



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

S T A F F R E P O R T

REFERRAL
OCTOBER 5, 2023

2420 Shattuck Avenue

Demolition Referral: Use Permit (#ZP2022-0149) to demolish an existing one-and-two-story commercial building, originally constructed in 1940 and subsequently altered (APN: 55-1896-3).

I. Application Basics

A. Zoning District: Commercial Downtown Mixed-Use (C-DMU) Zoning District

B. Parties Involved:

- **Project Applicant** Isaiah Stackhouse
Trachtenberg Architects, Inc.
2421 Fourth Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
- **Evaluator** Page & Turnbull, Inc.
170 Maiden Lane, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94010
- **Property Owner** 2420 Shattuck Avenue, LLC
9101 Burning Tree Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

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

II. Background

On October 28, 2022, the applicant submitted a Use Permit application to demolish a one-story commercial building located at 2420 Shattuck Avenue [APN 55-1896-3], and construct a new, 17-story, mixed-use building with 132 dwelling units above ground floor lobby and commercial space. The application is eligible for streamlined review per Senate Bill 330.

The Use Permit application #ZP2022-0149 is under review by the Zoning Officer and the project is not yet tentatively scheduled for Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) consideration; see link to plans below.

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

Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) 23.326.070.C, 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 330¹, 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.

¹ 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.

III. Historical Resources

The subject building does not appear on the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources or the State Historic Resources Inventory.

The subject property is not adjacent to any City of Berkeley landmark sites. The nearest City of Berkeley Landmarks/Structures of Merit are the Morrill Apartments constructed in 1911, located across the street at 2429 Shattuck Avenue, and the Barker Building constructed in 1905, located one block south of the project site at 2484 Shattuck Avenue (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Vicinity Map showing nearby historic resources (City of Berkeley GIS, 2023)

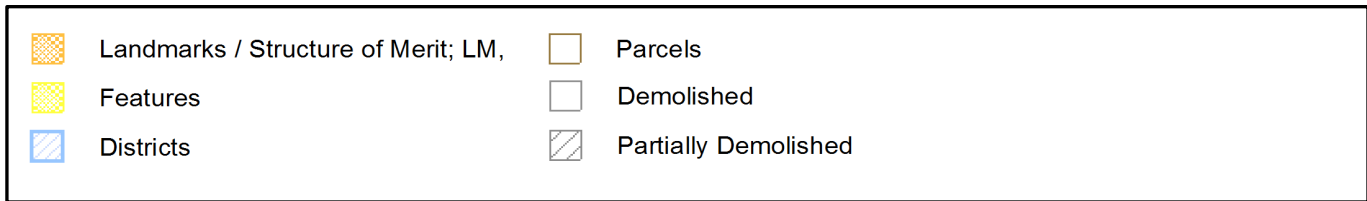
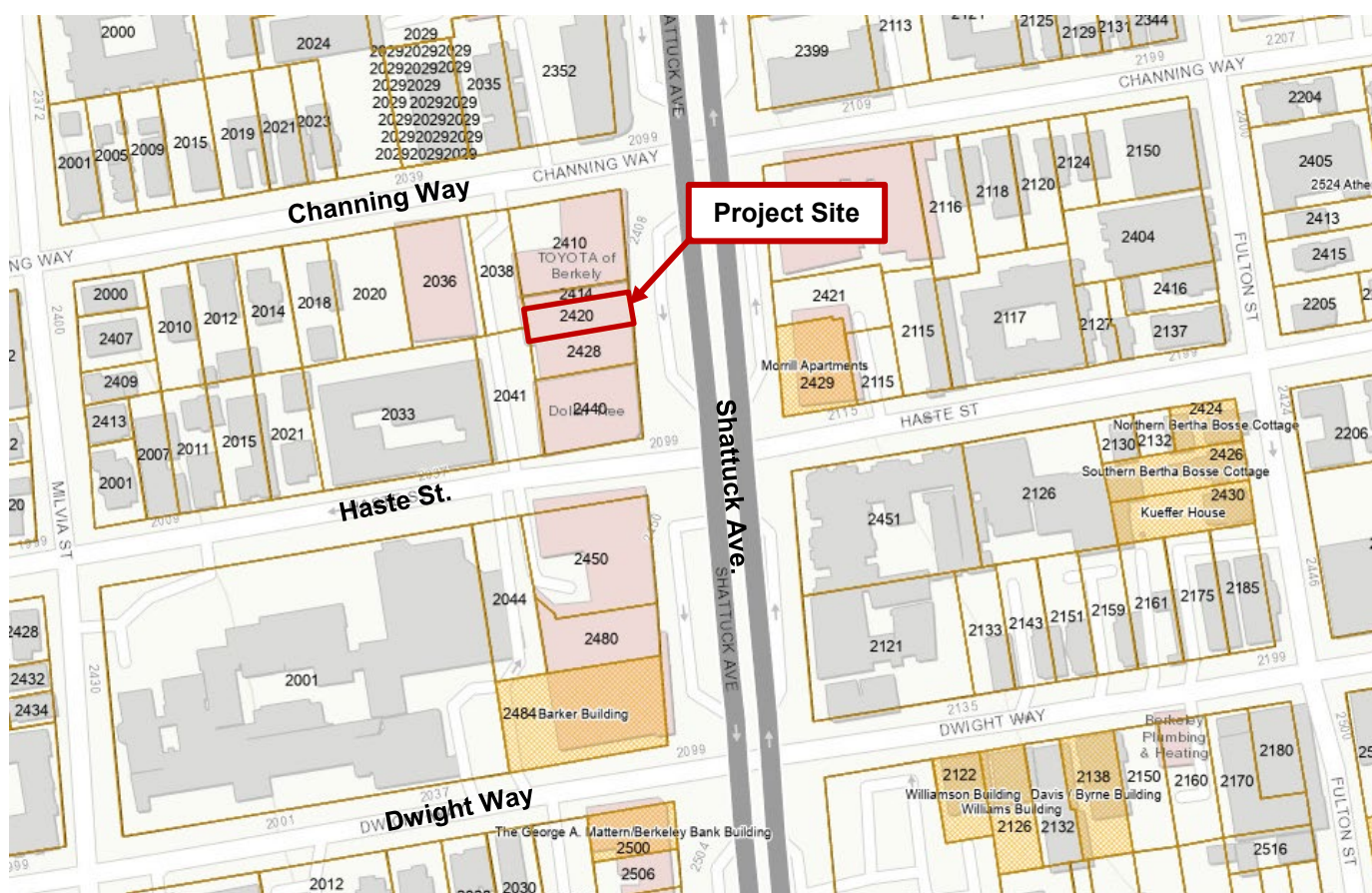


