



L A N D M A R K S  
P R E S E R V A T I O N  
C O M M I S S I O N

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S T A F F R E P O R T

REFERRAL  
FEBRUARY 2, 2023

## 1548 University Avenue

**Demolition Referral: Use Permit #ZP2022-0099 to demolish a commercial building originally completed in 1958, and to construct a new eight-story, mixed-use commercial and residential building (APN: 056-2003-024-01).**

### I. Application Basics

A. Zoning District: Avenue Commercial (C-U)

B. Parties Involved:

- Project Applicant: Isiah Stackhouse  
Trachtenberg Architects  
2421 Fourth Street  
Berkeley, CA
- Evaluator: Page & Turnbull, Inc.  
170 Maiden Lane, 5<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
San Francisco, CA
- Property Owner: 1598 University Avenue, LLC  
2343 Stuart Street  
Berkeley, CA

C. Staff Recommendation: Consider evaluation and take no action.

## II. Background

On February 2, 2022, Use Permit application #ZP2022-0099 was submitted to demolish the buildings at 1548 and 1598 University Avenue, to merge three contiguous parcels, and to construct a new eight-story, mixed-use commercial and residential building with as many as 207 dwelling units.

The Use Permit application is under review by the Zoning Officer and expected to reach the Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) for consideration later this year; see link to plans below.

<https://aca.cityofberkeley.info/citizenaccess/Default.aspx>

Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 23.326.070, any application for a Use Permit to demolish a non-residential building or structure which is 40 or more years old shall be forwarded to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for review prior to consideration of the Use Permit for demolition. Given the lack of a current, City-wide comprehensive historic resource survey, the referral requirement is understood to address the potential for the loss of unidentified significant resources.

When such a demolition request occurs under the provisions of Senate Bill 330<sup>1</sup>, the City would be divested of the ability to impose conditions related to historic resource preservation upon Use Permit approval. Nevertheless, the study of potential significance and the LPC referral shall be completed in accordance with the BMC requirement.

In considering the proposed demolition of a structure, the Commission will weigh the potential to meet the significance criteria for COB Landmarks and Historic Districts in the City's Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3), which are relatively specific and appear to align with the California Register. The Commission will also weigh the potential to meet the broader COB Structure of Merit criteria, which can include structures that are neither individually architecturally distinctive nor associated with significant people or events but may qualify as contributors to identified districts, areas, or clusters. The LPC may initiate a designation or take no action based on the significance criteria, but still forward comments regarding potential project conditions such as relocation, salvage, and/or photographic documentation to the Zoning Adjustments Board for consideration in its action on the application.

## III. Historical Resources

The subject property does not appear on the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, or the State Historic Resources Inventory. It is not adjacent to any City of Berkeley landmark sites. However, the nearest City Landmarks and Structures of Merit include: Fox Commons at 1670-1672 University Avenue (1931, 1940), and Saint Joseph the Workers church and grounds at 1640

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<sup>1</sup> At the time that the Use Permit application was submitted, the subject property was not a locally-designated Landmark site and not subject to BMC Chapter 3.24. If designation status were granted after Use Permit submittal date, then SB 330 would prevent the City from imposing any conditions under BMC 3.24 related to historical resource preservation on the project.



**Figure 3: Subject Property, primary building façade/north elevation** (Page & Turnbull)



#### **IV. Property Description** – see *Attachment 1*

The subject property is an interior lot on the south side of University Avenue, between Sacramento Street (west) and California Street (east). It features a single-story commercial building of approximately 3,600 sq. ft. that covers most of the parcel and is setback from the street by an asphalt parking lot. The building was completed in 1958 and designed by the architecture firm Reynolds & Chamberlain of Oakland.

The historic resource evaluation (HRE) for the subject property includes CA Department of Parks & Recreation Forms 523A and B, prepared by cultural resources consultants Page & Turnbull Inc. Their evaluation of the site and the single-story, wood-frame commercial building are thorough and descriptive of the property and its development history, including a summary of owners and commercial occupants; please refer to Attachment 1 of this report.

#### **V. Evaluation of Significance Criteria**

**Historic Context<sup>2</sup>:** For the purpose of contextualizing and focusing this discussion of potential historical significance, staff concludes that the period of significance for property at 1548 University Avenue would have begun with completion of the main building in 1958 and would have ended in 1983, allowing 40 year for historical maturity in accordance with the City’s standard for historical maturity (BMC Section 23.326.070).

