recipients at the time were the Rockefeller Center in New York, Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West in Arizona and Crow Island School in Illinois.¹⁴⁰

Watt Companies purchased The Village Green from Terramics in 1977, though Village Green Management Company, an arm of Terramics, continued to act as property managers until June 30, 1978. In 1977 Watt turned over board management to the Village Green Owners Association (VGOA). Until that time, the developer had retained three of five seats on the Board of Directors and therefore exercised full control. The first board comprised entirely of homeowners was formed in February 1978, and the first meeting was held on March 8th.¹⁴¹



Condominium floor plan, circa 1973



Condominium floor plan, circa 1973

Condominiums, 1973 to present

Converting the 629 rental units at The Village Green to private ownership was a long process. The first units were sold in 1973 with the first by-laws passed in August 1973, after 102 units had been converted. "The Village Green Owners Association consisted of one phase of 102 units, the developer (Terramics Associates) and a Board of three directors (one of whom represented Terramics)." ¹⁴² Some of the units' interiors were remodeled and some were sold "as is." ¹⁴³ The Village Green newspaper *Highlights* announced, "The conversion of Village Green from apartments to condominiums was completed in July 1978, and all units are now privately owned." ¹⁴⁴ In August, Watt Companies, "the last developer, departed and relinquished the Sales Office to the Green. At last the Association had its long awaited Clubhouse." ¹⁴⁵

The fledgling Village Green Owners Association was faced with the challenges of taking over management of the complex, finding dedicated and knowledgeable owners to volunteer time and energy, and learning to address neighborhood issues. Volunteers formed committees, including the Landscape Committee, to address their newfound responsibilities.

One issue arose in 1976 when the City of Los Angeles decided to install concrete sidewalks in the complex along Rodeo Road and Sycamore Avenue. Concerned residents contacted their Councilwoman, Pat Russell and gathered 1,066 signatures opposing the installation of sidewalks on the parkways. Most notably, 471 of the signatures came from people who lived outside the complex. "The petitions stressed hazards to children, the absence of any need now or in the future for additional sidewalks, and a very considerable number of environmental hazards if the walks were to be built." ¹⁴⁶

Once the rental units were converted to condominiums, the strict oversight of the rental management regarding vegetation outside of private patios was relaxed. Residents began planting favorite plants near front entries and along the fences and garage walls near units. The majority of these plantings were not problematic. However, a tree or an invasive species was

occasionally introduced into the landscape, causing problems for the owners' association by adding work to the landscaping staff to continually remove these plants. Problematic plants included loquats, palm trees, morea dietes, and equisetum, all of which still exist in the present-day landscape.

A gardening schedule published in the October 7, 1978 edition of *Highlights* noted seven full-time staff performing basic landscape work. Three people watering every day, two mowing, one cleaning up after the mowers and one weeding, trimming and raking.¹⁴⁷

A report by the Landscape Committee in 1979 noted that the grass at The Village Green was St. Augustine's, "a type that naturally goes dormant in the winter," after some owners complained of brown patches in the lawns.¹⁴⁸ Resident Bernie Altman recalled, "Around 1980, many mature trees were removed from garage courts, especially jacarandas, as they were perceived to be detrimental to the underground infrastructure." He also noted, "In the early days, there was significantly less exterior lighting than now. Various informal studies (possibly formal ones) were made to improve night lighting, including replacing original light fixtures with new ones that would be brighter . . . Lighting in motor courts was supplemented with wall and soffit fixtures starting about 1986. Of course, many residents objected to increasing the lighting level, but eventually that changed."¹⁴⁹

A set of architectural design guidelines was formulated beginning in 1979 by the newly formed Architectural Guidelines Committee, which helped to guide changes over the years.¹⁵⁰ As reported in *Highlights* dated June 17, 1979, the owner of unit 5244 requested permission to enlarge his patio to the same size as most other Type D units. The Board approved his request with the following provisos. "owner will bear "all expenses involved, fence matching exactly, new exterior plantings to match are, etc. and all work to be done by outside contractor."¹⁵¹

The same issue of *Highlights*, reported the Board's decision to approve installation of two benches to be placed "directly in

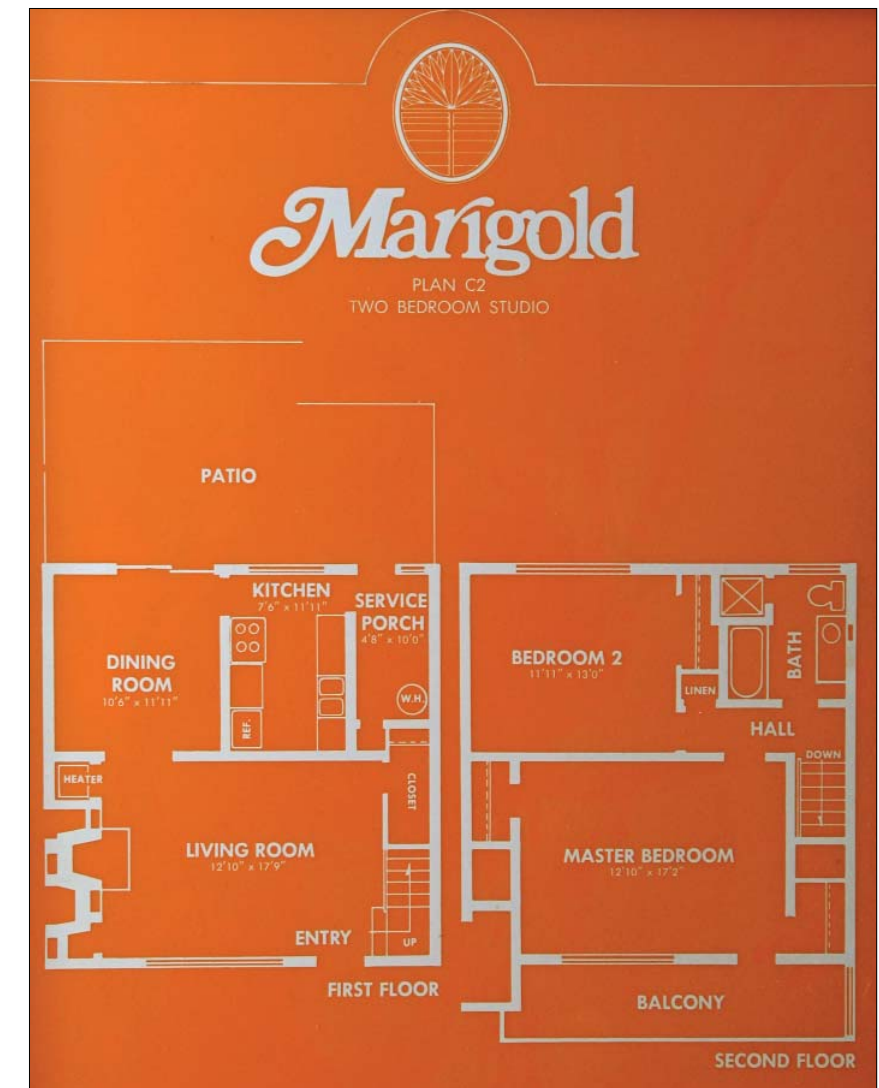
back of the Clubhouse for residents waiting for meetings, etc." These benches were to be "similar to those located around the Green."¹⁵² One should recall that during the war years, the Board purchased some secondhand benches, which were refurbished and used at the bus stops, and most likely at the large playground. This would indicate that the benches used were probably not the design envisioned by the original architects. These two benches are still in use outside the Clubhouse.

By the time of the condominium conversion, the complex was essentially childless. Policies instituted by the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company began the decline in numbers of families with children. By selective renting and through the removal of recreational features, management created a more park-like environment rather than an active play environment. What had been originally envisioned as an ideal place to raise children was now nearly a childless environment. In formulating the CC&Rs for the owners' association, Cella-Terr included language stipulating that no-one under the age of 18 would be permitted to live at the Village.¹⁵³ This set the stage for a landmark case striking down age restrictions prohibiting children from condominium developments in the State of California.

In the words of California case law:

John and Denise O'Connor bought a two-bedroom unit in Village Green in 1975. On July 4, 1979, their son Gavin was born. Shortly thereafter, the Association gave them written notice that the presence of their son Gavin constituted a violation of the CC&Rs and directed them to discontinue Gavin living there. After making unsuccessful attempts to find other suitable housing, the O'Connors filed a complaint against the association seeking to have the age restriction declared invalid and to enjoin its enforcement.¹⁵⁴

In 1983, in the case of O'Connor v. Village Green Owners Association, the California high court determined that "the age restric-



Condominium floor plan, circa 1973



Landscape, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)

tion in the CC&Rs of a condominium development . . . violates the [Unruh Civil Rights] Act.” Therefore condominium associations could no longer forbid residents with children under the age of 18. After the California Supreme Court decision, families with children slowly began inhabiting The Village Green once again.

Writing in 1985, George Rand, associate dean of UCLA’s graduate school of architecture and urban planning, described the demographic living at The Village Green.

Many units are now owned by retirees, a result of policies instituted over the years to make the project more easily managed by shifting to an adult population. When ownership was shifted to condominiums in 1972, restrictive covenants were added to prohibit children under 18 and animals of any kind. Until recently, residents were almost exclusively white, middle class retirees and scattered younger architecture aficionados with no children in their households.

The demographic contrast with the adjacent community has taken its toll. Teenagers ride through the project on bicycles and tear off a purse from an unsuspecting elderly woman or commit an afternoon burglary. A spate of rapes occurred about three years ago, and the lyrical layout of garden paths and the ‘formal entrances’ are now perceived as an obstacle course preventing safe and direct passage from car to home.¹⁵⁵

In 1990 architect Robert Alexander visited The Village Green, and in a letter described changes that he observed with recommendations as to how the complex might be improved. One idea was to restore one or more of the tot lots or the play area. Long-time resident and author of the National Register of Historic Places nomination Dorothy Wong remarked in a 1990 newspaper article “Many of the people who live here now – whether white, black or Oriental – tend to be professionals with limited means, like teachers and young architects.”¹⁵⁶

In April 1992, after the Rodney King police brutality verdict was

announced, riots broke out in south central Los Angeles and over the next few days spread to the area around The Village Green. A Fedco store at the corner of La Cienega and Rodeo Road (now a Target) was looted and its sprinklers set off. “The water from the sprinklers caused a great deal of damage and the parking lot was flooded. [Fedco’s] TBA (tires, batteries, and accessories) store was burned, as were other small buildings straddling the same intersection, and three in the shopping center on La Brea south of Rodeo. The fence around Target (a new building—the old Fedco building was eventually demolished, but not until after it was renovated and reopened) was installed at the insistence of the insurance company.”¹⁵⁷ See’s Candy, further down La Cienega was also looted. The Thrift Headquarters was also at Rodeo and La Brea from the early 1950s through the riots; it was destroyed by fire and was never rebuilt. No damage was reported at The Village Green.

A Memorial Tree program was instituted some time after the condominium conversion, whereby a tree would be planted in memory of someone. Since donors often wanted the tree near their unit or had a preference for a certain species, some of the trees introduced under this program were not suitable for the site, were not planted in appropriate locations nor were incompatible with the overall landscaping aesthetic.

By 1994, there were enough children growing up in The Village Green that the idea of a playground became one of the issues in the *Long Range Rehabilitation and Master Plan* commissioned by the owners’ association, and completed by the local firm Land Images in 1995.

Clarence Stein had suggested in 1951 that the West Green would make a good location for a larger playground. This statement, and due to the West Green’s cross dimensions being the greatest of any open space in the complex (more than 300 feet), this location was proposed for a playground. The 1995 report concluded that, “Given the pastoral character and informal massing of trees in this area, it provides an ideal setting for a centralized children’s play area.” The report suggested that to preserve the

natural look of the West Green, “generous mounding” at the playground’s periphery would camouflage it somewhat, and would “not noticeably disrupt the look or quality of the overall space.” The proposed play equipment, however, consisted of large, brightly colored plastic play structures. Resident Bernie Altman recalls, “Homeowners just plain didn’t ‘get’ the concept of a master plan, and objected vehemently to details that may never be implemented, such as seating areas, playgrounds and especially a swimming pool. They couldn’t be convinced that if the plan were adopted, a swimming pool (shown on the plan) might never be constructed—it had to be approved separately, but if it was ever approved, this is where it would be. The Board didn’t adopt the plan because of its gross unpopularity.” Without support from the community, the document was shelved.

Ten years later, in 2004, some owners organized a proposal to the annual election ballot, suggesting that the idea of a play area for children be explored. An organized and vocal group opposed this concept, and the proposal did not pass. Just one year before, the ad-hoc Cultural Landscape Report Committee had its first meeting, and the process to produce this CLR began.

By 2009, however, enough critical mass had formed to support the idea of a playground. More and more children were born at the complex every year, and the need for a play area became more urgent than it had been in the past. The Board approved a Resolution to form an ad-hoc Playground Committee to explore options for a potential play area for children. This committee’s work is ongoing and depends, in part, on the findings of this CLR.

Between 2004 and 2008 the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) was conducted. At this time all of the 629 condominiums were privately owned: the majority owner-occupied, others rented to tenants. Each of these residents had the freedom to landscape their patios with few restrictions, and many added plantings around the perimeters of their units. As a result of this personalization, the original designed landscape had taken on some vernacular landscape characteristics. The CLI assisted in determining the extent of unplanned plantings near patio areas so that

the treatment guidelines could develop a policy to sensitively manage owner interests with the goal to preserve or rehabilitate significant aspects of the original designed landscape.

The Village Green of 2013 remains a livable and vibrant community. The planning principles around which it was designed – the separation of pedestrian and automobile, a community-oriented lifestyle with indoor/outdoor living and a park-like setting – remain intact. Presciently, Lewis Mumford, an architecture critic, wrote in 1944 that,

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 [Baldwin Hills Village] 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 fruition.¹⁵⁸

Endnotes

1 Robert E. Alexander, Architecture, planning, and social responsibility, an oral history conducted 1986-87, Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989, tape 2, side 2, July 24, 1986, 71.

2 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection 3087, box 120, 4-5.

3 Gaborit, Pascaline European New Towns: Image, Identities, Future Perspectives, Peter Lang, 2009; FN 13, p. 27

4 Stein, Toward New Towns for America, 172, 192.

5 Stein, New Towns, 169.

6 Stein, New Towns, 169.

7 Stein, New Towns, 184.

8 Olympic Boulevard is equivalent to 11th Street, thus the two office buildings were located approximately six blocks apart.

9 Architecture, Planning and Social Responsibility, vol. 2, tape 3, side 1, October 2, 1986.

10 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120. Alexander, “Baldwin Hills Village,” p. 2

11 Stein, New Towns, 170.

12 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 3. This is a letter that was included with The Village Green application for Historic Cultural Monument status with the City of Los Angeles in 1975.

13 Architecture, Planning and Social Responsibility. Also evidenced by aerial photo (1936 & 1940) showing agricultural use, see UCLA Baruch Collection photos, c1512_b4_f9_thousand gardens_32, c1512_b4_f9_thousand gardens_31 and UCLA Airphoto F_O-4631_2-25-1936. Also WPA Land Use Survey Maps for the City of Los Angeles, 1933-1939, Book 8.

14 Gallion, Arthur B, The Urban Pattern, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1950: 143

15 Stein, New Towns, 169.

16 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 5.

17 Stein, New Towns, 172; Design on the Land: 1929-1948 US Town Planning, 507-508.

18 Stein, New Towns, 172

19 Date observed on plan entitled, “Residential Park Project” as well as in Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120.

20 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120.

21 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 3-4.

22 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives

collection #3087, box 120, 5. According to Catherine Bauer, the Rental Housing Division of the FHA was the only option allowing financing of the project, and the National Housing Act permitted mortgage insurance up to 80% of the value on approved rental projects which limited their equity to 6% and also limited rent levels. Bauer, “Baldwin Hills Village, Los Angeles, California,” Pencil Points, 47.

23 Alexander, Architecture, Planning and Social Responsibility, tape 3, side 1, October 2, 1986.

24 Stein, New Towns, 176.

25 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 6.

26 Village Green density found by dividing 629 by 67.7, yielding 9.26 units per acre. Surrounding density figure from Berry, “Baldwin Hills Village – Design or Accident,” Arts and Architecture, October 1964, 21.

27 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 6.

28 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 7.

29 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 6.

30 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 5.

31 Stein, New Towns, 184.

32 Letter to Board of Directors, n.d.

33 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 8.

34 Bauer, Pencil Points, 50.

35 Mumford, “Baldwin Hills Village,” 45.

36 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 9.

37 Stein, New Towns, 195

38 Bauer, Pencil Points, 53.

39 Stein, New Towns, 176.

40 Bauer, “Description and Appraisal,” 46.

41 Alexander, “Tenants Reactions to Baldwin Hills Village,” 2.

42 The 1924 Major Traffic Street Plan lists 391,947 automobiles registered in Los Angeles County on April 1, 1924. The same report estimates a population within the city of Los Angeles of 1 million people and in the county of 1.5 million, 11, 17.

43 At Sunnyside in Queens, New York, garages were built on peripheral lots for the storage of automobiles in recognition of the suburban location.

44 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 8.

45 Stein, New Towns, 175.

46 Stein, New Towns, 175.

47 Stein, New Towns, 175.

48 Stein, New Towns, 176.

49 Alexander, “Tenant Reactions to Baldwin Hills Village,” 1955, 1.

50 “Foundation Problems...” Cornell archives #3087, Box 98.

51 (See appendix C for a selected list of other projects built by the Baruch Corporation) The projected cost for the project was \$2,769,521; the completion date was slated for August 2, 1942. “From “Open Planning in Site Layout Applied to Rentals,” Practical Builder.

52 Ibid. (Practical Builder)

53 Bauer, Pencil Points, 59.

54 “Foundation Problem at Thousand Gardens Solved by Unique and Economical Method,” Cornell archives #3087, box 98

55 Stein, New Towns, 170.

56 See appendix C for list of sub-contractors. List taken from “Foundation Problem at ‘Thousand Gardens’ Solved by Unique and Economical Method,” 30.

57 This reference to original colors can be found in Bauer’s Pencil Points article, 50. After the war, the paint palette changed slightly to “salmon, green and cream for stucco, and rose, canary yellow, chartreuse green, earth brown and white for brick.” Practical Builder, March 1947. Because of rationing and the war effort, paint quality during World War II was poor.