Figure 2: Subject Property, historical image c. 1952 (Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association [via Page & Turnbull, 2022])

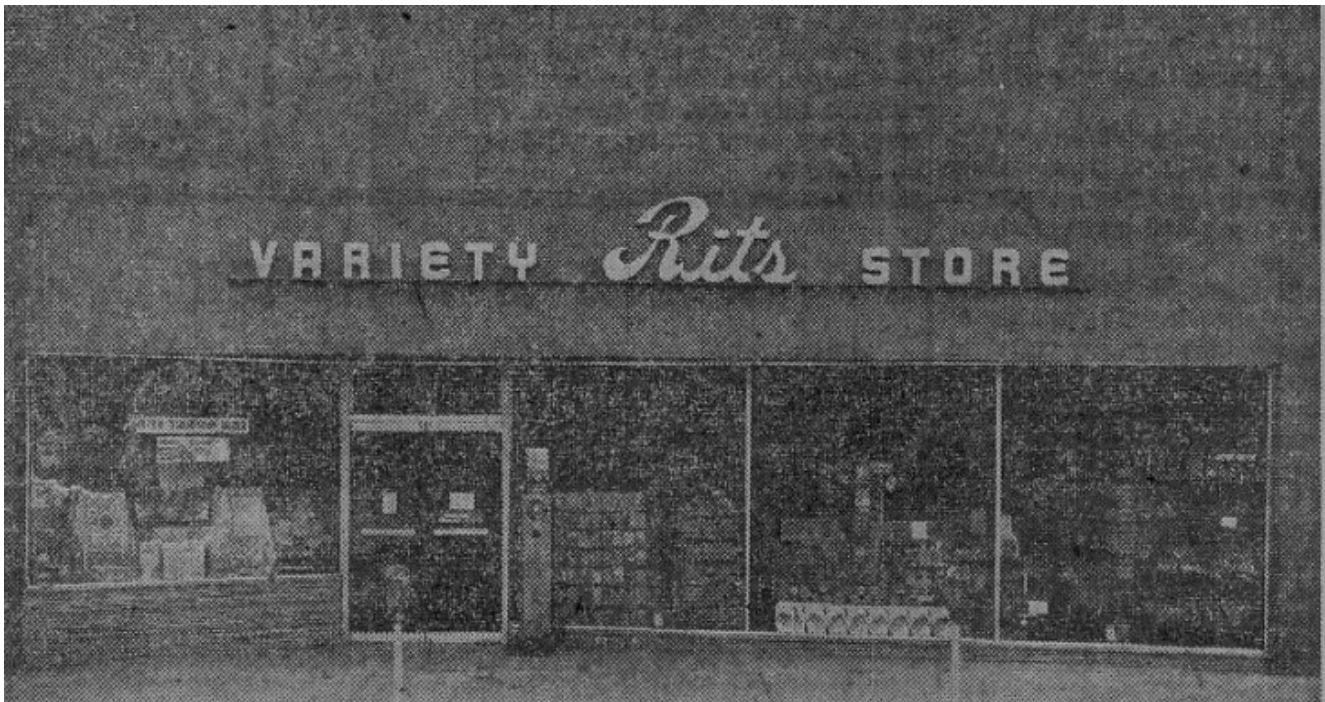


Figure 3: Subject Property, current site conditions (Page & Turnbull, 2022)



IV. Property Description

The historic resource evaluation (HRE) for the subject property, which consists of a historic evaluation report and a CA Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) Form 523 (A/B/L) was completed by Page & Turnbull, Inc. on December 21, 2022; please see Attachment 1 of this report. The following description derives from the information contained in the HRE, visual observation, as well as the City's land use archives and building permit records.

Parcel Description: The subject property is a mid-block parcel located on the west side of Shattuck Avenue, south of Channing Way and north of Haste Street, in the southern portion of Downtown Berkeley. The parcel south of the project site at the northwest corner of Shattuck Avenue and Haste Street is currently a vacant lot (prior building demolished in 2022) which has been approved for redevelopment with a new eight-story mixed use building with 40 dwelling units. Adjoining the property at the south is single-story one-part commercial block building designed by the same architect (James W. Plachek), which is included as part of the redevelopment project that will encompass 2420 – 2428 Shattuck Avenue. (The Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed a demolition referral for the 2428 Shattuck building at its August 3, 2023, meeting, and took no action towards initiating the property.) The corner parcel at the southwest corner of Shattuck Avenue and Channing Way, to the north of the sites proposed for redevelopment, is a single-story car dealership occupied by Toyota of Berkeley.

Building Description: The subject property is developed with a one-part block commercial building originally designed by one of Berkeley's master architects James W. Plachek. The structure, completed in 1940, covers the parcel with no setbacks from the front or side property lines. The building is constructed primarily of concrete and clad in painted, textured stucco. The primary/front (east) façade features a recessed, arched, offset entry doorway flanked on either side by two folding divided-light window fixtures (non-original), and an emergency exit door at the north end. The façade has a one-and-a-half story appearance due to a false parapet, and is clad in painted, textured stucco, with a flat roofline and concrete cornice line embellished with dentils. The north and south facades are not visible as they directly abut the adjoining buildings, and the west (rear) façade includes one-and-two-story additions made of concrete masonry block.

Early Site History & Parcel Development: The subject property was developed with the single-story building on site in 1940, capping the end of a period of commercial growth in downtown Berkeley. The building was designed by architect James W. Plachek, and built by contractor Willis F. Lynn for property owner Basil K. Denbigh. The typical single-tenant store was first occupied by an appliance store, followed by a series of retail, automotive, and restaurant tenants over its 80+ year history. Numerous tenant improvements over time altered the exterior facades of the property.

Known alterations to the property since its 1940 completion include:

- A major façade redesign in 1949 including new storefronts, bulkheads, and plate glass doors.
- A second façade renovation in 1962 replacing the non-original storefronts with garage doors for an auto service use
- A third façade renovation in 1967 for a long-running restaurant tenant, which included raising the primary façade to create a false second-story front
- Minor façade modifications in 2016 to remove decorative façade elements and faux second-story windows.

Documentation was not uncovered to exhibit the original appearance of the Plachek-design storefront. The first known historic photograph dates to 1952 (Figure 2), after the storefront had undergone a wholesale redesign.

V. Evaluation of Significance Criteria

Historic Context²: For the purpose of contextualizing and focusing this discussion of potential historical significance, staff concludes that the period of *potential* significance for the building at 2420 Shattuck Avenue would have been 1940, the year of its original construction. However, since the building is not identified as significant, no period of significance applies.