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<sup>2</sup> National Register Bulletin #15, Item V: How to Evaluate a Property within its Historic Context (2002); National Register Bulletin #16A. Section III: How to Complete the National Register Registration – Period of Significance (1997).

Owing to the building's commercial use and location in a commercial corridor district, the subject property is linked, historically, to Berkeley's economic development. This evaluation of the property will consider the various significance criteria within this historical theme.

**Significance Criteria:** The subject property is evaluated based on the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources and the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO/BMC 3.24). The existing building is over 50 years old and, therefore, may be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources. Because it is more than 40 years old, BMC Section 23.326.070 requires that it be evaluated for potential local significance prior to issuance of any demolition entitlement.

In determining the potential significance of this property, Page & Turnbull have analyzed the building's extant features and any associated parties against the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources (CR). To supplement this analysis of the CR, the consultants have also provided an analysis of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), BMC Chapter 3.24, which closely aligns to criteria of the CR. The evaluation concentrates on possible associations with events (CR-1, BMC Sections 3.24.110.A.2 and B.2), persons (CR-2, BMC Section 3.24.110.A.4), architectural design (CR-3, BMC Sections 3.24.110.A.1.a-c and B.2.a and c), and information/education (CR-4, BMC Section 3.24.110.A.3). The result of Page & Turnbull's and staff's evaluation is discussed below.

#### Events – CR Criterion 1/BMC Criterion for *Historical Value*

The consultant's research did not reveal that the subject property is linked to any singular event of historical importance to Berkeley or its economic development. Although it was the result of a pattern of commercial development along a central Berkeley corridor that connected Downtown to the I-80 highway and the bay, it has not played a far-reaching or important role in this historical pattern. The property, therefore, was not found to hold historical significance to the City.

#### Persons – CR Criterion 2/BMC Criterion *Cultural Value*

None of the individuals or commercial enterprises that owned or occupied the site were found to have made notable or lasting contributions to their field. This property has not contributed to the movement or evolution of culture in Berkeley and, therefore, does not exhibit cultural significance.

#### Design – CR Criterion 3/BMC Criteria *Architectural Merit*

The subject building was designed by the local architecture firm Reynolds & Chamberlain, whose commissions in the 1950s and 1960s included several larger, institutional projects on the UC campus and in the City of Oakland. However, it features an unmarkable, utilitarian style with no particular artistic expression or value. Its design is not comparable to the qualities of Berkeley's mid-century Landmark buildings or to the style of the nearby Storybook buildings at Fox Court and Fox Commons (1472 and 1670 University Avenue, respectively).

The property was not found to be the first/last/only property of its type in Berkeley, or the notable work of a designer, or to have exceptional value in its neighborhood context. Staff concurs with these findings and concludes that the 1958 building does not exhibit architectural merit.

Information – CR Criterion 4/BMC Criterion *Educational Force*

The evaluation of this property was limited to above ground and did not involve survey or evaluation of the subject property for the purposes of archaeological information. Moreover, there have been no recent CA Historical Resource Information System investigations for this parcel or its environs, but previous research concluded that it is not likely to yield archeological information.

LPO/BMC Criteria for *Structure of Merit*

As a potential Structure of Merit (BMC Section 3.24.110.B, Paragraph 2), the subject building does not appear to be worthy of preservation as part of a neighborhood, a block, or a street frontage, or a group of buildings which include City Landmarks because it is:

- Not the same age as the nearest City Landmark buildings;
- Cannot serve as good of architectural design;
- Not comparable to the type/use, design or style of the nearby Landmarks; and
- Not associated with events that are historically significant to the City of Berkeley.

For all of these reasons, Page & Turnbull and staff conclude that the property is not eligible for state or local register listing.

## VI. Recommendation

1. **Take No Action.** Staff recommends that the Commission consider the extent to which the buildings meet (or do not meet) the criteria for designation as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit, and then **Take No Action** to initiate it for consideration.

**Attachment:**

1. CA Dept. of Parks & Recreation Forms 523A and B for 1548 University Avenue, prepared by Page & Turnbull, Inc., dated May 2, 2022.