58 (Refer to the black and white image on page 3 to see the pattern.)

59 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 11. Though this was actually not so unusual – Wyvernwood, an earlier FHA project in east Los Angeles, also had buried utilities.

60 Aerial photos dating from 1936 and 1940 from The Benjamin and Gladys Thomas Air Photo Archives.

61 Stein, New Towns, 178.

62 Stein, New Towns, 178.

63 Stein, New Towns, 179-180.

64 Stein, New Towns, 190. This section in Stein’s book contrasts Edinburgh’s New Town with Baldwin Hills Village.

65 Bashford was responsible for the landscape design on several of architect Reginald Johnson’s earlier projects, and Johnson considered her his favorite landscape architect. Clark, “Reginald D. Johnson, Regionalism and Recognition,” Johnson, Kaufmann and Coate – Partners in the California style, 25.

66 Alexander, “Baldwin Hills Village,” 7.

67 The Villager 2, no. 1 (January 15, 1944): 6.

68 Hesse, Henry Melton, Homes for Moderns, with introduction and garden suggestions by Fred Barlow, Jr. Culver City, CA: Murray & Gee, Inc., c1946. (Unpaginated, this appears on second page of Barlow’s introduction).

69 Steve Close, letter dated June 6, 2000.

70 Timothy Alexander, “Growing up in Baldwin Hills Village,” unit 5549.

71 Anita Baldwin passed away in 1939, prior to the construction phase of Baldwin Hills Village.

72 Cornell University Archives #3807, box 107.

73 “Thousand Gardens, Inc. List of Exhibits, January-February, 1939 ” dated 2-20-39 from Cornell Archives #3087, Box 107.

74 The Villager 4, no. 2 (February 1, 1946): 1. “Capt. James R. McGonagle will return to the Village on February 1, as manager, his position when he left to enter service in the Armed Forces. Mr. Dearborn, who has been acting manager during Capt. McGonagle’s three year absence, will resume his duties as company controller.” McGonagle may have been the third husband of Dextra Baldwin McGonagle, granddaughter of Lucky Baldwin.

75 “Apartment Project Manager Named,” Los Angeles Times, November 2, 1941, E2.

76 The Villager 1, no. 5 (August 15, 1943); WM&A, “Baldwin Hills Village – LA, CA”

77 Alexander, “Tenant Reaction to Baldwin Hills Village,” 1.

78 “Baldwin Hills Block Ready,” Los Angeles Times, Feb 15, 1942, A6.

79 Observation made by architect and long-time resident Bernie Altman.

80 Los Angeles Times, Dec 27, 1942, A13.

81 Bauer, 51.

82 Classified, Los Angeles Times, March 8, 1942, 15 as an example. The same ad promises “carefree, genteel inexpensive living.”

83 “Introducing Baldwin Hills Village” brochure. Many inaccuracies can be found in the promised amenities in this promotional brochure, however, this phrase is listed as number one in a list of ten lifestyle amenities.

84 For a scholarly work on the Black experience in Los Angeles, consult Douglas Flamming’s book Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America, 2005.

85 Conversation with Tom Brown at a tea held at The Village Green, circa 2004. It was reported that the first resident of color was in an interracial marriage. See also Pastier, John. “Stuyvesant Town Replicas Repeat Mistakes of Past,” Los Angeles Times, November 1, 1970, J1.

86 Alexander, “Tenant Reactions to Baldwin Hills Village,” 2.

87 Stein, New Towns, 186-188, quoting from Bauer, Pencil Points, September 1944, 58-60.

88 Stein, New Towns, 169.

89 Robert Evans Alexander Collection #3087, box 107, Cornell.

90 The Villager 1, no. 10 (December 15, 1943); The Villager 7, no. 3 (Mar 1, 1949) article identifies the location of the Village Barber Shop and Beauty Studio as 5305 Village Green. Units were renumbered sometime in the late 1940s or early 50s. The Villager 1, no. 4 (June 15, 1943): 1, 3. Businesses advertising in this edition of The Villager, included the Village Commissary, featuring frozen vegetables, meats,

and liquor; Village Beauty Studio, which was above the Village Café (10 am to 7:30 pm, closed Sundays); and Maria Lewis’ Knit Shop, next to the Village Beauty Studio (1:30-4:30 pm daily, except Saturday, Wednesday night 7:30-9). The Village Community Church was held in the Clubhouse on Sunday mornings with “the Sunday school at 9:30, the adult class led by the pastor at 10, and the regular Sunday services at 11 a.m.” About 100 youngsters were enrolled in Sunday school.

91 Bauer, 58. Blueprints for Baldwin Hills Village label this building only as “Community Building” from the beginning.

92 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 12.

93 Stein, New Towns, 184.

94 “Villagers Afforded Many Recreational Facilities For Their Exclusive Use,” The Villager 1, no. 10 (December 15, 1943).

95 The Villager 6, no. 12 (December 1948), The nursery school was located at 5280 Rodeo Road.

96 Stein, New Towns, 184. The Villager 3:8 September 1, 1945, 3, reported that, “the Lanham Act federal funds may be withdrawn from the Baldwin Hills Child Care Center in the near future. The purpose of the Lanham Act federal funds was to release women for war industries, therefore, only the children of working mothers were eligible for enrollment during the war period. However, when the Lanham Act funds are withdrawn, the Baldwin Hills Nursery School will again enroll the children of mothers who are not employed, as well as children of those who continue to work.”

97 The Villager 1, no. 5 (July 15, 1943): 1.

98 The Villager 1, no. 5 (July 15, 1943).

99 The Villager 2, no. 9 (Oct 1 1944).

100 The Villager 2, no. 1 (January 15, 1944): 3. “Donald MacKenzie, our gardener superintendent, is appealing for any boys in the Village who would consider working either part or full time on the grounds this summer. He says it is impossible to employ gardeners of any age, because we are considered non-essential.”

101 The Villager 2, no. 1 (January 15, 1944): 1. Soldiers were stationed near Coliseum and Sycamore Streets during the war to watch for Japanese attacks. A photograph of one of the garage buildings at the Village shows a metal triangle, reported to be “rung” in case any citizens spotted Japanese lurking in the Village.

102 The Villager 1, no. 6 (August 15, 1943): 2.

103 Bauer, 55.

104 “British Housing Leaders Praise Baldwin Hills Village on Visit,” The Villager 1, no. 8 (October 15, 1943): 4.

105 The Villager 3, no. 8 (September 1, 1945): 8.

106 “Gardeners Start Spring Plantings,” The Villager 2, no. 2 (February 15, 1944): 3.

107 The Villager 1, no. 4 (June 15, 1943): 1.

108 The date used here is reflected in the Villager’s announcement of the end of the war and it coincides with the signing of the surrender document in the Japanese theatre. The authors assume this date meant the end of the sacrifices, rationing, etc. that residents of Baldwin Hills Village made during the war years. Numerous other dates exist for the end of the war depending on geographic areas. Without belaboring the point, a quick search on Wikipedia yields the fol-

lowing: “The war in Europe ended with the [capture of Berlin](#) by Soviet and Polish troops and the subsequent [German unconditional surrender](#) on [8 May 1945](#). . . . The war in Asia ended on 15 August 1945 when Japan agreed to surrender. The war ended with the total victory of the Allies over Germany and Japan in 1945.”

109 The Villager 4, no. 3 (March 1, 1946): 6.

110 The Villager 4, no. 3 (March 1, 1946): 3.

111 “ Statement of Policy No. 2 – Pets,” The Villager, 4, no. 4 (April 1, 1946): 6. Statement from rental office that pets are not allowed except, “Some dogs and cats were admitted to the Village prior to June 1942 under the above rental agreement, but permission to bring in others has not been granted since that time.” (1) Telephones. Letter from Southern California Telephone Company about installation of services in BHV and that applications being taken beginning March 1 for private two party line telephone service. Nursery School Goes Private. “The Baldwin Hills Child Care Center in the Village will be terminated around May 1.” Catherine McDonald will be running a private nursery school in its place, with no connection to the management nor the government.

“Statement of Policy No. 5 – Garage Doors,” The Villager 4, no. 7 (July 1, 1946): 1. “It is the desire of the owners of Baldwin Hills Village to cooperate as much as possible with all tenants requesting doors on their garages. Due to the shortage of lumber, it has been impossible for many months to fill requests for these doors. However, the garage door company has just informed us that they will have sufficient lumber within the next few weeks to install all of the extra doors on order and a few extra. Tenants who desire a door on their garage are requested to call Mrs. Jennings at the Administration building. The charge for a door is \$1.00 per month.” “Bus Service At Last.” Public transportation will be extended to the Village effective July 1. “. . . Los Angeles Motor Coach Company will extend the La Brea bus to Coliseum Street and La Brea Avenue. The bus will then go west on Coliseum Street to Sycamore Avenue to Rodeo Road, then east on Rodeo Road to La Brea Avenue, then north on La Brea Avenue. The main stop will be at Coliseum Street and Sycamore Avenue, where the bus will hold over from two to ten minutes.” “. . . the Los Angeles Transit Lines will extend the Jefferson bus to Alsace and Jefferson , which is approximately three blocks west of La Brea Avenue and two blocks north of the Village. This bus service, which will connect with the ‘J’ car at Tenth Avenue”

112 “French Architects Visit Village,” The Villager 4, no. 5 (May 1, 1946): 1.

113 The Villager 6, no. 5 (May 1, 1948): 1; The Villager 6, no. 6 (June 1, 1948): 1; and “Beautiful New Baldwin Theatre Open,” The Villager 7, no. 9 (September 1, 1949).

114 Description of nearby recreation facilities excerpted from Steven Keylon’s unpublished article, “Playgrounds . . . , 8.

115 “In New Housing Project,” Los Angeles Times, March 10, 1946, A3.

116 “Village Sale Now Completed,” The Villager 7, no. 7 (July 1, 1949).

117 “Clarence Stein: Land Planning’s man of influence” House & Home, 172.

118 “Village Sale Now Completed,” The Villager 7, no. 7 (July 1, 1949).

119 Advertisement, Los Angeles Times, November 20, 1955, A26.

120 Alexander Oral History, tape 3, side 2, October 2, 1986, 112-113.

121 “City Department to Dedicate New Reservoir,” The Villager 9, no. 4 (April 1951): 5.

122 Los Angeles Times, December 15, 1963, 1.

123 Los Angeles Times, December 15, 1963, 1.

124 One of the authors, Sara Loe, personally collected “flood mud” from her unit in court 11.

125 Don Neff, Los Angeles Times, December 15, 1963, 1

126 Los Angeles Times, December 15, 1963.

127 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 13. Sliding glass doors did exist in 1940 though most were either wood or steel framed. Aluminum framed doors were available but were rare and costly.

128 Larry Winans lecture at Village Green, October 21, 2000. Tape recording courtesy Gailyn Saroyan.

129 Larry Winans lecture at Village Green, October 21, 2000. Tape recording courtesy Gailyn Saroyan.

130 Larry Winans lecture at Village Green.

131 Steven Keylon, “Playgrounds”

132 Steven Keylon, “Playgrounds”

133 Berry, “Experiences in a 25-year-old Planned Neighborhood,” 219.

134 Turpin, “AIA to Honor LA Architects,” Los Angeles Times, May 7, 1972.

135 Los Angeles Times, April 7, 1974.

136 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 13. The first legislation legalizing condos in the US was Utah’s “Condominium Ownership Act” Enacted by Chapter 111, 1963 General Session (Utah Code Title 57, Chapter 8, Section 1).

137 Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 13. “Honored Housing Project Now Becoming Condominiums,” Los Angeles Times, April 7, 1974, F1. Alexander was hired as a consultant on the project in 1971, and oversaw some of the changes including the installation of aluminum sliding patio doors on some units.

138 This was ostensibly due to the property’s historic status as an L.A. County cultural landmark: The Village Green was designated as City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #174 in 1977. The application was filed 9/17/1975, two years after the condo conversion began.

139 Turpin, Dick. “Honored Housing Project Now Becoming Condominiums,” Los Angeles Times, April 7, 1974, F1.

140 Ibid. Turpin, Dick.

141 Personal communication with long-time resident Bernie Altman; Grassroots 2, no. 2 (March/April 1977): 1.

142 Theresa Weisberg. Village Breeze, the interim paper 1, no. 2 (March-April 1979): 1.

143 Letter by Roberta Diamond (?) to Zev Yaroslavsky October/November 1977, included in Village Breeze.

144 Village Green Highlights, October 7, 1978. Notice to be posted at the top of

the bulletin board alerting potential buyers of units for sale or rent, as the former sales office was now closed.

145 “The Board Room,” Village Green the interim paper 1, no. 1 (December 1978): 11.

146 Grassroots 2, no. 2 (March/April 1977): 4.

147 “Gardening Schedule,” Highlights, October 7, 1978, 2.

148 Susan Anderson, Chairwoman. Village Breeze, the interim paper 1, no. 2 (March-April 1979): 10.

149 Architect and resident Bernie Altman; Hager, Philip. “Condo Boards May be Liable in Crimes, Justices Rule,” Los Angeles Times, September 5, 1986, SD3.

150 Village Breeze, the interim paper 1, no. 6 (November/December 1979): 2. Resident Bernie Altman was one of the original members of this committee and verified the date and activities.

151 Highlights, June 17, 1979, 3.

152 Highlights, June 17, 1979, 3.

153 Robert Alexander said that “when it became condominium, to my horror, the new owners who changed it into condominium put deed restrictions in the new deeds that no one under the age of 18 was to live in the village, and if you became pregnant, you’d need to move out.” Alexander Oral History, tape 4, side 1, Oct. 2, 1986.

154 O’Connor v. Village Green Owners Association (1983) 33 Cal.3d 790 O’Connor v. Village Green <http://www.davis-stirling.com/CaseLaw/OConnorv-VillageGreen/tabid/839/Default.aspx#ixzz1XQtjyGbm> from Davis-Stirling.com by Adams Kessler PLC, accessed September 8, 2011.

155 George Rand, “Evaluation: Three California Pioneers” Architecture: The AIA Journal, July 1985, 88-91.

156 Leon Whiteson, “The Village Green, Its Designer Both Stand Test of Time,” Los Angeles Times, section E-1.

157 Recounted by resident Bernie Altman in a personal communication.

158 Mumford, “Baldwin Hills Village,” 45.



Existing Conditions,
Analysis and Evaluation

Assessment of Integrity by Aspect

Definitions for each aspect of integrity are taken from the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.⁵

INTEGRITY ASPECT	DEFINITION
Location	“is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.” The Village Green property and property boundaries remain unchanged from the time of completion of the original construction.
Design	“is the composition of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property.” The Village Green remains as designed as the site and building arrangement remains unchanged, spaces such as the three large green spaces, garage courts and garage courts remain as do their spatial relationships to one another, and the original circulation pattern including the separation of pedestrian and vehicular use remain. In general, all original features remain generally unchanged.
Setting	“is the physical environment of a historic property.” Situated on gently sloped land at the foot of the Baldwin Hills, The Village Green continues to embody the Garden City principles as its setting remains as intended. This is particularly evident in the “relationships between buildings and other features or open space,” as well as vegetation and pathways. The Village Green’s setting retains a high degree of integrity.
Materials	“are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.” Original building and patio materials (including wood and brick patio enclosures) are extant as are many original trees and areas of plantings. However, original paving materials, decomposed granite pathways and gathering spaces, have been replaced with concrete paving and lawn.
Workmanship	“is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history.” In general, original workmanship is evident throughout the complex particularly on buildings and structures, and in small-scale features such as extant lamp posts.
Feeling	“is a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.” Upon entering the environs of The Village Green, a sense of expansiveness and serenity still envelop the observer and the graceful curving pathways and vistas enhance the pedestrian-only interior.
Association	“is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.” The ideals upon which The Village Green was first conceived – well-designed multi-family housing, community, and Garden City principles – are still evident. The mature landscaping adds to the experience.

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the current condition and an analysis of integrity of the historic designed landscape of The Village Green. Narrative text, diagrams and photographs are used to describe the existing condition and to present the analysis of the landscape and its individual significant features. Existing condition and assessment of integrity are presented according to nine landscape characteristics including visual and spatial organization, views and vistas, land use, topography, vegetation, circulation, buildings and structures, water features and small-scale features.¹ A definition of each landscape characteristic is provided as an introductory sentence, and is developed from *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*.²

Documentation of the existing condition of The Village Green was accomplished by CLR committee members along with a group of other volunteers. This work included a plant-by-plant survey of the entire property completed between 2004 and 2008 and documented as the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI). The committee prepared the landscape analysis comparing this CLI data to the original plan to identify extant patterns, features and relationships of the original design. This assessment was undertaken to understand the cultural landscape as a whole, and to identify and document those qualities that contribute to its historic character, and those individual features that contribute to its significance.

Summary of Significant Features and Integrity

Determining the significant features of a historic designed landscape and assessing their integrity assists in defining a treatment plan. For The Village Green, tangible, intangible, large-scale and small details all contribute to the complex's historic character and are those features considered to be significant. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. In addition to being designated as a National Historic Landmark, a property must also have integrity, which is grounded in a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Integrity is defined by seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The Village Green retains integrity in all seven recognized aspects, making the complex a very significant landscape with a high degree of integrity. In general, The Village Green retains integrity as it remains in the same location as the original construction, and the principal elements of the original design including building arrangement and appearance, spatial organization and many original materials are generally extant. The Garden City principles upon which the complex was designed, and factored into its designation as a national historic landmark, are still evident. The complex has diminished integrity in some aspects due to the loss of original material, and due to contemporary replacements that were not always compatible with the historic character. The loss of recreational activities such as community use of the Clubhouse, have slightly diminished the social principle of the Garden City ideal, though the former Clubhouse (converted to residential units in 1955) is still considered to be a contributing structure. The Maintenance Building has been considerably altered and is no longer considered a contributing structure.³

The horizontality of myriad design features that created the original feeling of restfulness, as remarked upon by Clarence Stein, is still evident in extant building shapes and forms, roof overhangs and other details. However, this has been diminished by removal of linear groundcover beds at building foundations,

shrubby hedges as visual screens, and trees including the original olive tree allée between the Administration Building and Clubhouse.