Owing to the subject building's commercial use and location in a commercial corridor district, this property is linked to a historic context that is best defined as economic development. Additionally, the property could potentially be significant due to its association with notable architect James W. Plachek. This evaluation of the property's historical significance therefore analyzes the significance criteria within the themes of economic development and architectural merit.

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 they are more than 40 years old, BMC Section 23C.08.050 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, Inc., has analyzed the building's extant features and any associated parties against the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources (CR) and 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-

² 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).

4, BMC Section 3.24.110.A.3). The conclusion of Page & Turnbull's and staff's evaluations is discussed below.

CR and BMC Criteria:

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

The HRE concludes that 2420 Shattuck Avenue does not meet CR Criterion 1 because it was not found to be associated with events which made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States. In terms of historic context, development of the property would fall under the theme of economic development in downtown Berkeley. However, a study of its development history, ownership and occupancy records revealed no information linking this site to any events or singular episode of primary importance to Berkeley's history. It does not exhibit historical significance under the local or state criteria.

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

The HRE concludes that 2420 Shattuck Avenue does not meet CR Criterion 2 because no persons associated with the property are of identifiable historical importance. With respect to significant persons and cultural value, the consultant's research did not uncover information that suggests any of the owners or enterprises that occupied the site made a significant or lasting contribution to history or commercial development. Similar to the assessment of historical events, the individuals were not found or known to have been particularly accomplished within their fields or endeavors. Consistent with guidance from National Register Bulletin #32, the property's association with Plachek as the architect is evaluated under Criterion 3 for design/architectural merit below. 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 for *Architectural Merit*

The subject building was originally designed in 1940 by architect James W. Plachek. Plachek can be considered a local master architect of great importance for his contributions to the development of the City of Berkeley's built environment. Plachek is the architect of numerous prominent civic buildings including: Alameda County Courthouse (co-designer), City Hall Annex, the North Branch Berkeley Public Library, John Muir School, and others. Seventeen buildings designed by Plachek are listed as City of Berkeley Landmarks.

While association with Plachek as the architect of the building could potentially lend architectural significance to the property, the existing building on site has been repeatedly significantly altered and no longer retains integrity from its period of significance (1940). The street-facing façade has undergone significant alterations since the building's construction, as documented in the permit record and available photographs, and no longer retains its original Plachek design. The current design does not possess high artistic value or notable design quality. Owing to its lack of distinction, this property does not warrant consideration for local register designation for 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. Further, there have been no recent CA Historical Resource Information System investigation for this parcel or its environs, but previous research concluded that it is not likely to yield archeological information.

National Register – BMC Criterion *National Register*

The subject property is not listed on the National Register and therefore does not satisfy this criterion.

LPO Criteria:

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;
- Not an example of 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 building is not eligible for national, 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.

Attachments:

1. California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) Primary Record Form 523A/B/L, prepared by Page & Turnbull, dated December 21, 2022.

Prepared by: Reina Kapadia, AICP, Senior Planner; rkapadia@berkeleyca.gov, (510) 981-7485

Reviewed by: Fatema Crane, Principal Planner/LPC Secretary; fcrane@berkeleyca.gov, (510) 981-7410

F120State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code 6Z

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

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Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 2420 Shattuck Avenue

P1. Other Identifier: _____

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted
*a. County Alameda
*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Oakland West Date 2022
*c. Address 2420 Shattuck Avenue City Berkeley Zip 94704
*e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number 55-1896-3

*P3a. **Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)
The parcel at 2420 Shattuck Avenue (APN 55-1896-3) contains a one-story concrete building with a rectangular footprint covering the east half of the parcel, with a one-story and a two-story concrete masonry unit addition built to its immediate west. The building is located south of downtown Berkeley on the west side of Shattuck Avenue (**Figure 1**). Originally built in 1940, the building was designed by architect James W. Plachek and constructed by contractor Willis F. Lynn for property owner Basil K. Denbigh. Most recently the building was occupied by a restaurant, and is currently being used as a temporary construction office for nearby redevelopment. While the building features some elements typical of early 20th century commercial storefronts and neoclassical details, the building does not currently adhere to any particular architectural style. Documentation of the original appearance of the building was not found.