**Prepared by:** Fatema Cane, Principal Planner, fcrane@cityofberkeley.info, (510) 981-7410

State of California — The Resources Agency DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION <b>PRIMARY RECORD</b>	Primary # _____
	HRI # _____
	Trinomial _____
	NRHP Status Code <u>6Z</u>
Other Listings _____	
Review Code _____	Reviewer _____
	Date _____

Page 1 of 11 Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 1548 University Avenue

**P1. Other Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted **\*a. County** Alameda  
**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad** Oakland West **Date** 2018  
**\*c. Address** 1548 University Avenue **City** Berkeley **Zip** 94703  
**\*e. Other Locational Data:** Assessor's Parcel Number 56-2003-24-1

**\*P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)  
 The parcel at 1548 University Avenue (APN 56-2003-24-1) is rectangular in shape and is located to the west of downtown Berkeley at the south side of University Avenue between Sacramento and California streets (**Figure 1**). The parcel contains a surface level parking lot at the north of the parcel at its University Avenue frontage and has a one-story building with a rectilinear footprint at the rear (south) of the parcel. A small rear yard is located behind the building at the south property line of the parcel. Originally built in 1958 as an automobile sales and part sales store, the building was designed by Reynolds & Chamberlain and constructed by local builder Gerard M. Fisher for Edwin "Eddie" Neff.

The one-story building is built to its east and west lot lines and is constructed of concrete masonry units. It features a flat roof with a painted, metal-clad rectangular canopy which extends out at approximately ceiling height at the primary (north) façade. The length of the primary (north) façade is recessed slightly between the building's side walls, which extend as piers at the east and west ends of the primary façade. The painted concrete masonry units of the primary façade are sized and proportioned similar to a large Norman brick. Openings at the primary façade include a single leaf metal utility door near the east end of the façade, a large arrangement of fixed glazing around paired fully glazed metal frame doors at the center of the façade, and a single-leaf fully glazed metal frame door with a side light and transom at the west end of the façade (**Figure 2 and Figure 3**). The central arrangement of fixed windows consists of eight windows arranged two-by-two to either side of the central paired doors, while paired jalousie windows are located over the doors.

The east and west facades of the building consist of painted concrete masonry units with no openings (**Figure 4 and Figure 5**). Both facades are visible from adjacent parcels. (Refer to Continuation Sheet, page 2)

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** (list attributes and codes) HP6. 1-3 story commercial building

**\*P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other



**P5b. Photo:** (view and date)  
View of the primary façade, looking southeast, April 13, 2022

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**  historic  
1958 (original building permit)

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**  
Nathan D. George  
9101 Burning Tree Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

**\*P8. Recorded by:**  
Page & Turnbull, Inc.  
170 Maiden Lane, 5<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
San Francisco, CA 94010

**\*P9. Date Recorded:**  
May 2, 2022

**\*P10. Survey Type:** Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none") None

**\*Attachments:**  None  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (list)

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Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1548 University Avenue

\*Recorded by Page & Turnbull, Inc.

\*Date May 2, 2022  Continuation  Update

**\*P3a. Description (continued):**

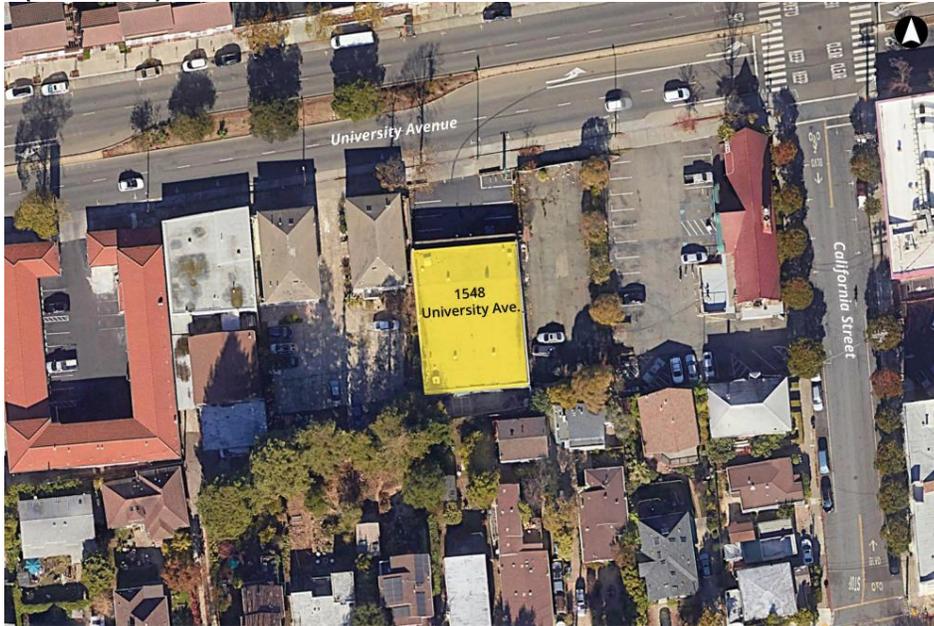


Figure 1. Location of 1548 University Avenue, subject building highlighted yellow.  
Source: Google Earth, 2020, edited by Page & Turnbull.