Garden courts retain the original basic forms but most have some diminished integrity as the landscape design has been altered. Non-compatible modifications include the replacement of decomposed granite walkways, allées of trees and geometric "sitting-out" areas with concrete walkways and lawn. Original planting patterns throughout the complex have been altered considerably. Most notable is the loss of horizontal groundcover beds at buildings, some flowering climbing vines on trellises, and many low uniform shrubby hedges.

Although some modifications have taken place, both the overall design of The Village Green and the individual units have stood the test of time. Two factors assisted with this success. First, the original design was intended for a targeted upper-middle class demographic. And secondly, amenities within each unit included lots of storage space, good-sized rooms (well above the minimum specified by the FHA), quality kitchens with stainless steel drain boards, wood-burning fireplaces, balconies, patios and garages. As such, today's residents with modern expectations are accommodated within the original design aesthetic, rendering units as desirable today as they were in 1941.⁴



View from Administration Building to Original Clubhouse, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University)



View from Clubhouse to Administration Building, circa 1950s. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



View from Administration Building to original Clubhouse, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection)



Contemporary view from Administration Building to original Clubhouse. Only a single olive tree remains from original allée, 2013. (Photo by Robert Creighton)

Visual and Spatial Organization

The visual and spatial organization of a historic landscape is derived from the arrangement of elements creating the ground, vertical and overhead planes that define and create spaces.⁶ In contrast to typical urban and suburban housing developments that are oriented to a street system, The Village Green was arranged along cross axes and as a superblock of buildings arranged around open spaces. Three large green spaces (West Green, Central Green and East Green) comprised one of the axes, creating the east-west spine of the superblock. Arranged perpendicular to and radiating out from the three great greens were 17 smaller spaces — the garden courts, each a minimum of 100 feet wide. Some residential buildings were arranged to face each green, but most were arranged around the garden courts, which were smaller and provided a more intimate scale. Trees were strategically planted along the edges of the greens to provide a human scale, and between the greens and as transitions into garden courts to provide a veiled view between spaces.

Robert Alexander credits Lewis Wilson with proposing the concept for three central green areas with a single axial entrance.⁷ As Norman Newton pointed out in *Design on the Land*, while this emphasis on the Beaux-Arts inspired axial symmetry helped to organize the space, the design team went out of their way to break up the formality as experienced on the ground.

As a consequence of such an arrangement, one might validly expect to find Baldwin Hills Village pompous or dull or both. But, on visiting it what one does feel is a delightful pervading sense of order and serenity. This may well be caused by the strong general structure of the design, but one is quite unaware of any overdone “classical” formalism in the layout – except in the management office and its mall. In explanation, there are two possibilities. First, the color scheme among the buildings, which never echoes the symmetry of the plan: for instance, if a certain

row-house is done in a combination of light brown and cream, its balancing counterpart is most likely in, say, smoky blue. Second, it is clear that here is another example of the power of judicious planning to form and modify space and to soften the edges of harshness. Throughout the project spaces are formed by vegetation as often as by the buildings. The overall spatial organization thus created is well reinforced and supported by the system of footwalks. Many architectural critics have admired the subtlety and skill of Barlow’s contribution; some have said the landscape treatment is what makes Baldwin Hills Village so distinctive.⁸

As noted above, while the architecture provided a strong dynamic spatial organization to the site arrangement, the circulation patterns and original studied plantings such as sycamore and olive allées, groundcovers, hedges and geometric decomposed granite areas also emphasized and reinforced the organization, and heightened the experience of the spaces.

Today, the main organizing features, spaces and relationships within The Village Green remain intact. While the arrangement of buildings and greens remains unchanged, many smaller original organizing features have been altered or removed. Features that are no longer extant include those that originally emphasized horizontality such as long, linear beds of groundcovers that carpeted building fronts, and those that defined smaller human-scaled spaces such as tree allées and shrubbery hedges and decomposed granite areas within garden courts. The geometry of the decomposed granite spaces with contoured hedges and lines of smaller trees (usually fruiting) has also been lost to the easier maintenance of turf.

Two Formal Axes are the major organizing elements of the site arrangement. Each provides an organizing line, either north-south or east-west, but does so in a manner that creates a series of spaces. Instead of a broad visual expanse along each

axis, the original site arrangement separated the larger units of space (the greens) and created a comfortable scale for each by the constriction of space at strategic points along the axes. Along the east-west axis, the three large greens were separated by narrower spaces defined by buildings on each edge with decomposed granite paving and an overstory of small groves of trees. The north-south axis was punctuated by the former Clubhouse and its glass walls, the small triangular planting area on the south edge of the Central Green, and connected to Garden Court 4/5. In the center of the court was a wall and terrace, centered on the axis. Each ‘interruption’ helped define edges of the larger spaces and provided an experience while moving through the spaces.

The two formal axes that form the backbone of the complex’s visual and spatial organization remain intact, mostly unchanged. The greatest change has occurred along the north-south axis near the former Clubhouse where the loss of the transparency of the glass walls of the former Clubhouse along the north-south axis and the olive tree allée that originally connected the Administration Building and the Clubhouse, which today consists of just one extant tree, has impacted the spatial organization. Other modifications include serpentine brick walls built outside the former Clubhouse after it was converted into two residential units in the early 1950s, which also obscures the axis.

East and West Circles create a formal and symmetrical space along Rodeo Road, and are organized as the ‘front door’ into the community. Originally, this area was a semi-circle of residential units with the former Clubhouse centered amongst the residences and the Administration Building fronting the street. Tennis and badminton courts flanked symmetrical driveways on either side of the Administration Building. The openness of this semi-circle was interrupted by the buildings and 12 olive trees on the south side of the Administration that created and between this building and the former Clubhouse. This very formal area served as the introduction into the complex to prospective renters and visitors. This embracing of the exterior street was in contrast to the remainder of the complex, which was designed



Garden Court 6/7 exhibiting elements of horizontality in the design and landscape, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



East Circle, 1960. (UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley, Robert J. Tetlow Collection)



East Circle, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Building 78, exhibiting marked horizontal wood siding on the second story, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Rear view of wall in Court 4/5 showing that the wall is a design element heightening horizontal motif in the landscape rather than a truly functional retaining wall, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

to enclose interior bucolic spaces, so that one had to enter a small space between buildings to experience the interior park-like setting.

The greatest change in the spatial organization of The Village Green has taken place in this area. The original tennis courts and badminton courts that originally flanked the Administration Building have been removed and the area converted into driveways and additional garages. This has changed the character from a prominent open space to a more closed area, impacting views toward the Administration Building. The visual drama and continuity of this formal open space is now interrupted by utilitarian uses.

Horizontality was an important tenet of the original design. This was evident in both the architecture and the landscape in which each emphasized horizontal lines beginning with the long, low profile of the buildings, extended by linear balconies and roof overhangs. At the building base, low groundcovers in broad planting beds extended along the residential buildings and out to the pathways. Garages were low, horizontal structures. Groundcover plantings between building fronts and original decomposed granite walkways, usually a space of 20 feet, accentuated the horizontality. English ivy, honeysuckle, wandering jew, Algerian ivy and jasmine all provided a textural line framing the bases of the buildings and organically tied them to the landscape.

Details and ornamentation that continued the subtle horizontal theme were the horizontal orientation of wood planks in the patio enclosures, garages and drying yards, the second story siding on Type 2 buildings, the ribbed glass in both the Administration Building and former Clubhouse, and the ribbed glass separating balcony spaces in Type 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 buildings. Steps at the front of the Administration Building and the pair of steps flanking the brick wall in Garden Court 4/5 were the only formal steps in The Village Green and both were low, furthering the motif.

Today, most of the primary features emphasizing horizontality remain including residential and garage buildings and their ornamentation. Other features, including large swaths of groundcover in front of buildings and the hedges that organized gathering spaces, have mostly been removed diminishing the visual and spatial organizational.

Primary and Secondary Garden Courts were a primary organizing feature of the original design. Of the 17 garden courts, 13 are considered to be primary as they open to one of the three large greens. Four are considered to be secondary as they are not directly connected to one of the greens. Garden Court 4/5 is the most public of the garden courts due to its location along the north-south formal axis. The other primary courts also have roles and higher visibility as public spaces. Secondary garden courts, the four triangular courts – 8/9, 9/10, 10/11, 11/12, were less visible and more private.

Each garden court was similar in its visual and spatial organization — defined by residential buildings, connected to adjacent spaces, and with similar circulation and planting patterns. Each was also unique in some way, so that one court was easily distinguished from another. Methods of defining space included strategically placed clusters of trees near openings onto the greens to create a more intimate space within the garden court. Others included contoured plantings such as hedges and lines of smaller trees to define even smaller and more intimate outdoor areas, originally known as “sitting out” spots. These were generally geometric in form and paved with decomposed granite.

Today, the garden courts remain as they were originally. They all generally retain the original form, scale and space as the original design. However, some plantings including groundcover beds and clusters of trees have changed, which has changed the character of the experience.

Motor Courts were originally accessed from the exterior perimeter streets on three sides of the property or from one interior access road. Sycamore Avenue was the only street that did not provide vehicular or pedestrian access into the complex.

Today, the characteristic pattern and linear expanses of the garage structures appear much the same as when The Village Green was first built. Some original garage structures have been extended, and seven new structures have been built. These have replaced areas that were originally court-scaled social outdoor spaces. Nevertheless, the garage structures still contribute to the complex's spatial horizontality. The footprints of the garage courts have changed slightly in some places, but generally remain as they were originally.

Buildings within The Village Green consisted primarily of 94 residential buildings, two community buildings and one maintenance building. Residential buildings served as boundaries between garden courts and garage courts and defined the open spaces of the complex. The service side of buildings generally opened onto garage courts and the more formal side enclosed garden courts. Walkways between buildings, and sometimes through a building (e.g. the four pass-through buildings), connected formal and less formal areas. The Administration Building and the former Clubhouse, with a position at the center of a formal Beaux Arts arrangement, served as the "front door" to the complex. Originally, the Administration Building would be the first experience for the visitor, and a view out towards the former Clubhouse would be the next. Glass on the north and south sides of both of these buildings originally added to the effect of openness. The Maintenance Building occupied a triangular space on the least desirable corner of the property, an area that was developed to partially screen the residential buildings from the corner of Rodeo Road and Sycamore Avenue.

Today, all buildings throughout the property remain in their original footprints and retain the same form, scale and massing as they did originally. The exception is the Maintenance Building, which has had sheds added to the original building. Residential buildings continue to define large spaces and garden courts,

and continue to serve as separators between garden and garage courts. These significant buildings add elegance and contribute to the visual and spatial organization of the complex as well as provide the characteristic horizontality of the complex that maintains The Village Green as at a human scale.

Tree Allées & Groves There were eight allées in different areas around the Green, as well as clusters of trees that added spatial interruptions and lent definition to garden courts. These clusters of trees added spatial interruptions and lent definition to garden courts. The allées served as compression points in the spatial organization to provide a more human scale experience. Sycamore and London plane tree allées connected the East and West greens with the Central Green. Instead of continuous open views and experience, the placement of the tree allées created an "opening" and "closing" of space. This design maintained the sense of the large open green spaces as a comfortable scale. Allées of olive trees connected the West Green with the secondary garden courts at the west end of the property. An olive tree allée also connected the Administration Building with the former Clubhouse. This arrangement complemented the formal layout of the semi-circular space and provided a studied interruption in the otherwise open area around the Administration Building. Other allées within the complex framed view inwards through the two pass-through buildings on Coliseum Street and the western pass-through building on Rodeo Road. In garden courts, clusters of trees were intentionally arranged to obscure entrances to 'interrupt' the linear spaces, approximately at the center, which created a more intimate experience.

Seven of the eight allées are extant albeit with one or more trees missing or replaced. The exception is the olive tree allée between the Administration Building and the former Clubhouse, likely the most significant, which has only one original olive tree remaining, the other 11 are missing. Clusters of trees that defined the relationship of garden courts to the larger greens have mostly been diminished over the years.



View into the complex from one of the pass-through buildings, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Agaves planted in olive tree allée in Garden Court 2/3, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Agaves planted in olive tree allée in Garden Court 2/3, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

Views and Vistas

Within The Village Green, views and vistas are designed features that created a controlled range of vision. These included axial views and veiled views, as well as a borrowed view of the distant Baldwin Hills.

Axial Views consisted of two views that followed the two formal organizing axes. The view along the east-west axis encompassed all three large green, but was strategically compressed by the two tree allées, which connected the East and West greens to the Central Green. The strategic interruption of this view included the two triangular spaces separating the Central Green from these allées, which were planted with low shrubbery and groundcover punctuated by California sycamore trees.

Along the north-south axis, which originally stretched from the Administration Building through the original glass wall of the former Clubhouse, across the Central Green and through Garden Court 4/5, was a framed view of the Baldwin Hills. The view was orchestrated by a series of strategically planted olive trees, one at the south side of the Administration Building extending to the former Clubhouse, and another continuing south in which pairs of olive trees framed the view to the nearby hills.

Today, the north-south axis is generally obscured by the addition of new trees and the overgrown nature of original trees. In particular, the coral tree, planted in the center of the original water feature, and the removal of the glass wall due to the conversion of the former Clubhouse into residential use obscures this view.

The brick walls that enclosed the former Clubhouse patios, a later addition, now completely block the original intended transparency of the north-south axis that allowed visual access from the Administration Building through the former Clubhouse to the Central Green and upwards to the hills beyond. The view framed by the olive tree allée between the Administration Building and former Clubhouse is also compromised, as only one tree of the original 12 survives.

The views along east-west axis retain most of the original intent. The original design consisted of views compressed by two tree allées on each side of the Central Green, which connected the green with the East and West Greens. Plantings in the triangular spaces adjacent to the Central Green have changed over time and now include incompatible tree species and overly complicated shrubbery and flower masses. All have become overgrown and obscure the views.

Veiled Views were originally accomplished using allées of London plane trees to create a visual, but semi-transparent connection between the East and West Greens and the Central Green. These allées were paved with decomposed granite, and planted with linear rows of trees and shrubbery at each connection. The effect was of a compressed view between each of the greens, adding an element of surprise as one moved through the landscape. A similar effect was created with the original plantings at the connection of each primary garden court to the larger greens.

Today, the effect of the veiled view between the greens remains relatively intact even though the low shrubbery and hedges have been removed and replaced by lawn. A similar change has occurred at the connection of the primary garden courts to the larger greens. In general, due to many original trees that remain, the partially and deliberately obscured visual linkages between the smaller garden courts and the larger greens remain. However, newer random plantings of trees and understory plants confuse the intended veiled sight lines in the Village.

Borrowed View was a strategic idea meant to capitalize on the original setting adjacent to the Baldwin Hills. When The Village Green was originally built no buildings existed on the slopes of the Baldwin Hills, so the beauty of the hills served as a “borrowed” vista for residents. In Garden Court 4/5, a low brick wall was built with a raised terrace behind to accentuate this long vista. The wall and topography were placed squarely in the axial sight lines from the former Clubhouse and strategically emphasized the view upwards to the Baldwin Hills in the distance. This was the

only monumental view exploited by the architects in a traditional Beaux Arts manner.

Today, this view is not readily apparent, and the setting has changed to the extent that a view towards Baldwin Hills may no longer be aesthetically pleasing for residents. The view toward the Baldwin Hills has been compromised by housing that now dots the hillsides.

Controlled Views were built as part of four ‘pass-through’ buildings, which were oriented parallel to either Rodeo Road or Coliseum Street. These ‘pass-throughs’ offered focused glimpses of the interior park-like grounds to passersby.

The controlled views into The Village Green have been modified by changes in vegetation within the garden courts. Some modifications have obscured the views including the view in from Garden Court 2/3. The olive tree allée has been altered by the addition of agaves set along the central axis, now overgrown these interrupt the once open view and diminish the experience of moving through the allée. Views through the other three pass-through buildings are less compromised, though interior landscaping has become more simplified, with views of mostly lawn and trees.



View toward Baldwin Hills from Central Green, circa 1954. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Contemporary view to mountains on north/south axis, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Principle land uses include residential and recreation, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)



Residents use the greens for informal recreation, picnics and parties, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

Land Use

The Village Green was originally designed for upscale living in modern Southern California, meant to accommodate residents in spacious apartments with plenty of parking for their automobiles. Aside from the obvious residential use of the land, a unique aspect of The Village Green was the abundance of outdoor space, both shared and private.

With the exception of the loss of recreational features, all other land uses remain. Though now condominiums, the primary land use is residential and accommodation of the automobile remains. The original intent of the land use was of a landscape that complemented the architecture and fostered community with planned recreational amenities. This has been substantially diminished with the removal of all recreational features other than a putting green, especially within the garage courts, and due to the gradual loss of the gathering spaces originally associated with the garden courts.

Residential – The principal use of the property was residential. Built as a multi-family rental housing complex, The Village Green originally consisted of 627 apartments in 94 buildings. At the time of construction, the management of Baldwin Hills Village reserved approximately two thirds of the units for families with children (starting with building 52 in court 10 and continuing clockwise to building 16 in court 3). As successive managements phased out families with children along with recreational features, the demographic of the community changed to older residents and younger single people.

In 1955, the former Clubhouse was converted into two apartments, bringing the number of residential units to 629. Between 1973 and 1978 under the ownership of Cela-Terr, Inc., all units were converted into condominiums. The CC&Rs of the VGOA at the time prohibited children under the age of 18, a rule struck down by the California Supreme Court in 1983.

Today, The Village Green is comprised of 629 individually owned units inhabited by a diverse demographic. Typical activities

associated with residential use, such as laundry rooms, drying yards and trash enclosures are included in each garage court. Large trash enclosures accommodate dumpsters for trash and recyclables and were an addition to the garage courts; originally trash was picked up from each unit.

Accommodation of the Automobile was essential at the time The Village Green was planned and designed. Automobile usage was disproportionately high among Southern Californians and incorporating spaces for automobiles was essential. Each unit originally had an assigned, covered parking space in one of the long, low carport-like structures. Additional uncovered spaces located nearby were for additional cars or for guests. The garage courts were originally designed so that automobiles of the day had adequate space to turn around in order to exit the court.

Today, the extensive network of driveways, garage structures and parking areas still exists with little alteration. Additional garage structures have been constructed on the sites of the original tennis courts and some extant garage structures have been expanded. This required removal of original recreational areas that were once located in garage courts. These changes reflect the importance of the automobile to the community as well as the potential additional revenue that might be generated by renting garage structures to residents with more than one vehicle.