The one-story building is built to its east lot line, includes a one-story and a two-story CMU addition to the rear at its west façade, and is constructed primarily of concrete. The east façade is clad with painted textured stucco and features a flat roof, false parapet, and painted concrete cornice with dentils. The first story features two folding divided-lite window fixtures with fixed lower lites and arched upper lites flanking the primary entrance and an emergency exit at the north end of the west façade (**Figure 2 and Figure 3**). The primary entrance is slightly offset to the north side of the east façade and features two wood doors recessed within an arched opening, with black and white mosaic tile flooring featuring the previous tenant's name (**Figure 4 and Figure 5**). Gold lettering featuring the former tenant's name is centered over the south window fixture a small vertical neon sign (**Figure 6 and Figure 7**). The north and south façades of the subject building are immediately adjacent to the neighboring structures and have no visible openings. The west façade consists of painted CMUs at the two rear additions.
(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

P5a. Photo



P5b. Photo: (view and date)
Oblique view of the primary façade,
looking northwest, August 2022.
Source: Google Street View.

*P6. **Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** historic
1940 (Original Building Permit)

*P7. **Owner and Address:**
2420 Shattuck Avenue LLC
9101 Burning Tree Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

*P8. **Recorded by:**
Page & Turnbull, Inc.
170 Maiden Lane, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94010

*P9. **Date Recorded:**
December 21, 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) 2420 Shattuck Avenue
*Date December 21, 2022 Continuation Update

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



Figure 1. Location of 2420 Shattuck Avenue, subject building highlighted yellow.
Source: Google Earth, 2020, edited by Page & Turnbull.



Figure 2: Detail view of partially hinged window fixture on south end of east façade. Looking west.



Figure 3: Oblique view of east façade. Looking northwest.

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Figure 4: Detail of primary entrance and recessed archway. Looking west.



Figure 5: Detail of emergency exit at north end of east façade. Looking west.



Figure 6: Detail of former tenant signage, lighting, and cornice. Looking west.



Figure 7: Detail of neon signage for former tenant; lettering reading "GIO'S" has been removed.

The west quarter of the subject parcel is a parking lot currently in use by the auto dealership at the southwest corner of Channing Way and Shattuck Avenue. Between the parking lot and the original subject building is a one-story CMU addition at the north of the west façade, and a two-story CMU addition at the south of the west façade (**Figure 8**). A small portion of the north façade of the one-story CMU addition is visible in the alleyway between the parcel adjacent to the north at 2414 Shattuck Avenue (**Figure 9**).



Figure 8: View of southwest corner of subject building, showing one-story and two-story concrete masonry unit additions. Looking northeast.

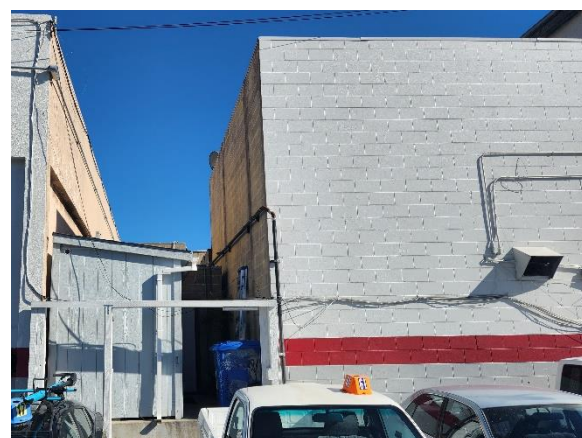


Figure 9: View of northwest corner of subject building, including alleyway behind adjacent building to the north. Looking east.

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The surrounding area contains a mixture of mixed-use multi-family residential buildings and commercial buildings including retail, restaurants, and an auto dealership. Buildings within the surrounding blocks include early to mid-twentieth century residential properties and commercial buildings, as well as several multi-story developments completed in the 21st century (**Figure 10 to Figure 19**). A parcel on the same block as the subject building, at the northwest corner of Haste Street and Shattuck Avenue, was recently demolished to construct new multi-family housing. Further north and south of the subject building contemporary multi-family housing is currently under construction or very recently completed.



Figure 10: Adjacent one-story optometrist office at 2414 Shattuck Avenue, built 1948. Looking west.



Figure 11: One-story auto dealership at north of subject parcel on Shattuck Avenue. Looking west.