Figure 2: Detail of primary (north) façade. Looking southeast.



Figure 3: Detail of west end of primary (north) façade. Looking south.



Figure 4: East façade of the subject building. Looking west from adjacent parcel.



Figure 5: West façade of the subject building. Looking slightly northeast from the adjacent parcel.

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The rear of the subject building consists of an undecorated, painted concrete masonry wall with two single-leaf metal doors, one near the west end of the rear façade and one near the east end (**Figure 6**). The rear yard has a poured concrete floor and a low concrete wall at the south property line. The south and west sides of the yard are enclosed with a wood fence, and the east side has a metal chain-link fence with a metal gate.



**Figure 6: Rear (south) façade of subject building and rear yard. Looking east.**

The surrounding area contains a mixture of multi-family residential buildings, commercial buildings including retail and restaurants, as well as motels and a gas station. Buildings within the surrounding blocks include early to mid-twentieth century residential properties and commercial buildings (**Figure 7 to Figure 10**). Further to the west of the subject building, around Sacramento Street, contemporary multi-family housing has been developed in recent decades.



**Figure 7: Group of commercial buildings at the northeast corner of University Avenue and California Street. Looking north.**



**Figure 8: Multi-family residential and commercial uses at the north side of University between California and Sacramento streets. Looking north.**

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Figure 9: View looking northwest along University Avenue from California Street.



Figure 10: Commercial building at the southeast corner of University Avenue and California Street.

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**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

Page 5 of 11 Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI# \_\_\_\_\_  
\*NRHP Status Code 6Z

\*Resource Name or # 1548 University Avenue

B1. Historic name: 1548 University Avenue  
B2. Common name: 1548 University Avenue  
B3. Original Use: Commercial  
B4. Present use: Commercial

\*B5. Architectural Style: Utilitarian

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

Originally built in 1958 in a utilitarian style, the building was constructed as an automobile sales and part sales store. Reynolds & Chamberlain were the architects and Gerard M. Fisher was the builder. The owner of the property was Edwin "Eddie" Neff. Few alterations have been made to the building since its construction in 1958.  
(See Continuation Sheet, page 6)

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: No \_\_\_\_\_ B9a. Architect: Reynolds & Chamberlain b. Builder: Gerard M. Fisher

\*B10. Significance: Theme N/A Area N/A  
Period of Significance N/A Property Type N/A Applicable Criteria N/A

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

Historic Context – City of Berkeley

Early Twentieth Century History of Berkeley

During the early twentieth century, particularly in the years between the 1906 Earthquake and the Great Depression, both the University of California and the town of Berkeley grew rapidly. After 1906, Berkeley became one of the largest cities in California, mostly as the result of an influx of as many as 20,000 San Francisco earthquake refugees. The construction of the Key System of ferryboats and streetcars made transportation between Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco quick and affordable and spurred the development of numerous residential tracts in Berkeley and Oakland. In turn, this growth brought in more customers and thereby spurred intensive commercial development in downtown Berkeley.<sup>1</sup>

During the first decade of the twentieth century, downtown Berkeley evolved from a district of low-rise, wood-frame buildings into a substantial urban district, with numerous large masonry buildings and stately public facilities. The City Beautiful movement inspired local architects, and many buildings constructed during this era exhibited neoclassical design.