Private Outdoor Spaces were provided for each unit. Of the 627 original units, 450 were provided with private patios. Originally, all ground floor units were provided with patios, most of which were walled-in by redwood fences and the remainder separated from the garage courts by hedges. Patios ranged in size from 250 to 400 square feet. Outdoor balconies were provided for 126 of the upstairs units, and 40 upstairs units were provided with patios as well.⁹ These spaces served as a buffer between dwellings and garage courts.

Originally, only some units had enclosed patios. These enclosures proved to be quite popular and serpentine brick walls were added by the early 1950s to enclose patios for all of the





South patio of original Clubhouse, circa 1944. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Interior view of original Clubhouse, circa 1944. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

remaining units. Though the work was performed outside the period of significance, the concept of individual private access to the outdoors was in line with Garden City principles, and these brick walls have gained importance in the landscape in their own right (see Small-Scale Features for more information). These private spaces retain their original footprints and fulfill the same type of use. Residents have used their 'private' outdoor spaces for a myriad of activities including sunbathing, gardening, play areas, barbecuing and for relaxing. Some patios have been elaborate tropical gardens, oriental gardens or areas reminiscent of the beach.

Recreation within The Village Green included many programmed uses supported by recreational features. The large greens served as informal space for larger group activities and as a pitch and putt green. Events could be held on the greens, where the entire community could gather in a central place. The smaller garden courts were more often used by residents of each court for casual outdoor activities (e.g. croquet, tag and picnicking). Since the majority of units opened directly onto garden courts, residents had a more immediate connection to these spaces and identified with their 'court.'

Recreational facilities were located in various areas around the property and included four tennis courts, two croquet courts, six badminton courts, three horse-shoe pitching areas, six play areas, a playground, and a wading pool just outside the nursery in the former Clubhouse.¹⁰ Because management, from the outset, made the decision to segregate families with children to Garage Courts 1 to 3 and 10 to 17, tot lots were built in four of these courts. These small play areas were paved with decomposed granite and surrounded by 4-foot tall wire fences and shrubbery. According to Clarence Stein in 1951, "there are a dozen (sic) or more small fenced and equipped play areas. These are generally placed just outside the ends of the enclosed garage courts, within sight, or at least hearing of mothers in their kitchens."¹¹ Play areas were equipped with sandboxes, slides, shelters, swings, seesaws, benches and tables.

The hierarchy of placement of recreational facilities corresponded with size and expected usage. Two tennis courts were placed symmetrically on either side of the Administration Building, and the largest playground was located in the triangular area just outside the former Clubhouse. Smaller recreational spaces were sited at the interior ends of garage courts, primarily used by those living nearby. Recreational facilities included the following:

- Former Clubhouse (originally called the Community Building) included a lending library, ping-pong tables, darkroom, reading lounge with fireplace, patio, large area used for dances, church services, and meeting space.
- Tennis Courts were located on either side of the Administration Building in the East and West Circles.
- A large playground was located near the former Clubhouse.
- Tot Lots (smaller fenced play areas) occurred in Garage Courts 1, 3, 12 and 17, in areas reserved for families with children.
- Badminton Courts occurred in the two triangular open spaces near the former Clubhouse. Four additional courts were located in Garage Courts 6, 8, 9 and 11, and were set aside for families without children. In Garage Court 6, badminton was located just south of building 30, and in Court 8 it was south of building 41. In Court 9 it was located just north of Building 44A, and in Court 11, just south of Building 54A. All had asphalt surfaces.
- Horseshoe Pits occurred in Garage Courts 9 and 11 on the west end of The Village Green. One was behind Building 46, another was behind Building 56, and the third was in Court 16 behind Building 88. All had earthen floors.
- Croquet Courts were located adjacent to, and south of, the tennis courts in the East and West Circles.
- Wading Pool was located just south of the former Clubhouse.
- Putting Green was in the open space of the Central Green.



One of the tot lots, circa 1944. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Informal volleyball game on the lawn outside the former Administration Building, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

The former Clubhouse, which was the heart of The Village Green activity, operated until 1955 when the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company, owners of The Village Green at the time, converted it into two additional rental units. At the time, fewer activities were being held in the former Clubhouse, and a potential for increased revenue was a likely motivation.

The large playground that included a badminton court, originally built in the triangular open space east of the former Clubhouse, was intended to serve as play space for all children residing in the complex. Due to its proximity to the nursery school, this playground was reserved for children enrolled in the school during WWII and immediately thereafter. The identical triangular open space (with companion badminton court) on the opposite side of the former Clubhouse was intended as one of a number of planned outdoor gathering spaces. An aerial photograph from 1944 shows this as open space, but by 1948 it was being used as a plant nursery. Both triangular spaces were surrounded by 4-foot tall wire fences, paved with decomposed granite and surrounded by two species of pine trees. Eventually all features were removed and now both triangular areas are lawn. Some mature Aleppo pine trees remain.

Though equipped with abundant recreational features at the time of construction, two of the original architects commented on potential additions. In his 1949 book, consulting architect Clarence Stein suggested that, “a well-equipped playground for boys and girls of all ages, in easy safe walking distance, preferably within the superblock, is needed. This could be added now, possibly in the Western Central Park.” He also remarked “a swimming pool is another addition that would probably have been very welcome at Baldwin Hills. The fact is, if I remember rightly, a swimming pool was suggested at one time, to be placed directly in front of the Community House.” Instead, a wading pool was built on the Central Green in front of the former Clubhouse. Shortly after construction, it was deemed unsafe and was filled with soil.¹²

Robert Alexander said in the early 1950s, “The play areas, scattered throughout the project, were equipped with sandboxes, slides, shelters, swings, seesaws, benches and tables.” He also noted that the inclusion of these smaller tot lots “was not contemplated until after construction, laundry drying facilities and playgrounds are considered inadequate in the children’s areas.”¹³ After the 1963 flood, only two small play areas remained, located in Courts 12 and 17. Today, there are no formal play areas remain.

With the exception of the putting green, all other recreational features – tennis courts, badminton courts, croquet courts, horseshoe pits, tot lots – were eventually phased out and have been replaced by parking spaces, driveways, garage structures or lawn. The former Clubhouse functions were moved to the Administration Building in 1978 when Terramics handed over full control to the Village Green Owners Association.

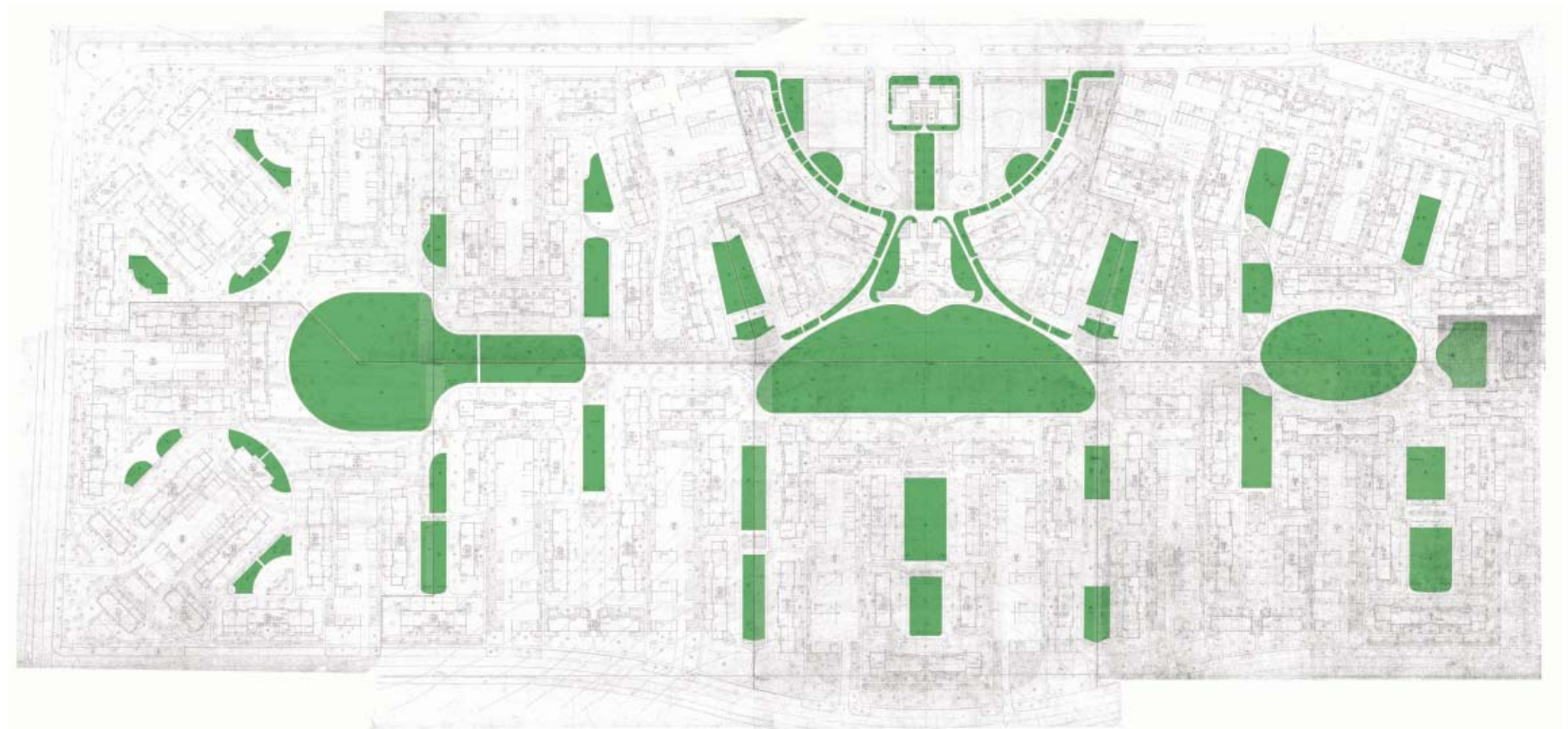
Utilitarian uses include the Maintenance Building, which was originally located on a small triangular piece of land at the corner of Rodeo Road and Sycamore Avenue, placing the least desirable functions (e.g., incinerator, maintenance equipment, etc.) in the least attractive corner of the property.

The Maintenance Building remains in its original location. Though no longer used to incinerate trash, other utilitarian functions are still present.

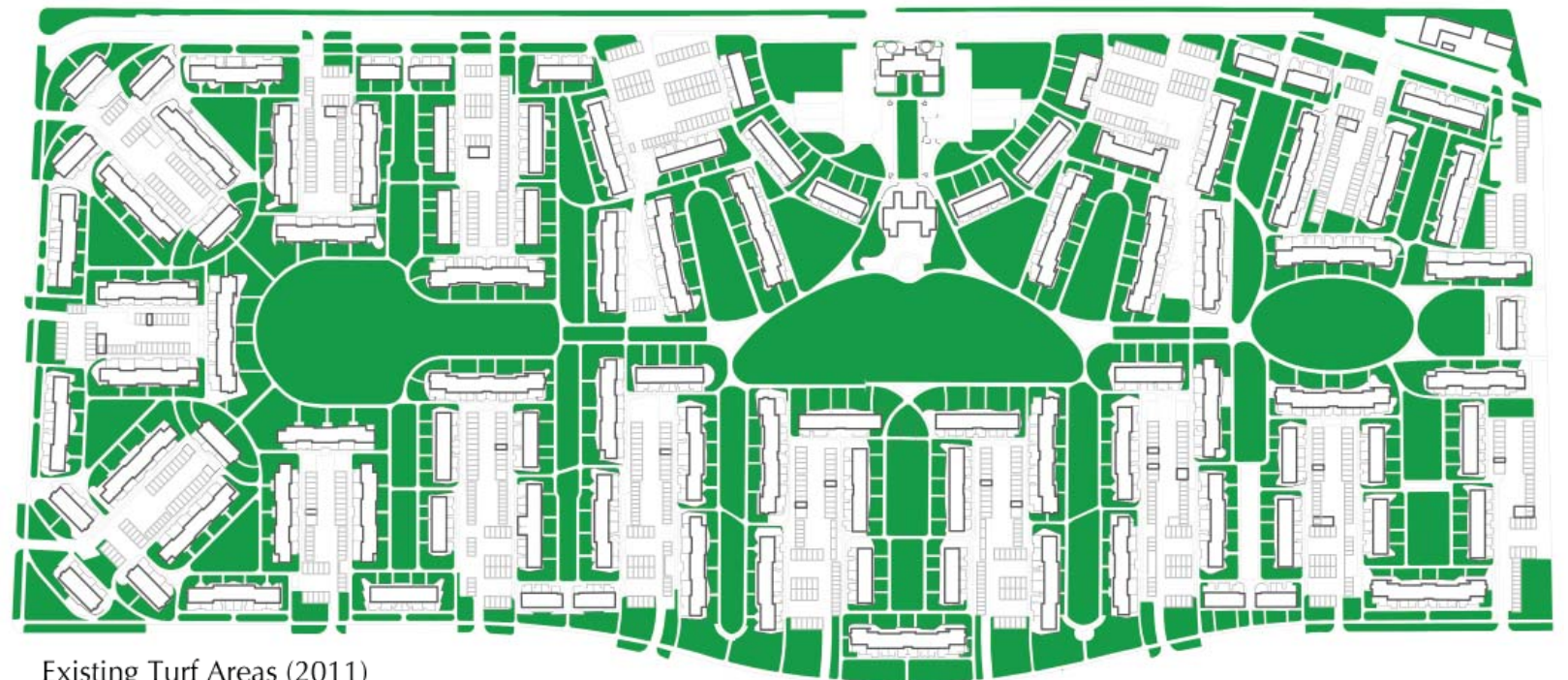
Topography

Topography consists of the “three-dimensional configuration of the landscape surface characterized by feature and orientation.”¹⁴ This is the contour and slope of the land. Prior to construction, the nearly level site was scraped clean of vegetation, and was a gently sloping site. Only one terrace in Garden Court 4/5 emphasized a slight change in slope.

Although the 1963 flood destroyed much of the understory vegetation, the topography in the Village remains relatively unchanged.



The Village Green
Lawn (1942-1948)



Existing Turf Areas (2011)

Vegetation

Of primary importance to a CLR is the use and characteristics of the vegetation chosen to impart a particular aesthetic to the landscape. The original designed landscape consisted of specimen trees, ornamental trees and shrubs, vines, groundcover and turf. The original palette of 77 plants devised by Fred Barlow, Jr. allowed for enough variation that each court could be identified by the combination of plantings to be found within. Norman Newton, in his essay, noted that, “The garden courts differ considerably from one another, with enough variety of treatment to dispel any feeling of boring sameness.”¹⁵ The plantings in the large greens consisted of lawn punctuated by trees.

The original plant key written on a paper separate from the plans has been lost. Diligent detective work, along with help from experts, allowed the committee to re-create some of the original plant list. Other large-scale landscape projects Barlow designed contemporary to his work at Baldwin Hills Village provided additional clues about plant species that may have been used. On the plans, Barlow listed by number 9 groundcovers, 24 shrubs, 10 vines, and 27 trees (not including specimen trees).

The overall plant palette, while restrained, included differing colors of greens and silvery olive trees, as well as purple leaf plums. Original flower colors were generally white, with bold spots of color in purple jacaranda flowers and boldly colored vines.

The greatest changes between the period of significance and present-day conditions are in the vegetation. Because of the passage of time, the catastrophic flood of 1963, and different landscape philosophies under various stewardships, the vegetation at The Village Green retains some of its original form and pattern but much of the original plant palette has been altered from the original design intent.

The plantings in the large greens still consist of lawn and trees, however, there are fewer trees now than originally planted, and

some later additions are now mature trees that have gained importance in their own right. While many original trees and original plant species still exist, some large-scale vegetation features have been lost.

The original palette, with its emphasis on native and Mediterranean trees and plant materials, and the organized hierarchy of plant materials and limited use of color was replaced by a much more complex and colorful palette in the Winans’ plan in 1966, and by subsequent alterations.

Specimen Trees were an original component of the planting plan. The original landscaping budget included approximately four large specimen trees per acre.¹⁶ Species planted were: Blighia, Brazilian pepper, jacaranda, Koelreuteria, oak, olive trees, a rubber tree (however, a Moreton Bay fig was planted), sycamore, Tricuspidaria and Victorian box. These trees were referenced by name on the 1941 as-planted plans.

Specimen trees retain the most integrity due in part to the longevity of most species originally planted. Of the original specimen trees planted according to the Barlow plan, the following remain (as of 2013; listed by tag number): Brazilian peppers – 154, 158, 207, 208, 212?, 783?, 883, 1188?, 1658; jacaranda – 151, 203, 371, 769, 1324, 1363, 1371, 1652; Koelreuteria – 215, 1252, 1937; oak – 284, 323, 1858, 1922; olive trees – 53, 54, 55, 56, 69, 270, 272, 273, 274, 315, 317, 318, 320, 488, 517, 531, 538, 555, 595, 612, 683, 703, 722, 906, 930, 1031, 1073, 1109, 1110, 1122, 1218, 1307, 1340, 1358, 1379, 1407, 1443, 1461, 1479, 1501?, 1710, 1820, 1829; California sycamore – 684, 1848, 1850; Tricuspidaria – 786 (shown as Lily of the Valley Crinodendron patagua); Victorian box – 1564. (Note: those tag numbers followed by questions marks denote the correct species in a known historic location but with some doubt that the tree was original.)

Trees were an inherent component of the original design, meant to provide shade and to organize space. The original plans included 27 tree species (not including specimen trees) with

possible repeated species of different varieties. Trees served to define courts, separate and/or articulate spaces, serve as linear allées, provide character and definition to “sitting out” areas, and to add character, color and sculptural interest to the landscape. Architect Robert Alexander noted, “Trees were planned to form ‘ceilings’ over residential courts, or to separate large open areas, or to reproduce an early California scene in some cases.”¹⁷

Today, some original trees (other than specimen trees) remain in the landscape. These include evergreen pears, carobs, Aleppo pines, sycamores, London plane trees, Brazilian peppers. Some original species, such as California peppers, black locusts, purple leaf plums and flowering peach have failed and have been removed. Successive managements planted trees in locations that were not compatible with the design intent. A Memorial Tree program instituted after The Village Green became condominiums, allowed residents to choose a tree and have it planted in a location of their choosing. Robert Alexander noted that in the early 1950s, management had added trees to the West Green to foil casual baseball games by young residents.¹⁸

Shrubs and Hedges were planted as horizontal visual accents with shrub hedges defining discrete spaces, such as an enclosure for play areas or a separation between walkways and asphalted garage courts. Alexander noted, “Hedges were designed to screen off conversation sitting areas from pedestrian circulation . . .,” and to curve around decomposed granite areas in individual garden courts to provide privacy for conversational sitting areas.¹⁹ Small islands of flowers surrounded by low boxwood hedges were planted after the close of World War II in areas where walkways merged. They were also planted in front of the tennis courts and near the connecting walkway in the West Green. These hedges provided additional lines in the landscape, further reinforcing the horizontality. Shrubs were selected that flowered in white, and were planted to add a layer of texture, restrained color and often fragrance to the landscape.