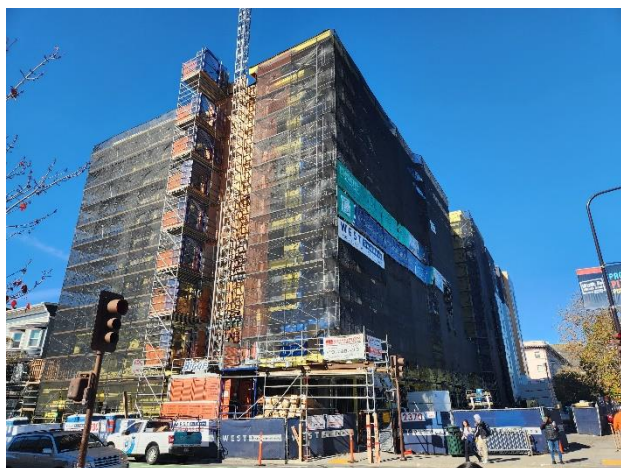


Figure 12: Phase two of Identity Logan Park at 2370 Shattuck Avenue, an eight-story mixed-use multifamily building under construction. Looking northwest.



Figure 13: Multi-tenant two-story commercial building at 2395-2399 Shattuck Avenue. Looking northeast.

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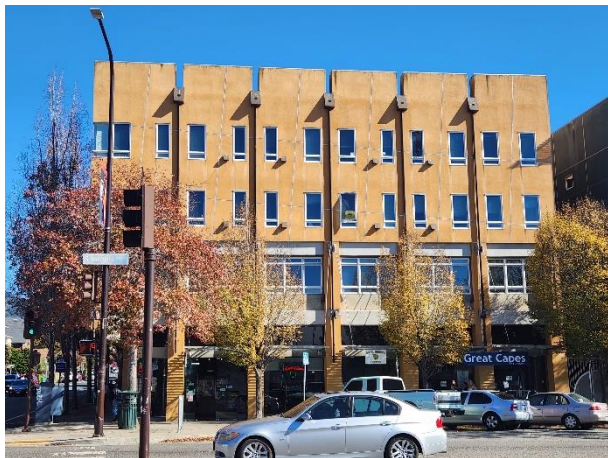


Figure 14: Four-story mixed-use multi-family building at 2100 Channing Way, opposite Shattuck Avenue from subject building. Looking east.

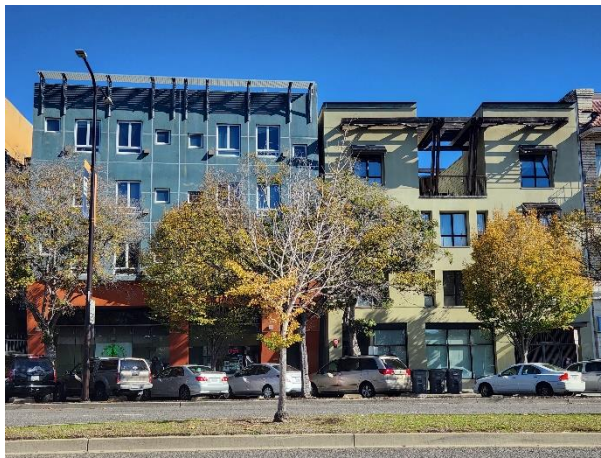


Figure 15: Four-story mixed-use multi-family buildings at 2419 and 2425 Shattuck Avenue, opposite Shattuck from subject building. Looking east.



Figure 16: The Morrill Apartments at 2429-2437 Shattuck Avenue, City of Berkeley Landmark #81. Looking east.



Figure 17: Five-story mixed-use student housing building at 2110 Haste Street. Looking southwest.



Figure 18: One-story multi-tenant commercial building at 2450-2467 Shattuck Avenue. Looking southwest.



Figure 19: Former one-story commercial building at 2440 Shattuck Avenue, south of subject building on the same block. Looking northwest.

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 *Resource Name or # 2420 Shattuck Avenue

B1. Historic name: 2420 Shattuck Avenue
 B2. Common name: 2420 Shattuck Avenue
 B3. Original Use: Commercial
 B4. Present use: Commercial
 *B5. Architectural Style: Early 20th Century Commercial
 *B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

2420 Shattuck Avenue was originally built in 1940 by contractor Willis F. Lynn in an unknown style as a single-tenant one-story commercial building. According to the original building permit from September 10th 1940, the owner of the property was Basil K. Denbigh.¹ Major renovations and additions have heavily altered the original primary (east) façade in 1949, 1962, 1967 and 2016. These and other alterations are based on City of Berkeley permit records and are discussed in more detail below and in Table 1. (Refer to Continuation Sheet, page 7)

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____
 *B8. Related Features: No B9a. Architect: James W. Plachek b. Builder: Willis F. Lynn
 *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
Incorporation of Berkeley