Meanwhile, the growth of the University of California under the patronage of influential people like University President Benjamin Ide Wheeler and donor Phoebe Apperson Hearst also encouraged the physical development of the city, as well as the growth of its identity and local culture. This period saw Berkeley begin to develop its reputation for progressiveness, unconventionality, and bohemianism – traits that were reflected in its architecture, especially the new First Bay Region-style houses built throughout the area that were designed by the likes of Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, and John Galen Howard.<sup>2</sup>

(Refer to Continuation Sheet, page 7)

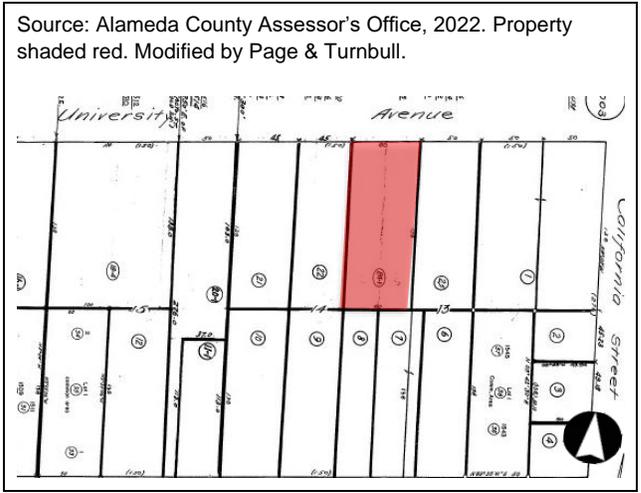
B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes)

\*B12. References: Refer to Page 11

B13. Remarks: None

\*B14. Evaluator: Page & Turnbull, Inc.

\*Date of Evaluation: May 2, 2022



(This space reserved for official comments.)

<sup>1</sup> Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, *Berkeley Landmarks: An Illustrated Guide to Berkeley California's Architectural Heritage* (Berkeley: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1994), 64.  
<sup>2</sup> Charles Wollenberg, *Berkeley, A City in History*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), 78.

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**\*B6. Construction History (continued):**

Known alterations to the subject building that are documented by permits on file at the City of Berkeley Building and Safety Division are listed in **Table 1** (below).

Table 1: Alterations to 1548 University Avenue				
Permit #	Date	Owner	Builder/Contractor	Description
84010	2/19/1958	Eddie Neff	Reynolds & Chamberlain (architect); Gerard M. Fisher (builder)	Construct a one-story, one-room building to be used as a store. Constructed with concrete footing and foundations, concrete block walls, and a tar and gravel roof. Cost \$27,000.
86608	2/26/1959	Collyear Motor Sales	Electric Sign Repair	Install 6" steel pole and porcelain enamel double face sign.
98597	8/29/1963	F. Wilson, T&J Auto Parts	Ace Electric Co.	Install illuminated arrow sign atop the existing sign board.
	8/18/1969	Marie Plunkett (applicant)	Not applicable	Change of use from vacant (former T&J Motors and Mechanical Shop) to a Repair Shop.
115861	2/20/1970	University Sport Cycles	H. Hobson	Repaint face of existing ground sign.
	11/17/1971	Frank Crane (applicant)	Not applicable	Change of use to from a Motorcycle Shop to a Motorcycle sales and repair use (granted) – NOTE - previous use described as an automobile parts establishment
0401808151	3/31/1980	Berkeley Yamaha (lease)	Not listed	Erect one ground sign
0701823570	7/1/1982	Dorothy Neff (owner); Berkeley Yamaha (lessee/applicant)	Not listed	Change of copy on existing ground sign to Yamaha / Motorcycles – Snowmobiles – Race Carts
0729875029	7/29/1987	Woodsmith (lessee)	Not listed	Erect non-bearing wall within existing retail unit for storage area.
UP A2144	7/22/1993	Andrew Katz (applicant)	Not applicable	Change in use to establish a video rental/sales business.
ZP2016-0167	9/7/2016	Vernon Neff	Not applicable	Change of use from retail (video rental) to group class instruction (Han-Wen School)

Documented alterations are largely limited to changes to the freestanding ground sign on the parcel and permits for the changing use of the property. The available permits do not include details of changes to the exterior of the building. Alterations that were identified through visual observation include changes to the size of the opening at the east end of the primary façade. Changes in the coursing and pattern of the concrete masonry units of the primary (north) façade show that the opening containing the metal door at the east end of the façade was previously slightly wider (to the west); this is supported by photographs of the building in 2011.<sup>3</sup> The existing single-leaf fully glazed metal frame door at the west end of the façade was installed circa 2017 (**Figure 11**).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> An April 2011 photograph of the subject building provides a clear view of the primary façade and shows a slightly wider door at the east end of the primary façade. Google Maps, Street View.  
<sup>4</sup> Photographs of the subject building in December 2016 and June 2017. Google Maps, Street View.