Today, the plantings in the garden courts include, in addition to the trees and lawn, foundation plantings that act as borders to



Coral tree in former wading pool in front of original Clubhouse, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Moreton Bay Fig that has become an important feature of The Village Green landscape, the species intended for this location was an Indian rubber tree. (Photo by Holly Kane)



A garage court from the early condominium period exhibits a wide variety of plantings, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)



Bougainvillea planted next to a garage, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

the buildings, and random plants that are individual statements of color and texture added by the residents. Species vary widely but generally the foundation plantings and resident plantings are not original plants or species. The devastating 1963 flood and subsequent planting design by Winans appears to have removed most remaining vestiges of the original understory plantings. Documentation just prior to the flood is limited to a few historic photos making it difficult to ascertain what features still remained.

Maintenance considerations during the first decades of operation resulted in the removal of some hedges as they required regular trimming. Removals of recreational features, many of which had surrounds of chain-link fences with shrubbery, resulted in further loss of shrubbery and hedges.

The large swaths of groundcover in front of buildings, and the hedges that organized gathering areas and planting spaces, have been replaced almost uniformly by lawn, foundation shrubs and vernacular plantings by residents. Some examples of these newer planting materials are agapanthus, Indian hawthorn, juniper and Liquidambar styraciflua. Invasive species have also been planted or have volunteered.

Groundcovers originally provided a strong horizontality that reinforced the overall design. Linear beds of groundcovers originally fronted buildings and provided both a complementary design element as well as a low-maintenance planting. Walkways were kept 20 feet from the front of the buildings to ensure some degree of privacy for the ground floor rooms, and groundcovers such as ivy, jasmine and honeysuckle were planted in these areas to discourage foot traffic. Architect Robert Alexander later said, "We avoided the customary 'base planting' used to soften buildings and substituted ground cover such as ivy in the minimum twenty-foot wide area between paths and buildings. The texture was a relief from broad panels of lawn, and the ivy tended to climb the walls, especially on the north side, merging the buildings into the land."²⁰ Two of the original groundcovers – jasmine and honeysuckle – would also have added a scent to the air when in bloom.

The use of groundcovers diminished during the years when New England Mutual Life Insurance owned the complex, and the 1963 flood and subsequent landscaping work cleared any remaining original groundcover. Today, patches of groundcover exist in front of various units, but not with the original structure and form. The loss of these swaths of groundcover, which provided a cohesive design element throughout the complex, marks the loss of an important landscape feature. Groundcover in front of unit 5276 is the best extant example.

Vines added color and texture to the architecture. Brightly colored flowering vines were originally planted at the foot of trellises and were intended to climb building facades, cross plain balcony fronts, and grow up trellises between front entries. Vines added distinctive color to garden courts as well as helped to ‘tie’ the buildings to the landscape.

Some vines remain in the landscape today. These include copa de oro and orange, violet and scarlet trumpet vines. However, most original vines disappeared by the time Winans’ plan was introduced. Winans added rebar trellises to the landscape, though today only a few vines are trained to climb the trellises, losing the original design intent.

Lawn was originally used judiciously to provide areas of usable lawn within easy reach of residents. Each of the three large greens was planted with lawn, and within each garden court were one or two panels of lawn. Symmetrical panels of lawn framed the Administration Building and the former Clubhouse. The only lawn planted in an olive tree allée was in this location; all other olive tree allées had decomposed granite centers. In the garden courts, these panels of lawn were juxtaposed with decomposed granite areas framed by hedges and ornamental trees.

Today, lawn is the most prevalent planting, not only covering the original areas but also covering original areas of groundcover along buildings and where decomposed granite areas would have occurred in most garden courts. Other original vegetation

was slowly replaced with lawn up until the 1963 flood, when the understory plantings were destroyed. The Winans plan, implemented by 1966, specified lawn virtually everywhere except for foundation plantings along buildings, and in garage courts. Now many of the foundation plantings from Winans’ plans are gone, leaving lawn up to most building facades, with some shrubbery and random plantings punctuating the foundations.



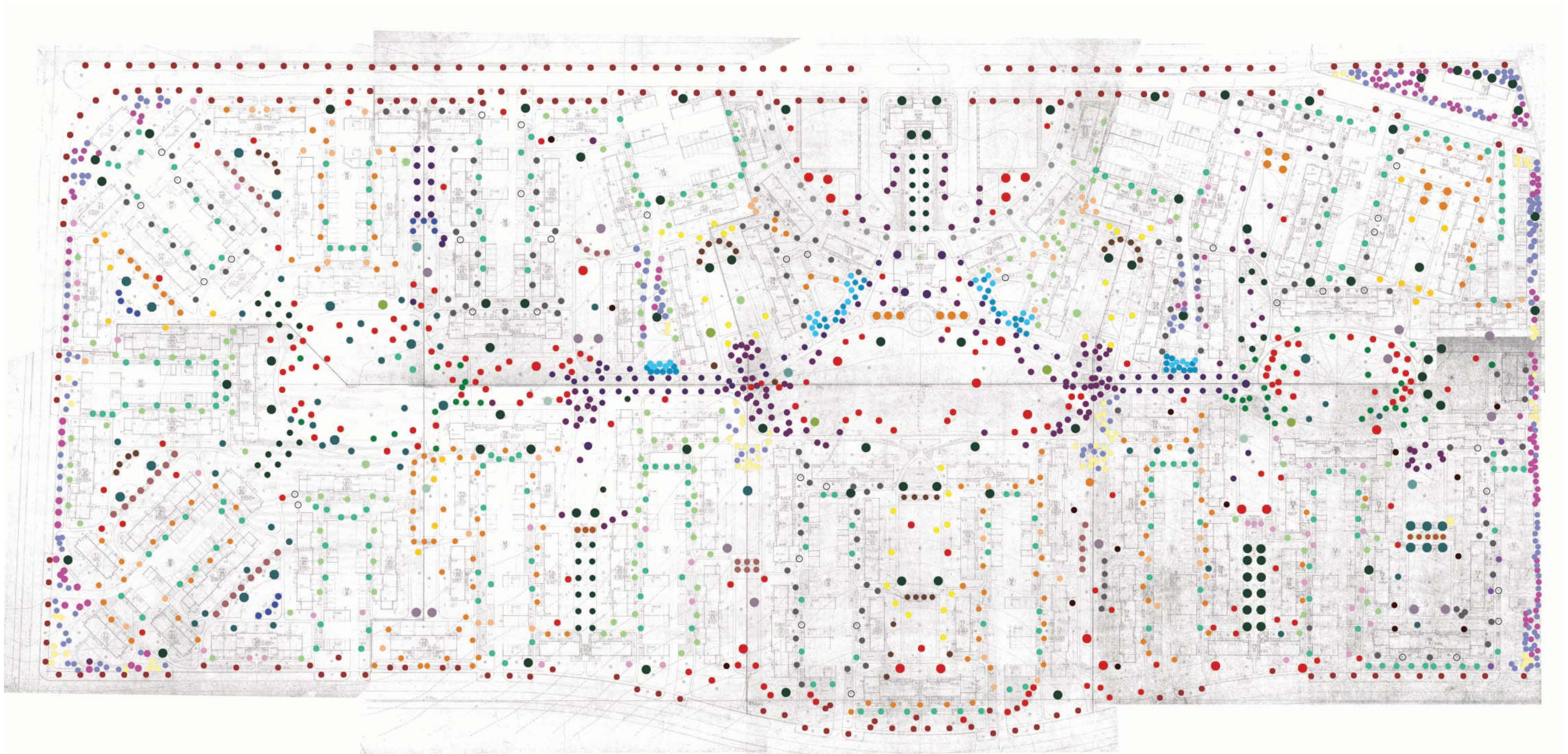
Low plantings in the triangular space adjacent to Building 83 assisted in “interrupting” the view between the allée and the larger greens on either side, while maintaining a veiled view, circa 1953. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



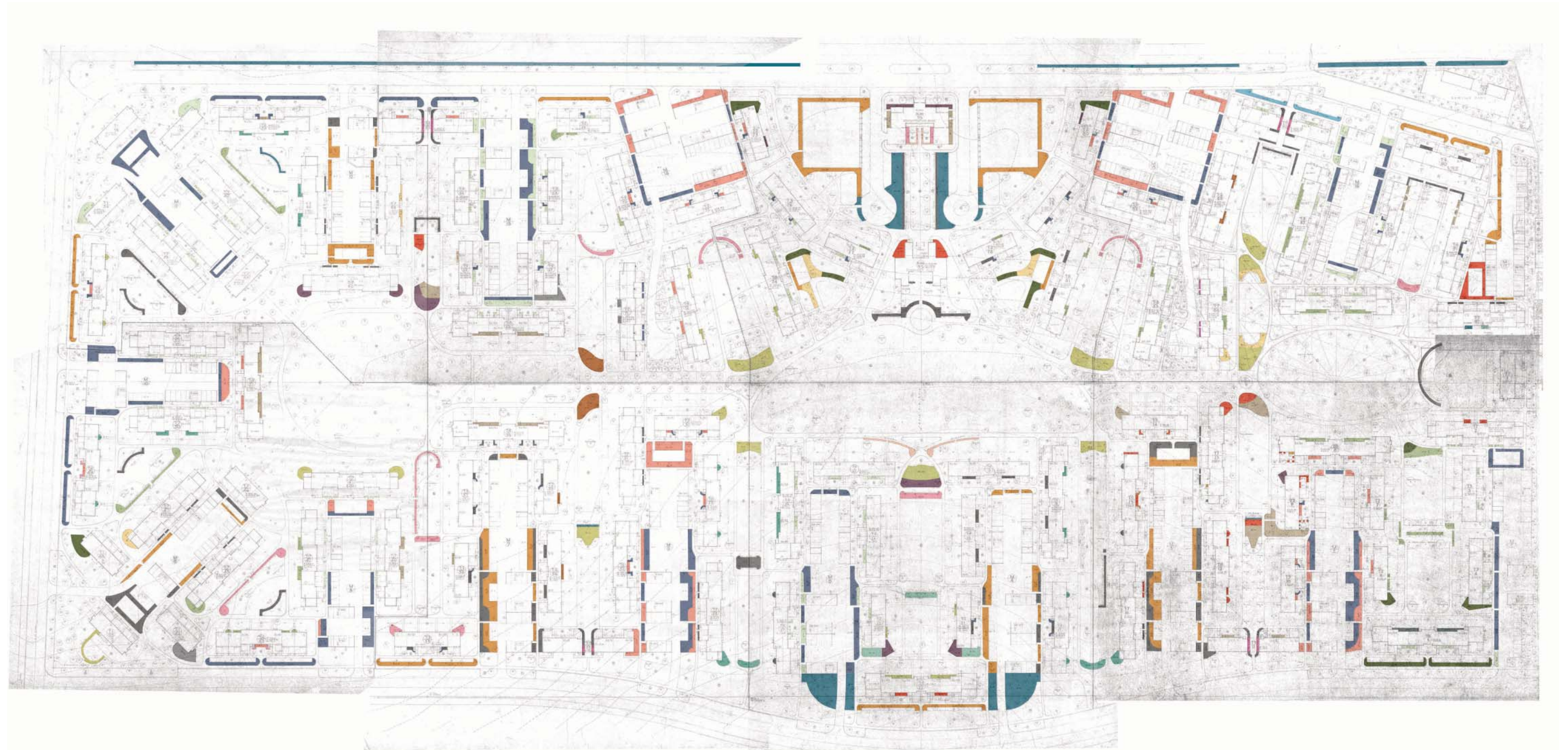
View toward Building 31 taken the day after the Baldwin Hills Dam flooded the area, note the north wall of the building was ripped open, 1963. (Photo courtesy of Bernie Altman)



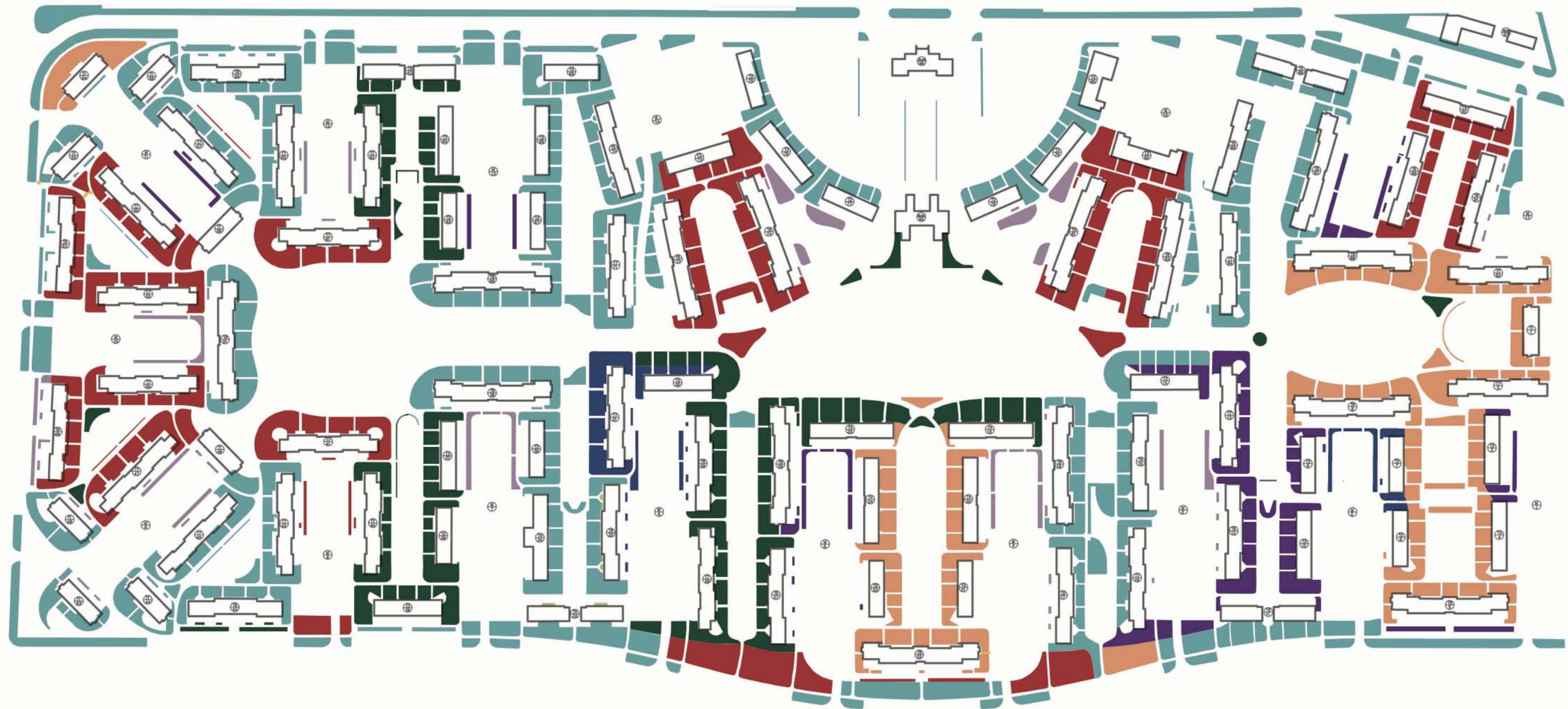
“Woodland scene” designed by Merrill Winans after the 1963 flood changed the character of the triangular space at the east end of the west allée, 1974. (Shulman Collection, The Getty Research Institute)



The Village Green
Trees (1942-1948)

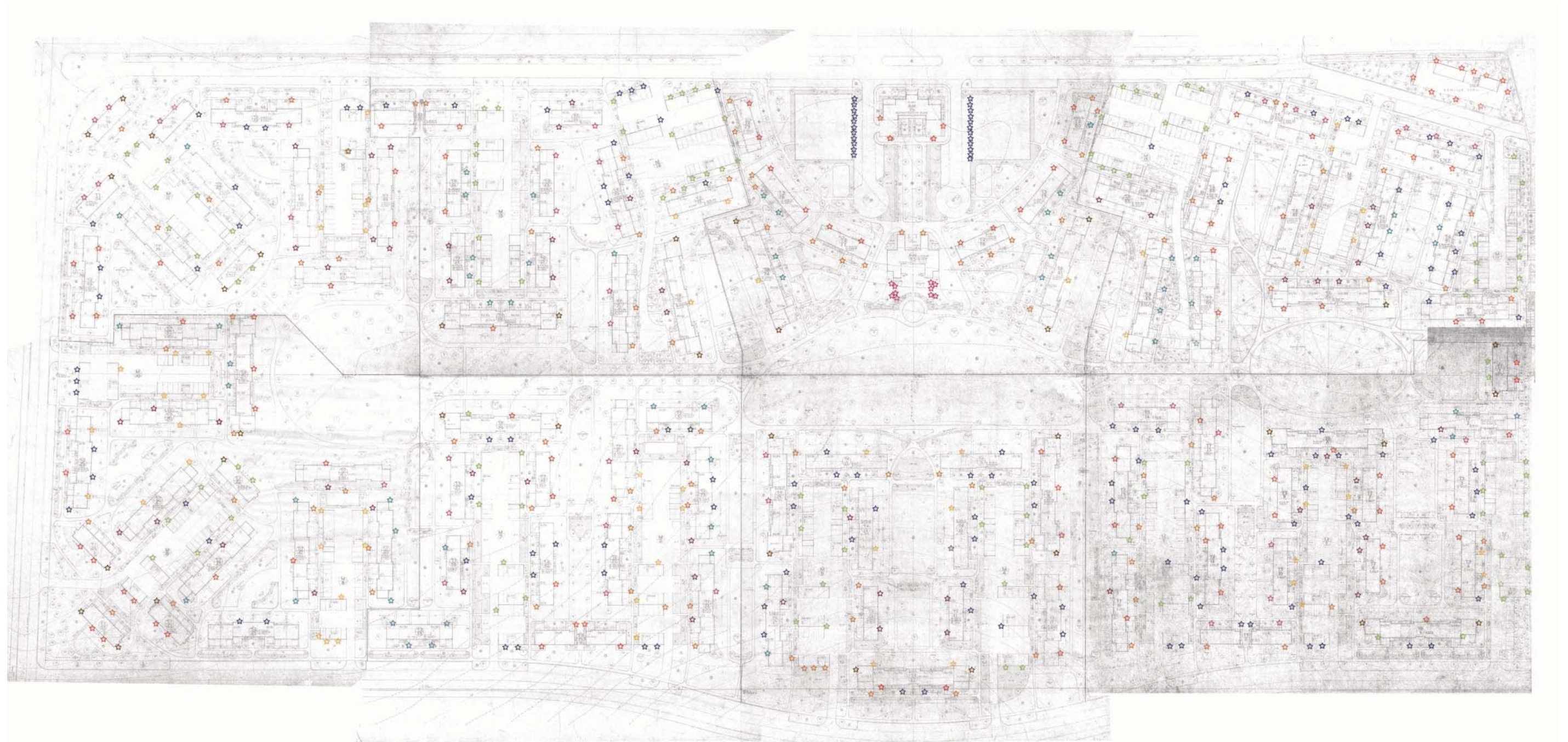


The Village Green
Shrubs (1942-1948)