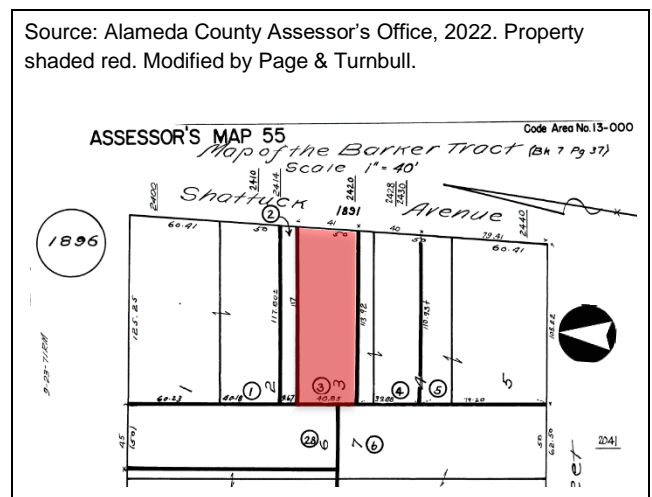
The development of Berkeley proceeded very slowly prior to the establishment of regular rail service between the town and Oakland and San Francisco. In 1873, with the completion of the first buildings at the new campus of the University of California in Berkeley, several local investors formed the Berkeley Land & Town Improvement Association to spur development. This group organized land sales, built stores and wharves, and lobbied for a direct ferry connection to San Francisco. In 1874, the Berkeley Ferry & Railroad Company initiated regular service between San Francisco and Ocean View (now West Berkeley). Also that year, a horse-drawn transit line began operating along Telegraph Avenue between the areas that are now downtown Berkeley and Oakland.² In 1878, the Town of Berkeley incorporated, encompassing both the bayside manufacturing settlement of Ocean View and the small academic village of Berkeley.³

Following Berkeley's incorporation, Shattuck Avenue was already well on its way to becoming the town's main street. This was mostly the result of Francis Kittredge Shattuck's successful efforts to convince the Central Pacific Railroad to run a spur line from Oakland through the middle of his mile-long land holdings located just west of the University of California campus. The spur line ran along Adeline Street and terminated in a station at Stanford Square (later renamed Shattuck Square). The blocks east of Shattuck Avenue contained an eclectic mix of uses and remained in a quasi-rural state for much longer than the land south and west of Shattuck. While Shattuck Avenue served as the main north-south transportation corridor in downtown Berkeley, University Avenue served as the east-west horsecar route, connecting the shoreline community of Ocean View with downtown and the campus. (Refer to Continuation Sheet, page 8)

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

*B12. References: Refer to Page 15
 B13. Remarks: None
 *B14. Evaluator: Page & Turnbull, Inc.
 *Date of Evaluation: December 21, 2022

(This space reserved for official comments.)



¹ Permit No. 49531. September 10th, 1940. Accessed by the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.
² Alan Cohen, *A History of Berkeley, From the Ground Up*, Archived on Archive.org, Accessed September 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20171014035000/http://historyofberkeley.org/chapters.html>
³ Cohen, *A History of Berkeley, From the Ground Up*.

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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 2420 Shattuck Avenue				
Permit #	Year	Owner	Builder/Contractor	Description
49531	1940	Basil K. Denbigh	Willis F. Lynn	New construction
65804	1949	Sal Wiseman	Illegible	26' x 24' two story addition at the rear
66384	1949	Wiseman	East Bay Glass	Install plate glass doors, storefronts, and display floor
79732	1956	Verdies Bar B-2 (occupant)	Keeney & Wedeking	Interior remodel for restaurant tenant
94756	1962	Ronald Paul Hulse (occupant)	Ronald Paul Hulse	Remove storefronts and install gate type folding doors across front of building for auto shop, install new fire escape door in rear, remove parking meters in front for new driveway
109447	1967	John Schipani	Mentanye & Baughman	Remodel building for use as restaurant
113268	1967	John Schipani	Robert Chalre	Additional one-story storage room
98-00005208	1998	John Schipani	Va Tong Roofing	Reroofing
B2015-06033	2015	John Schipani	Victor Rasilla	Demolition of interior finishes, equipment, built-in seating and non-structural non-load bearing partition walls
B2016-01435-REV	2016	John Schipani	Victor Rasilla	Revision submitted to alter front elevation by removing awnings, pot shelf shutters and faux upper windows and repaint front of building