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**Figure 11: Photograph of the subject building in 2016. Source: Project Application ZP2016-0167. On file with the City of Berkeley Building and Safety Division.**

**\*B10. Significance (continued):**

Historic Context – City of Berkeley

*Early Twentieth Century History of Berkeley (continued)*

Commercial and civic development continued through the 1920s in downtown Berkeley, with construction of several new downtown buildings including the city's first "skyscraper" – the twelve-story Chamber of Commerce (now Wells Fargo) building at the northwest corner of Shattuck Avenue and Center Street, designed by Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. in 1925. Located to the west of the downtown core, the vicinity of the subject property was served by public transit from the first decade of the twentieth century, with a rail service on University Avenue running between Shattuck and the Southern Pacific line at the city's western bay shore.<sup>5</sup> The blocks between downtown Berkeley and the campus and the more industrial developments around San Pablo Avenue nearer to San Francisco Bay, filled slowly during this time, with relatively sparse commercial and residential development along University Avenue between Grove Street (now Martin Luther King Jr. Way) and San Pablo Avenue through the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>6</sup>

*The Great Depression and World War II*

During the Great Depression, Berkeley's suffering was somewhat minimized by the presence of the University, which continued to provide employment for many citizens, although working-class neighborhoods in West Berkeley experienced more economic strain.

World War II brought a tremendous population boom to the entire Bay Area, and Berkeley was no exception. Wartime housing projects to accommodate military personnel were constructed in Berkeley, and facilities at the University itself were commandeered for military use. Civilian numbers also grew as people relocated to Berkeley for employment at local shipyards like the Moore Drydock on the Oakland Estuary and the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond. Transportation lines and other infrastructure in Berkeley expanded to make these workers' commutes easier.

*Post-World War II*

After the war, Berkeley experienced the same out-migration as many other large cities in the country, as families moved to the suburbs to take advantage of G.I. home loans and the increased ease of commuting by automobile. This led to a shift in the demographics of Berkeley, where larger working-class populations developed. G.I. benefits also resulted in soaring enrollment at the University of California, which meant that students flooded available housing around the campus. The large houses that had previously been subdivided to accommodate war workers were well-suited to housing students. In the early 1950s, the blocks surrounding the subject building were occupied by commercial, institutional, and residential uses, much like today. The development of University Avenue through the mid-twentieth century was decidedly auto-focused, as automobile service stations were located on three of the four corners at Sacramento and California Streets (**Figure 12**)<sup>7</sup>

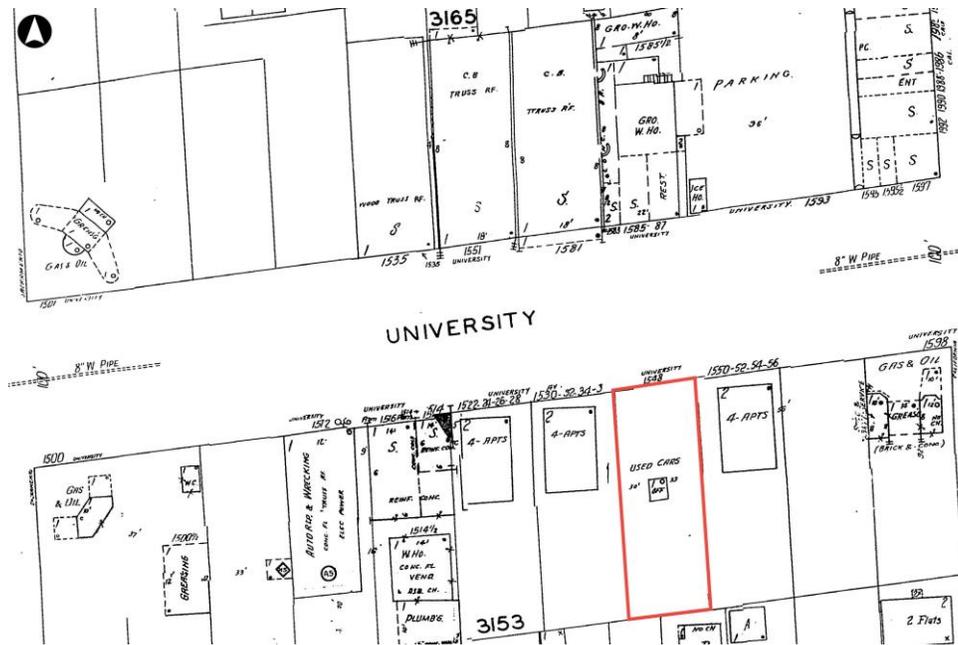
<sup>5</sup> C. L. Huggins, Berkeley, California (map) (Berkeley, 1904) David Rumsey Map Collection, electronic resource at <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/7s77tm>, accessed April 26, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Sanborn Map Company maps for Berkeley, California, Sheets 65-71, 1911.