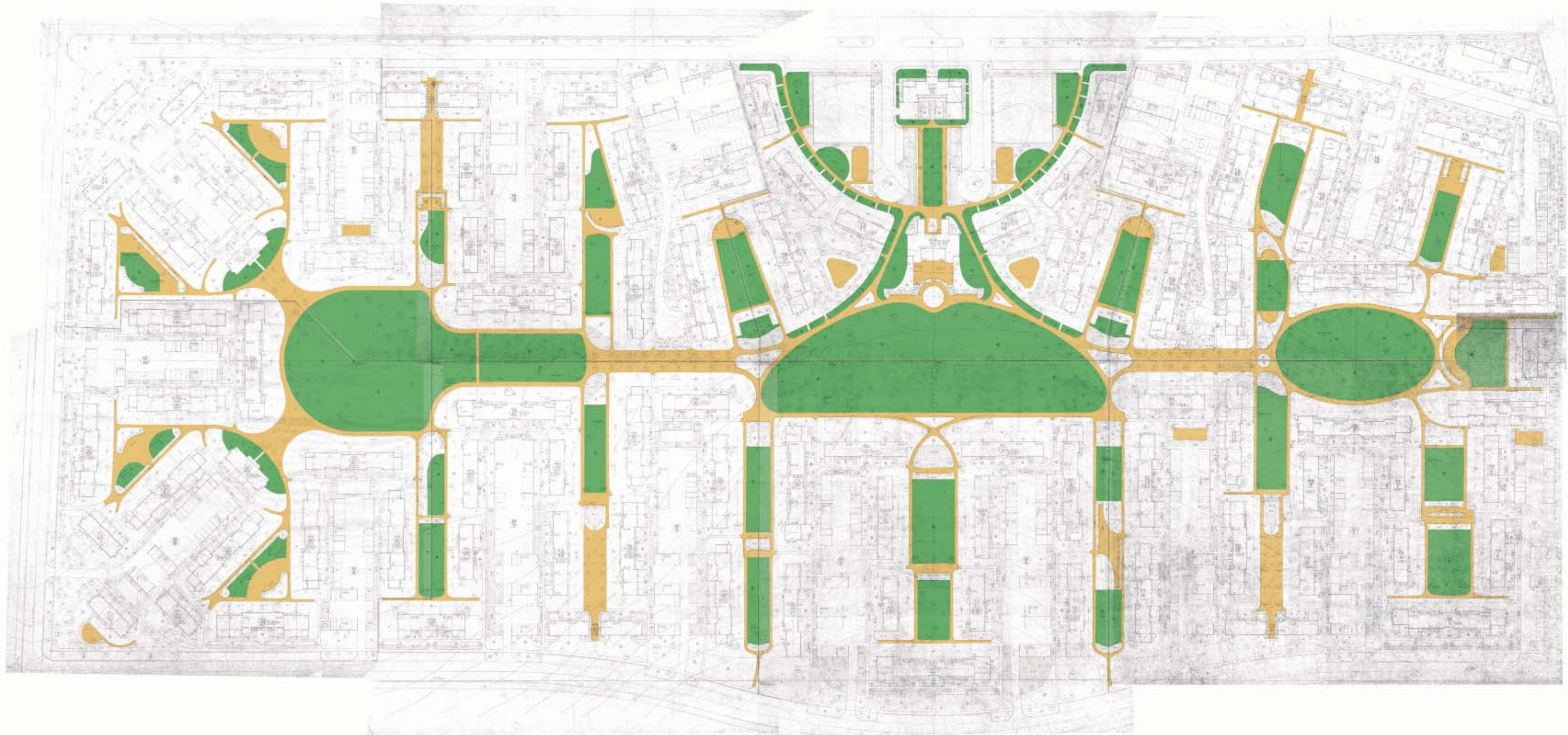


The Village Green

Groundcover (1942-1948)



The Village Green
Vines (1942-1948)



The Village Green

Decomposed Granite Walkways (1942-1948)

Circulation

Circulation encompasses the methods in which users move through a site, including vehicular and pedestrian movement. Separation of vehicular and pedestrian circulation was a key principle in the design of The Village Green. As with earlier Garden City developments on the East Coast, the architects endeavored to maintain a separation between automobiles and pedestrians, allowing pedestrians to access all parts of the complex without crossing a street or driveway. But they were also challenged by the Los Angeles car culture, which differed from older East Coast cities where public transportation existed prior to the introduction of automobiles. This required planning for multiple automobiles per unit, and resulted in a covered space for each unit plus an additional two spaces for parking per unit.

Automobile Circulation was uniquely designed for The Village Green. Because Rodeo Road was a busy road, an internal access road was designed to parallel the street, allowing safer access into garage courts. Garage courts connected to Coliseum Street and Hauser Boulevard were entered directly from each street. In total, 17 garage courts, originally paved with asphalt, served the needs of the complex. Courts 1 to 8 were entered from Coliseum Street, Courts 9 to 11 entered from Hauser Boulevard, and courts 12 to 17 enter from the access road along Rodeo Road. No garage courts extended to Sycamore Avenue as the designers hoped to keep the commercial strip accessible to pedestrians without a street intervening. None of the garage courts intersected one another. Garden courts extended nearly to the perimeter of the property on all sides, between the garage courts, relegating pedestrian and vehicular access to respective sides of most buildings.

The original automobile circulation patterns remain virtually unchanged today. One exception is the service yard outside the Maintenance Building, which originally had an exit to Rodeo Road. Sheds were added, blocking the exit and egress was later reconfigured so that access was solely from the service drive in the interior of the block.

Some driveway configurations have changed, including the driveways on either side of the Administration Building. The driveways for Garage Courts 14 and 15, which extend almost to the allées connecting the large greens, have both been widened slightly, each leaving a small peninsula of land containing a mature tree extending into the driveway. Asphalt is still used as the paving material.

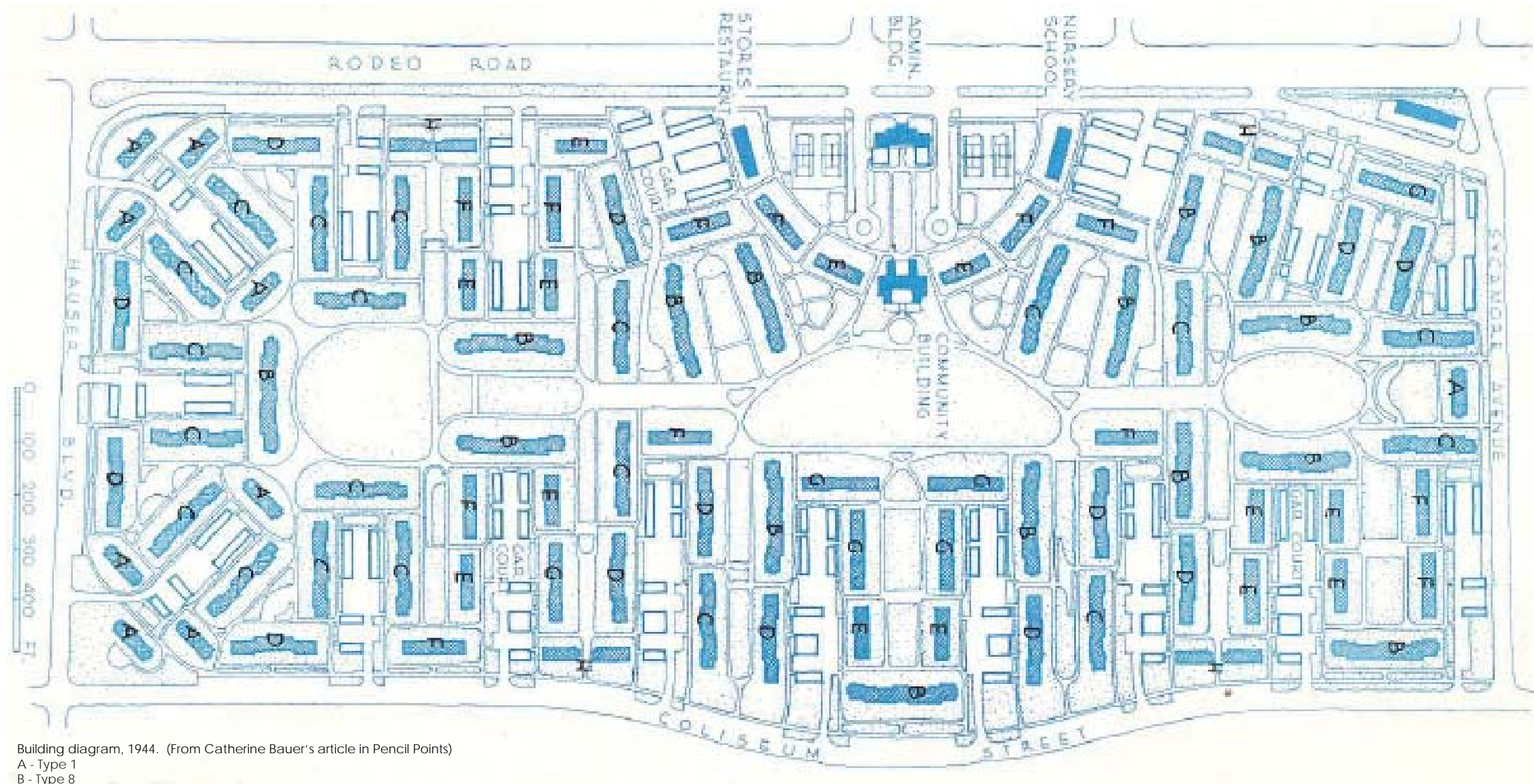
Pedestrian Circulation was along well-designed routes within the complex's grounds, allowing safe and easy access to fronts and rears of all units. Walkways of decomposed granite, often connected by central geometric shapes distinct to each court, gave residents convenient routes around The Village Green, without having to cross a streets or driveway. These decomposed granite walkways served the formal garden court side of the circulation system. Concrete block paths were an important motif and signaled pedestrian connections to buildings. Upon stepping out of the Administration Building towards the former Clubhouse, the initial steps were on these staggered blocks. They were also used to connect front doors to the main walkways, and served as patio floors. These blocks also served a utilitarian function, if plumbing issues arose under patios, they were easy to remove and replace.

More utilitarian walkways – those connecting the inner garden courts to the garage courts – were paved with asphalt, as were all the walkways within the garage courts.

Pedestrian circulation patterns remain relatively unchanged today. Decomposed granite paving and asphalt have been replaced by concrete paving. In general the walkways follow the original alignment, and in some cases the widths of pathways have been narrowed, but are consistent with the original idea. Decomposed granite paving that originally helped define the allées connecting the three large greens has been removed. Two parallel concrete walkways now occur along the outside edges of the allées, significantly altering the intended design experience of the allée. In Garden Court 12/13, the walkway alignment has been moved to bypass overgrown roots of the Moreton Bay

fig tree (originally intended to be a rubber tree on Barlow's as-planted plan). A small walkway separating the little West Green from the West Green has been removed.

Some of the pedestrian circulation routes have been narrowed, particularly at intersections. Gathering areas, originally paved with decomposed granite and that were intended to have benches have also mostly been removed. The exception is a gathering area in Garden Court 4/5, and the olive tree allée in Garden Court 2/3.



Building diagram, 1944. (From Catherine Bauer's article in Pencil Points)

- A - Type 1
- B - Type 8
- C - Type 7
- D - Type 6
- E - Type 2
- F - Type 3
- G - Type 4
- H - Type 5

Some of the buildings on this drawing are misclassified and should read:

- Bldg 10 - F
- Bldg 75 - E
- Bldg 80 - E
- Bldg 81 - B
- Bldg 85 - D

Buildings and Structures

The buildings and structures at The Village Green provided a strong organizing element in the original design. The complex consisted of 97 buildings, 94 of which were for residential use. Three buildings – the Administration Building, the Clubhouse and the Maintenance and Storage Building – served residents and management of The Village Green.²¹

The mass, form and scale of the buildings remain unchanged today, and an effort has been made to have their exterior color schemes (walls and roofing) reflect the initial postwar years of operation. Initial paint quality and availability was affected by the outbreak of World War II, as building materials were directed toward defense needs. A color palette reflecting colors used in the postwar period has been devised and buildings are being repainted on a rotating schedule.

Administration Building served as the public entrance into the complex and was sited prominently in the formal half-circle entrance from Rodeo Road. Because Baldwin Hills Village was operated as rental housing, the Administration Building served as the offices of the management. The original symmetrical floor plan included offices and storage as well as a one-bedroom apartment for the manager. The original central space, used for tenant contact, had a high ceiling and ribbed-glass clerestory windows that gave a feeling of openness. Ribbed glass, horizontally arranged, was used in the front façade of the building, screening the view to the street, whereas plain glass was used on the opposite side of the building, facing the former Clubhouse.

The manager's apartment was later changed to the present-day management offices. When the condominium conversion was completed in 1978, the Administration Building was turned over to the Village Green Owners Association. Today the Administration Building is also known as the Clubhouse, and houses the management and security patrol offices, two meeting rooms, a library, kitchen, and restrooms. The smaller rooms are reserved for archival materials and for the board members and committee chairs' use.



Building 55, a Type 7 building, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



A Type 2 building with horizontal board detail on the second story, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Building 90, a Type 4 building, showing vine growing on horizontal trellis, 2013.
(Photo by Holly Kane)



Larger drying yard in Court 11, and an original lamp post with signage, 2013.
(Photo by Holly Kane)



Maintenance Shed, Building 97, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Drying yard between two garage structure, Court 4, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

Former Clubhouse, visually connected to the Administration Building via an olive tree allée, provided an interior social space. During World War II, when people were unable to leave the complex easily due to gas rationing, regular dances, debates, church gatherings and other activities kept the former Clubhouse busy. The former Clubhouse also had a library, darkroom, billiards, shuffleboard and ping-pong tables.²² Although this central building was originally designed to house a nursery school, at some point prior to full operation it was turned into a community clubhouse. The patio provided an enclosed outdoor experience for residents. Like the Administration Building, the former Clubhouse had horizontally oriented ribbed-glass on the side facing the Administration Building and plain glass on the side facing the Central Green.

In 1955 owner New England Mutual Life Insurance converted the former Clubhouse into two large rental units. Each consisted of six rooms and three bathrooms, two fireplaces and two patios.²³ These two units were converted into condominiums in the 1970s and remain privately owned residential units today. Because the use of this building as a community clubhouse was a significant aspect of the original plan, and because the transparency of the original building has been obscured with the addition of walls, thus obstructing the visual axis running from the administration building through the green and to the hills beyond, the integrity of the building and its interaction with the Administration Building has been diminished.

Maintenance and Storage Building, located in the northeast corner of the property, housed the equipment and supplies needed to maintain The Village Green. An incinerator was also located in this area, used to burn trash. A service yard was located on the south side of the building with exits onto both Rodeo Road and the service drive.

The Maintenance and Storage Building remains today, slightly modified with shed-like additions placed on the west end of the building, and continues to house equipment and supplies.

The incinerator originally used to burn trash has been removed. Otherwise this building is still used for its original purpose.

Residential Buildings consisted of 94 buildings, containing 627 units. Although cohesive in appearance, the residential buildings consisted of eight discreet building types, each of which exhibited subtle variations with stepped facades, varied rooflines (both one and two-stories, with some mixed), different lengths, balconies, trellises, stucco versus brick, and horizontal wood siding on some buildings. Roof overhangs extended 2 ½ feet from building facades, creating a horizontal linear shadow, which added to the cohesive look of the complex.

All of the original 94 residential buildings occupy the same footprint and serve the same purpose today as when they were designed.

Garages were an essential use originally, accommodated as linear rows of covered garage spaces and were arranged in each garage court. Originally open structures, management offered residents the option to enclose them with wood siding and a wooden door once rationing for World War II had ended.

Of the original 85 garage buildings, 64 remain unchanged. An additional 12 were extended when recreational features, such as tot lots and horseshoe pits, were removed. After World War II, residents could request to have their spaces enclosed as a garage with a door for an additional \$1 per month in rent. This was followed by enclosure of all garage stalls.

Some of the original garage structures were destroyed in the 1963 flood and have been rebuilt using the same footprint, massing and design, with the exception of the siding, which was done in stucco not wood. Seven additional garage buildings were added in areas that contained either recreational features or open space. These replaced the tennis courts, and in Garage Courts 3, 14, and 15 they replaced groves of trees and a play area.

Laundry Rooms were an important facility to residents since few units had interior laundry areas. Most washing was done in one of the 17 laundry buildings located within each of the garage courts.

Today, laundry rooms remain in the original locations and with the same exterior appearance as originally constructed.

Drying Yards were originally open-air spaces with clotheslines, and were located within each garage court. Hooks were installed inside carports for wet weather drying. Garage Courts 4 and 7 had open drying yards spanning the space between two garage structures, the remaining garage courts all had fenced drying yards.

Drying yards remain today in all courts, however, the walls around the drying yard in Garage Court 1 have been removed, and it now functions as a community garden space with raised planters. Original clotheslines are extant within the remainder of the drying yards. Because dryers have been installed in the laundry rooms, drying yards are only occasionally used by residents.

Trash collection areas have been added in the garage courts as trash is no longer collected from individual units. These enclosures contain bins for recyclables and household waste and are surrounded by tall painted wooden fences, which aesthetically blend with the original redwood fences and maintain much the same appearance as drying yards.

Water Features

Constructed water features “utilize water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions.” The Village Green had both, a wading pool and an irrigation system.²⁴ Though a swimming pool was included in early plans, it was never built.²⁵ Instead, a small circular wading pool was installed adjacent to the former Clubhouse patio, overlooking the Central Green. Early photographs show a fountain with aquatic plants growing in the pool and inquisitive children at the edge. Reginald Johnson’s Kodachrome film circa 1943 shows water in the pool. However, by 1944, Catherine Bauer described “a pool, waterless until someone figures out a way to keep babies out of it”²⁶ The complex was originally completely landscaped and included irrigation sprinklers with water supplied from a well on the property.

Wading Pool was an original feature of The Village Green. Possibly because of a perceived hazard, the original circular wading pool located in the Central Green adjacent to the former Clubhouse was filled with soil fairly soon after the complex opened. The pool shape remained, but was converted to a planter and the mature coral tree now occupying the circular container was planted after the 1963 flood.²⁷ This tree, though not historically significant, has gained importance in its own right as a well-recognized and beloved feature of the landscape. Children love to play around and on it, and caregivers with strollers gather to watch children play and interact, fulfilling one of the intended functions of the complex, albeit not in quite the way the original designers envisioned it.

Irrigation is provided through an updated, though outdated, irrigation system in place today. Valves are hand-cranked to be turned on and off. Deep divots dot the landscape where the level of turf has risen inches above sprinkler heads. Functionality has decreased and water usage is not managed well. Breakdowns in the pumping apparatus cause The Village Green Owners Association to rely on city-supplied water on occasion.



The aesthetic water feature at The Village Green was a wading pool outside the original Clubhouse, 1944. (Photo by Margaret Lowe, Clarence Stein papers, #3600. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Some time in the 1940s, the wading pool was filled in, circa 1946. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)

Small-Scale Features

These are “elements that provide detail and diversity combined with function and aesthetics” in the landscape.²⁸

Lamp Posts were original components of the design. Cast-metal lamp posts, painted green, with segmented curved glass lanterns, were strategically placed in the landscape. Usually located at junction points of walkways, these lamp posts were the only freestanding site lighting within The Village Green. Approximately 148 were installed originally. Each unit also had a front and rear porch light with the exception of the upstairs units, which only had a rear entrance.

The original lamp posts are still operational and are believed to still be in their original locations. However, as they do not provide adequate lighting levels for contemporary needs, additional lamp posts, nearly identical in appearance to the originals, have been added. These lamp posts can be distinguished from the originals by two stamps found on the bottom circular metal part of the lamp, one is a number “2” and on the opposite side are “CSI” enclosed in a diamond-shaped outline. The addition of lamp posts was necessitated for safety reasons and the compatible appearance of newer lamps is compatible with the complex.

Benches were originally intended to be placed in clusters, located in “sitting out” areas. They were not installed, possibly due to wartime restrictions or to funding stipulations from the FHA, thus minimizing the architects’ intent for functional areas meant to foster community.

Today, eight benches are located within the complex. Two are in each of the three large greens and two are in Garden Court 2/3 where the gathering area has been repaired including the addition of decomposed granite paving. None of these benches, however, are original to 1941; they are recent additions. Two wooden benches are located outside the Administration Building, installed in 1979. The design is not compatible with the style and materials of the original benches Barlow would have used. As a



Early view into Court 9/10, circa 1944. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Underside of new lamp posts shows distinguishing features: a number 2 and CSI enclosed in a diamond shaped box, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)



Historic lamp post with possible historic sign and modern sign, Court 11, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

reference point, Barlow installed benches at the Harbor Hills multi-family housing project in 1941 that were simple and made from slat steel. As this was a project contemporary to the design of The Village Green, the appearance of the Harbor Hills benches is an indication of what benches might have looked like had they been installed originally.

The lack of benches diminishes the concept of gathering or “sitting-out” areas where residents could gather, one of the key features of community in a Garden City development.

Signage was originally simple and unadorned, and was used to inform tenants and visitors of the garage court number as well as the unit numbers to be found in it. Since unit numbers were not usually visible from the street, by the 1950s signs were posted around the perimeter near garage court entrances to identify units accessible from that entrance.

Modern signage within The Village Green informs users which units are located in each court, and a large sign adjacent to the Administration Building proclaims The Village Green’s status as a National Historic Landmark. All original signage has been removed. However, the current signage that provides directions to garage courts and identifies unit numbers is compatible with the original design and does not detract from the integrity. The large sign posted by the Administration Building is not in an original location, nor is it compatible with the look and feel of the complex, however, it is easily reversible.

Fences originally included those that enclosed patios and others that provided separation within garage courts. Original enclosed patios had painted redwood fences. The fences were detailed with boards arranged in a horizontal pattern. Chain link fences were used in several ways, mainly to prevent residents or children from cutting through hedges and to enclose recreational spaces. Four-foot tall fences enclosed many of the recreational areas, and two-foot tall fences in garage courts separated walkways from driveway areas. These fences all had vegetation growing around them, effectively concealing them.

The original horizontal redwood fences enclosing patios remain today, as do the serpentine brick walls added ca. 1950, though repairs have been made and rotted wood has been replaced as needed. Some brick walls are unstable and the mortar is cracked. Both maintain their original appearance.

Chain link fences are extant in some garage courts though usually these fences are concealed by shrubbery. Most of the original chain link fences have been removed, especially those fences that were associated with removed recreational features.

Trellises were originally included on building facades. All buildings had some type of trellis to encourage flowering vines to grow up the building facades or along a horizontal trellis. Some were on the sides of the buildings, and others were perpendicular to front doors where vines could also be trained to grow, provide privacy, cooling and spots of color. Horizontal trellises were located on the front facades of building Type 4, allowing flowering vines to further emphasize the horizontal lines so prominent in the landscape.

Most of the trellises on buildings remain today but are not generally used for the boldly flowering climbing vines Barlow introduced to add color and court identity. The wall mounted pipe trellises on Type 6 buildings have for the most part been removed. While mostly extant, these features are not serving their original purpose and their integrity has been diminished.

Wall, one decorative terrace wall was built in Garden Court 3/4 to emphasize the view upwards towards the Baldwin Hills. This 59 ½ foot long by three foot tall wall was originally symmetrically flanked by four steps on either side, corresponding to the decomposed granite paths leading up to them. The wall was built with long narrow cast concrete bricks measuring 32” long x 1 ¾” high, echoing other horizontal lines found in the buildings and vegetation and of the Baldwin Hills in the background. The ground behind the wall is approximately 17” below the top of the wall, further suggesting the wall was designed as an aesthetic element in the landscape, rather than for purely utilitarian purposes.



Original signage helped visitors find their way, circa 1942. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Two-foot high chain original chain link fence mostly concealed by shrubbery in Garage Court 9, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

The cast concrete block retaining wall in Garden Court 3/4 remains unchanged and is a contributing feature.

Cast Concrete Pavers formed the walkways that accessed front doors as well as patio floors. These pavers were different sizes, all rectangular, and were laid in a staggered pattern. These were designed for easy access to work on sewer lines under patios, when necessary.

Some of the original rectangular cast concrete pavers remain today in their original locations. These include pavers in patios and in walkways leading to front entrances, though many original pavers have been subjected to concrete infill to increase stability and evenness, and to diminish 'trip-and-fall' hazards. Most pavers have been replaced with concrete paving, diminishing the original staggered look of the paver walkways.

Important Character-Defining Features Outside the Period of Significance

Although the Period of Significance is defined as 1935 to 1942, with a possible amendment to include early operation up to 1948, some features in the landscape that fall outside that period acquired importance to the original design and life at The Village Green. Some of these important features are included here.

Serpentine Brick Walls were built by 1950 to enclose originally open private spaces at the rear of the buildings. Some of the original architects designed and supervised construction of these new walls, built of standard red bricks and mortar in a curved pattern.²⁹

Mature Trees located throughout the complex are in locations and of a species that is compatible with the original design intent, and as such have gained importance. Species include ash, Dawn redwoods, and the Moreton Bay fig. Others, such as the deodar cedars, however, alter the spatial design intent at heart of the Village.

The coral tree that was planted in the former wading pool has attained importance as a much-loved feature of the landscape as well as a play place for children and a gathering place for adults.



Fenced patio, private outdoor space, circa 1940s. (Robert Evans Alexander papers, #3087. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)



Pavers in patio and patio entrance in Garage Court 4, 2013. (Photo by Holly Kane)

Endnotes

1 Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert and Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, process, and techniques*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, DC, 1998.

2 Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert and Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, process, and techniques*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, DC, 1998.

3 The Village Green Historic Structures Report, 2010.

4 Stein, *New Towns*, 180. Alexander also mentioned this in his papers: “Extraordinary storage space and stainless steel kitchen sinks and counters were Johnson pets.” Reminiscence of Robert Alexander, 1977 from Cornell University archives collection #3087, box 120, 11. Reginald Johnson was known for his work on mansions prior to Baldwin Hills Village and his insistence on “luxury” items can be attributed to that.

5 NPS National Register Bulletin 15, “How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property.” Accessed online April 15, 2013. www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_8.htm#seven%20aspects

6 *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, 53.

7 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 6. This letter was included in the 1975 Historic Cultural Monument application for The Village Green.

8 *Design on the Land: 1929-1948 US Town Planning*, 511.

9 Bauer, *Pencil Points*, 53. Although confusing, originally the two bedroom units in T7 buildings did have dedicated patio spaces, alternating fenced patios and patio areas with hedges. These areas with hedges were later enclosed with serpentine brick walls. The units that did not have private patios were all the remaining units that now have serpentine brick enclosures.

10 Letter to Board of Directors, Feb 25, 1941.

11 Stein, *New Towns*, 185.

12 Stein, *New Towns*, 185. Alexander also mentions a planned swimming pool in “Tenant Reactions to Baldwin Hills Village,” 1.

13 Alexander, “Tenant Reactions,” 1.

14 *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, 53.

15 *Design on the Land*, 509.

16 Letter to Board of Directors, Carl A. Koch Library, Cornell University.

17 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 7-8.

18 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 9.

19 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 7-8.

20 Alexander, Baldwin Hills Village letter, 7.

21 A Historic Structures Report has been produced for The Village Green and can be consulted for greater detail.

22 “Villagers Afforded Many Recreational Facilities for their Exclusive Use,” *The Villager* 1, no. 10 (December 15, 1943).
“New life injected into our community activities by the thorough organization of the The Villagers into various action groups throws a strong spotlight on the many splendid recreational facilities proved by the Baldwin Hills Village management.

Numerous Villagers have enjoyed the advantages provided for the exclusive use of tenants of this deluxe apartment development. Such features include the four fine tennis courts, our free bus service, The Clubhouse with its well furnished meeting rooms, library ping pong and pool tables, bridge tables and sun patio, badminton and croquet courts, the nursery school, maid service, telephone switch boards, and the administration building to care for tenants needs. In addition, there are the landscaped surroundings, lawns and play yards, the walks and open vistas, and similar attractions found in no like area anywhere.”

23 “Display Ad,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 4, 1955, D15.

24 *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, 53.

25 A *Los Angeles Times* article from December 27, 1942, A13 stated, “Plans have been made for swimming pool at rear of the structure after the war. There is now more than 97 per cent occupancy” Robert Alexander also stated that “Originally a full sized pool was proposed in the area between the Clubhouse and the Administration Buildings; however, due to wartime restrictions it was never built.” “Tenant Reactions to Baldwin Hills Village,” 1. Stein also mentions it in *New Towns*, 185.

26 Bauer, *Pencil Points*, 59.

27 Excerpted from Steven Keylon’s article “Playgrounds . . . , 7.

28 *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, 53.

29 It was likely Robert Alexander. By this time he was partners with Richard Neutra and Neutra’s Nesbitt House has similar walls.



Appendices



APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX B: AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Baldwin Hills Village, now known as The Village Green, has received numerous awards and designations since its construction, culminating in its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 2001.

1944 New York Museum of Modern Art – one of twelve well-designed communities included in a special traveling exhibit called “Looking at your Neighborhood”

1946 New York Museum of Modern Art – one of 47 outstanding examples of contemporary architecture for exhibition “Built in U.S.A. 1932-1944”

1946 Southern California Chapter of the AIA Distinguished Honor Award

1947 Award to Baldwin Hills Village, Ottava Triennale Di Milano, Italy

1972 National AIA 25-Year Award

1977 Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Los Angeles declares Historic Cultural Monument No. 174

1989 Selected by the Los Angeles Urban League and Crenshaw Neighbors, Inc. for its Community Beautiful Award

1993 National Register of Historic Places

2001 National Historic Landmark

The Village Green was acknowledged in the *Congressional Record* of the U.S. House of Representatives on April 20, 1993. Congressman Julian C. Dixon entered this officially in the *Congressional Record* upon the listing of The Village Green in the National Register.

Twenty-Five Year Award from the American Institute of Architects in 1972, only the third time this award was given.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF SITE, LANDSCAPE AND EXTERIOR SUBCONTRACTORS,
1941-42 CONSTRUCTION PAHSE

Anchor Fence & Post Co., fences
Barber Bridge Drilling Corp., water well
Wm. H. Barnsdall, sprinkling system
B. B. Bell Co., lighting fixtures
Brooks & Co., sprinkling system parts
Byron-Jackson, deep well pumping plant
California Hardware Co., finish hardware
Consolidated Rock Products Co., truck mixed concrete, sand,
cement, gravel, rock
Dames & Moore, foundation engineering
Ben Fallgren, plastering and lathing
Fielding Electric, underground conduit
William Gelfan, painting
Hoegee & Sons, awnings
Hood Construction Co., tank fittings and pipe
Hunt Process, concrete curing
R. W. Hamsher, plants and plantings
Kurt Haas, pre cast steps and garbage receptacles
Michel & Pfeffer, steel sash
National Cornice Works, sheet metal work
Pacific Clay Products, ceramicweld pipe
J. E. Porter Corp., playground equipment
Republic Glass Co., glazing
Robinson Roof Co., roofing
Spicer & Thompson, streets, walks, excavations, and backfills
E. H. Wilkholm, brick masonry

*Source: "Foundation Problem at 'Thousand Gardens"

APPENDIX D: EARLY SITE HISTORY

Early Site History

The first known people to occupy the gently sloping land at the foot of the Baldwin Hills were the Tongva Indians. Archeological evidence and state historical records indicate that the Tongva Indians have lived in the Los Angeles area for thousands of years; in 1994 the State of California recognized the “Gabrielino-Tongva Nation as the aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles basin” area. The Gabrielino-Tongva settled up and down the Los Angeles basin coast and inland to the San Bernardino Mountains. Their settlements included a thriving community, Saa’ang na, near the present day location of Playa Vista and the Ballona wetlands, approximately five and a half miles southwest of Village Green. The present day course of Ballona Creek, which feeds the Ballona Wetlands, runs within three-quarters of a mile of Village Green. The Gabrielino-Tongva’s first contact with Europeans came in 1542 when Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a conquistador under the Spanish crown, landed in San Pedro Bay.¹

Spanish domination in the basin area began in 1781 and lasted until circa 1822, when Los Angeles evolved from a Spanish town to a Mexican town. Eleven families of Spanish, Native American, Mexican, African and Caucasian descent founded El Pueblo de Los Angeles in 1781. Comisionado Jose Vicente Feliz was the first recognized government official. In 1784, the Spanish government instituted the rancho system to help establish title to the land, and many Spanish citizens received land grants in exchange for their military service. The hills above Village Green were parceled into three large ranchos: Rancho La Ballona and Rancho Rincon de los Bueyes in 1839, and Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera in 1843. The land later chosen for the site of Village Green belonged to the Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera.

In 1843, Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera, consisting of 4,408,105 acres, was granted to Vicente Sanchez. The name of the rancho was derived from local landmarks. ‘Cienaga’ is Spanish for swamp or marshland. There were marshes in the area between Beverly Hills and the Baldwin Hills. ‘Paso de la Tijera’ is Spanish for ‘Pass of the Scissors,’ which referred to the pass

through the nearby hills, which had the appearance of an open pair of scissors. The boundaries were as follows:

“A line following the same route as Exposition Boulevard between La Cienega Boulevard and Third Avenue formed the northeast boundary. From Exposition Boulevard and Third Avenue the line headed due south to Vernon Avenue. At Vernon it jutted east a few blocks to Arlington Avenue and continued south along Arlington until it reached Slauson Avenue. The southern boundary, commencing at Slauson and Arlington, traversed westward to a point just west of La Brea Avenue. From here a line angled in a northwesterly direction to Stocker Avenue in Baldwin Hills. A westerly line roughly paralleled Stocker to a site just west of La Cienega Boulevard. From here the western boundary started northward and followed the course of La Cienega back to Exposition Boulevard.”
(Kielbasa, 116)

Vicente Sanchez was a colorful character. In 1822, he was imprisoned in irons in Santa Barbara for reasons unknown, but was released and became alcalde (essentially the mayor) of the pueblo Los Angeles in 1830. He was imprisoned again in 1831 and again elected alcalde in 1845. In 1846, Vicente Sanchez’s son, Tomas A. Sanchez moved into the La Tijera adobe on the Rancho. (Kielbasa)

By decree from Mexico, the pueblo of Los Angeles became the capitol of Alta California, then a Mexican territory, on May 23, 1835. In 1849, after the conclusion of the Mexican American War, California became part of the United States and Los Angeles was incorporated with a population of 3,530.

Vicente Sanchez died in 1850 and his son, Tomas, took over operations at the Rancho. Like his father, Tomas Sanchez was involved in politics, serving as tax collector for Los Angeles in 1843 and as sheriff from 1860 to 1867. He also served in the California forces led by General Pio Pico during the Mexican-American War and fought at the Battle of San Pasqual in 1846. He did not

maintain a strong interest in ranching, and gradually sold off parts of the Rancho beginning in 1874.