<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Map Company maps for Berkeley, California, Sheet 51, 1950.

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Table 2. Occupancy History, Commercial Businesses at 1548 University Avenue	
Year(s) of Occupancy	Business Name
1958-1963	Collyear Motor Sales
ca.1963-1969	T&J Auto Parts
1970-1972	University Sport Cycles
1973-1985	Berkeley Yamaha <sup>12</sup>
1987-1993	The Woodsmith Store
1994	No business listed in directory
1995-2016	Five Star Video
2016-Present	Han-Wen School

**Reynolds & Chamberlain, Architects**

The architecture firm of Reynolds & Chamberlain consisted of Malcom Dames Reynolds (1906-1995) and Loy Chamberlain (1909-1997).<sup>13</sup> Both studied architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, Reynolds between 1928 and 1930, and Chamberlain between 1929 and 1932.<sup>14</sup> Based in Oakland, the firm’s Berkeley projects included 1948 renovations to Minor Hall (formerly Durant Hall) to accommodate the University of California, Berkeley’s Optometry School and design of the Low Temperature Laboratory, now Giaouque Hall, completed on the Berkeley campus in 1954.<sup>15</sup>

Other projects by the firm included single family homes, a 216-unit residential development in Concord with architects Anshen & Narbelt, a 1948 addition to the American Trust Company Bank Building in Oakland, Oakland Parks and Recreation Department Golden Gate Recreation Center, and several schools in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.<sup>16</sup> Reynolds & Chamberlain later collaborated with other firms on large projects such as the 1967 campus plan for Merritt College with Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons, the 1968 Oakland Museum with Roche and Dinkeloo, and the 1973 Oakland Coliseum BART Station with Neill Smith.<sup>17</sup> Both architects were active in the East Bay Chapter of the American Institute of Architects during their careers.

**Evaluation**

**California Register Evaluation**

The property at 1548 University Avenue is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) or the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). The building does not appear in the most recent version available of the State of California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD), issued March 2020, indicating that no record of a previous survey or evaluation is on file at an information center of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS).<sup>18</sup> The subject building is not listed as a City of Berkeley Landmark or Structure of Merit.

*Criterion 1 (Events)*

1548 University Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 (Events) for its association with any events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States. The subject building was constructed in 1958 as a commercial building for use by an automotive sales business at a time when automotive ownership and use in California was commonplace. This business was not associated with the early twentieth century development of automotive businesses in Berkeley. No significant events are known to have taken place at the subject building that would allow the building to rise to the level of significance necessary to be individually eligible for the California Register.

*Criterion 2 (Persons)*

1548 University Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 2 (Persons). The subject building was constructed for owner Eddie Neff as a simple commercial retail building to be leased to commercial tenants. Neither the Neff family nor the tenant occupants of the subject building appear to have made significant contributions to the social and economic history of Berkeley, and little additional information was found regarding their personal achievements as they would relate to the subject property. None of the known businesses at 1548 University Avenue were found to have made a significant impact on local, state, or national history such that the building could be found significant under Criterion 2.

<sup>12</sup> “Notice of Bulk Transfer,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, October 1, 1974; “Berkeley Yamaha” [advertisement], *North East Bay Independent and Gazette*, October 25, 1978

<sup>13</sup> Pacific Coast Architectural Database, “Reynolds & Chamberlain,” electronic document at <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/firm/2062/>, accessed November 20, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> “Malcolm D. Reynolds,” [obituary], *San Francisco Examiner*, August 1, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> *Architect & Engineer*, March 1948, 46; April 1950, 47;.

<sup>16</sup> *Architect & Engineer*, September 1941, 21, 23 ;May 1945, 8; January 1948, 47; March 1953, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *The Architectural Index*, 1967, 18; William H. Liskamm, “BART,” *The Architectural Forum*, April 1973, 47.

<sup>18</sup> California State Office of Historic Preservation, Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD), Alameda County, updated March 2020.

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*Criterion 3 (Architecture)*

1548 University Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 3 (Architecture) as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Completed in 1958, designed by architects Reynolds & Chamberlain and erected by builder Gerard M. Fisher, the building is a utilitarian, box-like concrete masonry unit structure designed to accommodate commercial occupants. While modern in its materials and rectilinear simplicity, 1548 University Avenue lacks the architectural interest of contemporaneous modern buildings in Berkeley such as the Harold E. Jones Child Study Center at 2425 Atherton Street, designed by Joseph Esherick in 1958. The building does not appear significant for its association with architect Reynolds & Chamberlain. While active in civic and institutional projects through the middle decades of the twentieth century, this firm do not appear to have produced a noteworthy body of work or been influential in the field of architecture overall. The property does not appear to be eligible as a contributor to a historic district, but the evaluation of a potential district is outside the scope of this report.

*Criterion 4 (Information Potential)*

1548 University Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 4 (Information Potential). The "potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of California" typically relates to archeological resources, rather than built resources. When California Register Criterion 4 (Information Potential) does relate to built resources, it is relevant for cases when the buildings themselves are the principal source of important construction-related information. The subject property does not appear to be individually significant under Criterion 4 as a building that has the potential to provide information important to the prehistory or history of the City of Berkeley, the state, or the nation. It does not appear to feature construction or material types, or embody engineering practices that would, with additional study, provide important information. Identification or evaluation of archaeological resources is beyond the scope of this study.

**City of Berkeley Landmark and Structure of Merit Evaluation**

The City of Berkeley maintains a list of properties designated as local Landmarks and Structures of Merit under Chapter 3.24 of the Berkeley Municipal Code. Much like the National and California Registers, the Municipal Code provides criteria that must be met in order for a property to gain Landmark or Structure of Merit designation. Properties may be landmarked if they meet standards of architectural, cultural, educational, or historical significance, or if they are already listed in the National Register. A property may be designated as a Structure of Merit if it does not rise to the level of Landmark status, but has contextual importance and is worthy of preservation as part of a neighborhood, block or street frontage, or group of buildings that includes Landmark properties.

The subject property at 1548 University Avenue does not appear to be eligible as a City of Berkeley Landmark. The subject building is a somewhat utilitarian mid-twentieth-century commercial building that was constructed for use as a store in 1958 and has been altered minimally with use by subsequent tenants. The building is not an early or rare example of its type within the City of Berkeley and therefore does not demonstrate architectural merit such that it would qualify as a landmark. It does not provide architectural value to the surrounding neighborhood, which is characterized by a mixture of commercial and multi-family residential buildings of varied construction dates and architectural styles. 1548 University Avenue was used for automotive and motorcycle retail and repair businesses during a time when the automobile use was already a regular part of urban life, and as such the building would not be eligible as a landmark for its cultural value. 1548 University Avenue does not appear to be eligible as a landmark for its educational value. The subject building does not bear significant historic associations for it to contribute meaningfully to educational curricula. The building also does not appear to be eligible for its historic value as its type and style do not embody the history of Berkeley or the state. Additionally, the subject building is not listed on the National Register.

The subject building does not appear to have contextual importance as part of a neighborhood, block, or street frontage, as the character of University Avenue between Sacramento and California streets lacks visual, architectural, or historic distinctiveness or significance in its mixture of commercial and multi-family residential buildings dating between ca. 1929 and 2007. Therefore, 1548 University Avenue is not eligible as a City of Berkeley Structure of Merit.

**Conclusion**

The commercial building at 1548 University Avenue, Berkeley, California, was designed by architects Reynolds & Chamberlain and completed in 1958 for owner Eddie Neff. The building was used for automotive parts and motorcycle sales from its construction until the mid-1980s, after which it was occupied by a woodworking tools retail store, video rental store, and after-school education provider. This evaluation is based on a site visit and analysis of available documentation pertaining to the subject building's ownership and occupant history, chronology of construction and alterations, and architectural characteristics. The subject property is not eligible for individual listing in the California Register under any criterion, nor is the subject property eligible for designation as a City of Berkeley Landmark or Structure of Merit. The property does not therefore appear to qualify as a historic resource for the purposes of review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As such, the California Historical Resource Status

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Code (CHRSC) of "6Z" has been assigned to the building, meaning that it was "Found ineligible for NR, CR or Local designation through survey evaluation."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> California State Office of Historic Preservation Department of Parks and Recreation, *Technical Assistance Bulletin #8: User's Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historical Resource Inventory Directory*, Sacramento, November 2004.