Andrew Joughins, a blacksmith, purchased 360 acres from Tomas Sanchez in 1874 for \$6,000. In 1875, Sanchez sold the remainder of the Rancho for \$75,000 to four men, F. P. F. Temple, Arthur J. Hutchinson, Henry Ledyard, and Daniel Freeman who divided the purchase into quarters, each getting a share with the agreement that any sale of land must first be offered to the other partners at a fair market price. In 1875, Temple, who owned the Temple and Workman Bank, appealed to Elias J. “Lucky” Baldwin for a loan to shore up his failing bank. Baldwin agreed to loan him \$300,000 with all of Temple’s land holdings as collateral, and an agreement that Temple and Ledyard would sell their shares of the Rancho to Baldwin. Baldwin paid \$35,000 for the two quarters and received the deed on December 2, 1875. Hutchinson later bought Daniel Freeman’s share and the 360 acres that Andrew Joughins had purchased, uniting the other half of the Rancho. In 1886, Hutchinson sold out to Baldwin for \$60,000, reunifying Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera.

By 1880, E. J. Baldwin owned more than 35,000 acres of land in Southern California. His acquisitions were well timed; a land boom started soon after 1880 giving credence to Baldwin’s moniker “Lucky.” Many towns were developed on Baldwin’s lands including Rosemead, Monrovia and Arcadia. Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera, however, remained largely undeveloped. Despite the fact that E. J. Baldwin’s cousin, Charles Baldwin, eventually started a successful dairy on the land, E. J. Baldwin did not consider the land profitable and used it primarily as grazing land for sheep. After Baldwin acquired the Rancho, the hills on the western side of the property became known as the Baldwin Hills.

Despite Baldwin’s attitude about the Rancho, when he died in 1909 his estate listed Rancho La Cienega O’ Paso de la Tijera as his most valuable asset. In the year before his death, the Rancho was estimated to be worth \$7 million.

¹ Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area General Plan. Congressional Record, Vol 139: 50, April 20, 1993.

In the early 20th century, the city of Los Angeles was beginning to spread outward and development followed public transportation lines. The Redondo Electric Railway and the Southern Pacific Railroad both crossed the Rancho, fueling the demand for residential development. Whereas E. J. Baldwin had had no desire to develop or sell the property, his primary heirs, his daughters Anita Baldwin and Clara Baldwin Stocker, were prepared to sell the entire Rancho for \$2,225,000 shortly after his death. When the estate executor, Hiram Unruh, protested the sale maintaining that the property would increase in value, the sisters divided the land into large parcels and sold some of the parcels while retaining others. Anita Baldwin kept the land that was later to become the site of Baldwin Hills Village. One of the other parcels was purchased by the Angeles Mesa Land Company who developed the Angeles Mesa area, currently part of the Ladera and Crenshaw areas. This land was annexed by the city in two phases in 1922.

A parcel retained by the Baldwin heirs was leased to The Sunset Golf Corporation in the 1920's. This parcel included the La Tijera adobe building, which was incorporated by the corporation into their clubhouse building. The sloped lands that had up until now served as grazing pastures became the south Sunset Fields public golf course. After World War II this parcel was subdivided for development as a residential neighborhood and the clubhouse became the home of a women's club. In 1972 the Consolidated Realty Board purchased the building.

In 1917, oil was discovered in the Baldwin Hills leading to the establishment of the Inglewood Oil Field. Oil was continuously pumped from the hills until 1960, causing the hills to sink at least ten feet. This geologic condition is known as subsidence, and is thought to have contributed to the collapse of the earthen Baldwin Hills Dam in 1963.

The 1932 Olympics were held in Los Angeles and many of the athletes were housed in areas near the yet-to-be-built Baldwin Hills Village. More than 600 two-room houses constructed for the athletes in the hills west of Crenshaw and south of Vernon; the houses were demolished shortly after the event. The location's role in the Olympic event is commemorated in the names of Olympiad Drive and Athenian Way.

APPENDIX E: ARCHITECTS’ BIOGRAPHIES

Robert E. Alexander, FAIA (1907-1992)

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

After being hired by Wilson and Merrill, and by working on and completing ten house designs over the next couple of years, Alexander was able to obtain his architect’s license in 1936. He then immediately demanded a partnership in the firm, which became known as Wilson, Merrill and Alexander. Alexander was listed as Architect and Production Manager for the firm and stayed until 1941.

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

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

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

In addition to Baldwin Hills Village, Alexander was affiliated with Estrada Courts, and the unbuilt Elysian Park Heights project in Chavez Ravine, in collaboration with Richard Neutra, with whom he formed a partnership from 1949 until 1958. Like the rest of the Baldwin Hills Village design team, Alexander moved into the Village with his family, staying until 1951.

Fred Barlow, Jr. FASLA (1902-1953)

The landscape architect most prolific and passionate about garden apartment communities was Fred Barlow, Jr., who was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1902. Moving to Hollywood, California with his family at age 11, he later got his landscape degree at the University of California, Berkeley. From 1926-29 he worked for landscape architect Paul G. Thiene, and in 1930 began a 13-year collaboration with landscape architect Katherine Bashford. He became partner in the firm Bashford and Barlow in 1936, after nearly two years working for the Civilian Conservation Corps at Yosemite. Bashford and Barlow became widely known for their restrained and often contemporary landscapes for some of the Southland’s most impressive homes built during the Great Depression. Collaborating through the 1930s most frequently with architect H. Roy Kelley, the team of Kelley, Barlow and Bashford won many awards from the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Fred Barlow, Jr. was also instrumental in the creation of the Southern California Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), which was formed in 1937.

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

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

Frederick William Edmondson, Jr. (unknown)

Fred Edmondson, Jr. was a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome (Rome Prize) and a graduate of Cornell University with a Bachelors in Landscape Architecture in 1936. According to Alexander’s oral history with Marlene Lasky, Fred Edmondson was a landscape architecture student at Cornell when he won the Prix de Rome. Customarily the winner was sent to Italy for further study but since Mussolini was in power, Edmondson was sent to Mexico instead. On his way back, he stopped in Los Angeles to visit his uncle, well-known architect Myron Hunt. Alexander picked him up at the train station and convinced him to work on the Baldwin Hills Village project for “ten days and ten evenings on specific paths and shrubbery and tree massing that changed the whole aspect”² In any case, his name was listed as a Chief Assistant Architect in the Wilson, Merrill, and Alexander

organizational chart (see page 16) on the Baldwin Hills Village project. He went on to work with the Federal Works Agency and designed Linda Vista, a large defense housing project in San Diego, California.³ He later taught landscape architecture at Cornell starting about 1949.⁴

Reginald D. Johnson, FAIA (1882-1952)

Reginald Davis Johnson was the son of Bishop Joseph Johnson of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. Born in New York, he moved with his family to Pasadena in 1895. Reginald Johnson went back to the East Coast for college: he attended Williams College and later got his B.S. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) in Boston in 1910. After graduating, Johnson travelled to Europe to study first-hand the Old World architecture, with a view to adapting these styles to the needs and modes of modern day America. By the time he returned to Pasadena to open up his architectural practice in 1912, he was well-grounded, and his practice was a success from the start.⁵ His partnership (1921-25) with Gordon Kaufmann and Roland Coate produced some of Southern California's finest buildings. During his more than 25 years in architecture, he created houses, businesses, churches, and grand hotels of great distinction and elegance, including the Miraflores estate in Montecito, St. Paul's Cathedral in Los Angeles, the Hale Solar Laboratory at Caltech University in Pasadena, and the Biltmore Hotel in Santa Barbara.

By the mid-1930's, after a long and successful career designing some of the grandest estates in Southern California, Reginald Johnson planned to retire at age 53. He accepted one last commission, for the Santa Barbara Post Office. According to fellow architect Robert Alexander, "[Johnson] had won all the honors to which most professional men aspire. He felt that this was the end of a satisfying professional life, but, in the end, he found a new beginning. He grew young." This "new beginning" was his profound involvement in the housing movement.

A few years earlier, around 1934, after visiting his friend Clarence Stein on the East Coast, Johnson visited the slums in Washington, D.C. and became interested in the housing movement. He

was appalled by what he saw, and soon became involved with "public housing, slum clearance, urban rehabilitation, and became a convert to contemporary design."⁶ Upon devoting his energies to improving these horrific conditions, the work gave him a newfound purpose. "For the first time, Reg[inald] saw people in architecture, and a subjective, universal social need for better homes. Humanity became his client."⁷ Returning to Southern California, and partnering with architect Lewis E. Wilson, he took a very active role in the "social, economic and political disputes" of these explosive times. After studying the problems of housing, he became convinced that a public housing program "was the soundest immediate solution for the most neglected segment of the housing need," personally investigating the local slum conditions, and leading groups on tours of the slums, hoping to gain their allegiance. "With steadfast conviction, he provided leadership and inspiration in the never-ending battle to clear slums and provide housing for people at the opposite end of the economic scale from his former clients."⁸

Based on what they had seen studying Stein's communities for the middle class on the East Coast, Johnson and Lewis Wilson realized early on that that these same concepts could be used to create finer ways of living for the middle classes on the West Coast. In the middle 1930s they began planning such a development, which became Baldwin Hills Village.

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

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

Edwin Ellison Merrill (1890-1964)

Merrill was born in Albany, Oregon, and received BS in Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley in 1913 and another BS in architecture from MIT in 1915. From 1915 to 1923 he worked in architectural offices and with the U.S. Navy, in 1924 he formed the partnership with Lewis Wilson that would define the rest of his career.¹¹ Another project he worked on was the Bakersfield Theater Project in Bakersfield, California.

Clarence Stein, FAIA (1882-1975)

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

Stein moved back to New York in 1919 and in 1921 began a long and fruitful collaboration with architect Henry Wright (1878-1936). This charismatic partnership would produce some of the most innovative urban planning in the history of the United States. In 1923, at Stein's initiative, the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) was formed, in collaboration with Henry Wright, and other members including Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye,

and Alexander Bing. The goal of this group was to “connect a diverse group of friends in a critical examination of the city, in the collaborative development and dissemination of ideas, in political action and in city building projects.”¹² The RPAA had a profound influence on urban development through the prolific and effective writing of its members.

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

Wilson, Merrill & Alexander (1936-1941)

The firm of Wilson, Merrill & Alexander began in Los Angeles in 1924 when Lewis Wilson formed a partnership with architect and engineer Edwin Merrill, creating the firm of Wilson and Merrill. Wilson was listed as Chief Architect and Engineer in the firm, while Merrill was Architect and Office Manager. After being hired by Wilson and Merrill in 1934, and by working on and completing ten house designs over the next couple of years, Robert Alexander obtained his architect’s license in 1936. He then became a partner in the firm, which was then known as Wilson, Merrill and Alexander. Alexander’s role was listed as Architect and Production Manager for the firm, and he stayed until 1941.

Lewis E. Wilson, AIA (1900-1957)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Merrill Waite Winans (1907-1994)

Born in New Jersey on Christmas Eve 1907, Merrill Winans was the youngest of three children born to Frederick and Matilda Winans. Frederick, apparently an alcoholic, left the family shortly after Merrill was born, leaving Matilda to raise Merrill and his siblings, Mabel and Clarence.¹³ Matilda, who ran a boarding house, was also an excellent seamstress with a wealthy clientele. Bringing young Merrill along to her client’s estates, Matilda often sent Merrill out to play in the grand gardens. It was here that he developed an interest in gardens and landscape design.¹⁴

Merrill suffered from respiratory problems aggravated by New Jersey’s cold winters, so in 1916 the family moved to California. It has been said that Merrill studied at the “Atelier de Beaux-Arts Institute in Los Angeles,”¹⁵ but searches of Los Angeles City Directories and the Los Angeles Times turn up no such school. It is more likely that Winans attended Polytechnic High School in

downtown Los Angeles, which by 1914 was offering courses in architecture, the curriculum being provided by the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects of America.¹⁶ After graduating high school, Winans began working as an architectural draftsman for several of the prestigious architects of the day, and by 1926 worked for a few years with Baldwin Hills Village architect Reginald D. Johnson.¹⁷ For a year beginning in 1928, Winans moved to Hawaii to serve as draftsman for architect Ralph Fishbourne. He married Elsie Marlette in 1930. Elsie's father Robert was a skilled carpenter, so when work as an architectural draftsman became scarce during the early years of the Great Depression, Winans survived by assisting Robert Marlette doing carpentry work on homes.¹⁸

By the middle 1930s, Winans was working as a gardener for landscape architects Florence Yoch and Lucile Council.¹⁹ He became interested in plants and landscape design, and, apparently encouraged by Reginald Johnson and other architects with whom Winans may have worked, by the late 1930s Merrill Winans began working as a "landscape designer." Some of his early clients were composer Oscar Rasbach and illustrator Pruett Carter.²⁰ The only landscape project published prior to World War II was the residence of Mr. and Mrs. W. Hubert Tappan (of the Tappan Stove company) in Arcadia, in collaboration with architect H. Roy Kelley.²¹ During World War II, he served with the U.S. Army Engineers, developing camouflage to hide gun emplacements at Point Loma, San Diego. After the war, Winans resumed his work as a landscape designer, creating the landscapes for several properties constructed for Baldwin M. Baldwin adjacent to Baldwin Hills Village. For the first of these in 1948, Winans created a tropical and sub-tropical indoor/outdoor landscape for Hody's Coffee Shop, which was designed by architects Wayne McAllister and Lewis E. Wilson.²² The following year, again with Lewis Wilson, Winans designed the lushly dramatic tropical landscape for the Baldwin Theatre.²³ He was also responsible for the landscape of the Baldwin Hills Shopping Center by architect Robert E. Alexander.²⁴

In the 1950s, Winans was active in the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA), serving as secretary-treasurer for the Association's first term. As the chair of the CLCA State Education Committee, he began working with the state of California to bring vocational training to inmates at San Quentin as they were preparing to re-enter society.²⁵ After licensing for landscape architects became a requirement in 1953, Winans obtained license #729.²⁶ He was also a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), serving as President of the Southern California Chapter in 1967 and 1968.

In the 1960s, Winans created the landscapes for the Atlantic Richfield Research Center in Anaheim, the Memory Garden Memorial Park (in collaboration with Cornell, Bridgers and Troller), and J.C. Penney Distribution Center in Buena Park. He also created the landscape for a large resort residential project for Atlantic Richfield company executives near La Paz, Baja California.²⁷

After the devastating Baldwin Hills Reservoir disaster in December 1963, Baldwin M. Baldwin hired Winans to create a new landscape for Baldwin Hills Village, which had sustained significant damage.—Though Winans returned periodically to advise the management on the landscape maintenance, by the time of the condo conversion plant material had been allowed to become overgrown, and Winans' landscape vision was eventually diminished.²⁸

In the late 1960s he began a 20-year involvement with Heritage Square in Los Angeles, a museum collection of relocated Victorian-era buildings. Its aim, he said, "is to save buildings that would otherwise be destroyed. Eight endangered structures have so far been moved to the site – everything from a railroad depot to a Pasadena church."²⁹

For the last fifteen years of his life, Winans served as landscape architecture consultant for the Development Review Board for the City of Lakewood.³⁰ Merrill Winans died in Los Angeles on July 21, 1994.

Endnotes

1 "Villager of the Month," Robert E. Alexander, The Villager 4, no. 5, (May 1, 1946).

2 Robert E. Alexander, Architecture, planning, and social responsibility, an oral history conducted 1986-87, Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989, tape 3, side 2, October 2, 1986.

3 From the 1942 Cornell alumni magazine.

4 Steen from Steven Keylon.

5 Mock, Built in USA, 119.

6 <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/architects/610/> Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD) copyright 2005-2012 Alan Michelson, accessed February 1, 2012. This information was quoted from Johnson's obituary in Architectural Forum January 1953, 53.

7 Robert Alexander, "Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A., 1882-1952."

8 Robert Alexander, "Reginald Davis Johnson, F.A.I.A., 1882-1952."

9 Letter to F. A. Gutheim, AIA, from Catherine Bauer Wurster and William Wurster, December 15, 1952.

10 Denzer, Gregory Ain, 121.

11 Mock, Built in USA, 120.

12 MacKaye, "Regional Planning," 293-299.

13 <http://www.coping-with-life.com/2009/07/my-great-uncle-wallpaper-hanger.html>

14 <http://cwcfamily.org/articles/family/nthp.htm>

15 Baldwin Hills Village National Historic Landmark Nomination, 30.

16 "Class in Architecture," Los Angeles Times, October 5, 1914, 12

17 The Los Angeles City Directories for 1926 and 1927 list Merrill Winans as draftsman for RD Johnson. Larry Winans has claimed that Merrill worked for Johnson, Kaufmann and Coate, but that partnership was disbanded by 1925, when Merrill was just eighteen, so it seems unlikely.

18 <http://cwcfamily.org/articles/family/nthp.htm>

19 Two-page biography created by Winans' wife Elsie at the time of his death.

20 Elsie Winans' two-page biography; The 1940 census lists Winans as landscape designer, with salary for the year of "0."

21 H. Roy Kelley was the architect Bashford and Barlow collaborated with most frequently in the years 1930-42. Kelley's office was in the Architect's Building in downtown Los Angeles, which also housed the offices of Reginald D. Johnson (Winans worked there in the 1920s) as well as Bashford and Barlow. The landscape for the Tappan Residence shows the influence of Fred Barlow, Jr., in contrast to the post-WWII work Winans is known to have done with an emphasis on tropical and sub-tropical plant species.

22 "A Guide to Contemporary Architecture in Southern California," Frank Harris, Weston David Bonenberger, Watling, 1951, 53. Winans is credited as "Merrill Wynans."

23 Architectural Forum 91 (1949): 98.

24 "Shopping Centers Re-studied: Emerging patterns" James Ross McKeever, Community Builders' Council, Urban Land Institute, 1957, p. 127.

25 <http://www.clca.org/clca/about/history/50.php>

26 Elsie Winans' biography.

27 Elsie Winans' biography.

28 Larry Winans lecture at Village Green, October 21, 2000. Tape recording courtesy Gailyn Saroyan.

29 <http://cwcfamily.org/articles/family/nthp.htm>

30 Elsie Winans' biography.

The Village Green

Cultural Landscape Report Part I

Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis and Evaluation