Documented alterations are extensive and include the construction of at least two completely new façades at 2420 Shattuck Avenue. As the earliest historic photos available date to after the storefront was replaced for the first time in 1949, what the original façade looked like was not discovered through research (**Figure 20**). The primary façade was renovated again in 1962, replacing the non-original storefronts with garage doors to facilitate auto-access from Shattuck Avenue for the tenant, Berkeley Muffler Service. The primary façade was completely rebuilt in 1967 for Giovanni's Restaurant, which would remain for the longest of all the façades. Until 1967 the primary façade was roughly the same height as adjacent buildings, but was raised to create a false second story (**Figure 21**). Renovations in 2015 building permit No. B2015-06033 demolished interior finishes and built in-seating, removing murals painted by artist Don Clever in 1967 (**Figure 22**). The work described by building permit No. B2015-01435-REV, dated 2016, is responsible for removing the faux second-story windows and some minor decorative elements resulting in the subject building's current appearance.



Figure 20. Historic photograph from circa 1952, showing earliest known condition of the primary façade. Note that the storefront windows, bulkheads, and doors are all non-original in this photo. Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

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Figure 21: 2420 Shattuck Avenue, 2016. Source: Google Streetview.



Figure 22: Nonextant murals by artist Don Clever on the interior of 2420 Shattuck Avenue, in January of 2013. Source: Ted Friedman, berkeleyside.org.

Willis Franklin Lynn, Builder

Willis Franklin Lynn (1898-1987) was a prolific builder in Alameda County, with his business based in Oakland. After enlisting in the U. S. Army in 1919, Lynn returned to Oakland and worked as a contractor until the 1950s. Dozens of newspaper advertisements selling “Willis Lynn” homes appear throughout the 1920s, and other adjacent advertisements selling appliances and building materials were advertised as “used in the Lynn Homes.”⁴ He retired to Santa Cruz by the late 1950s, and died in 1987.

James W. Plachek, Architect

James W. Plachek (1885-1948) was a prolific architect based in Berkeley who designed dozens of buildings in the East Bay including many Berkeley Landmarks. The following is excerpted from the 2015 Shattuck Avenue Commercial Corridor Historic Context and Survey Report for the City of Berkeley by Archives and Architecture, LLC.:

James William Plachek was born in 1885, in Illinois, to Czechoslovakian immigrant parents. At the age of 15, he began an apprenticeship as a draftsman under Chicago architect J. E. O. Pridmore, and then went on to study engineering. Following the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, Plachek, along with several others, was sent to San Francisco by the Mayor of Chicago to study the effects of the devastation. Under this directive, Plachek worked with William Weeks, the State Department of Architecture in Sacramento, and the City Architect’s Office in San Francisco. In 1912, Plachek received his certificate to practice architecture, and he moved to Berkeley to set up his own firm.

Until his death in 1948, Plachek was active in Berkeley civic life, and designed and executed a multitude of Berkeley buildings, including the Heywood Apartments at 2119 Addison St., the UC Theater at 2036 University Ave., the Plachek Building at 2014 Shattuck Ave., the Stark and Central Hotels, and the Berkeley Public Library.⁵

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

Historic Context – City of Berkeley

Early Development of South Berkeley⁶

The subject area, South Berkeley, grew slowly in the city’s early years due to confusion over whether the area would be absorbed by Oakland or Berkeley. The incorporation of the Town of Berkeley in the 1870s originally proposed to extend the southern boundary of the town to Russell Street but due to opposition from the City of Oakland the boundary line instead was drawn at Dwight Way.

⁴ “Contractors and Material Men in Lynn Homes,” *Oakland Tribune*, June 14, 1925, 34.

⁵ City of Berkeley Planning Department, “Shattuck Avenue Commercial Corridor Historic Context and Survey,” *Archives and Architecture*, May 28, 2015, 50.

⁶ This section summarized from “Chapter 9: More on East Berkeley” and “Chapter 11: Incorporation” in Alan Cohen, *A History of Berkeley, From the Ground Up*, Archived on Archive.org, Accessed September 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20171014035000/http://historyofberkeley.org/chapters.html>

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In the mid nineteenth century, within the area that would become South Berkeley, the land consisted of large farming tracts owned by a few landowners. The installation of a railroad station at Alcatraz and Adeline Streets in 1876 spurred the development of the surrounding blocks with industrial uses located near the railroad line and residential housing beyond. The Newberry Station, now the location of the Ashby Bart Station, was established several years after the Alcatraz Station and proved a catalyst for development in the immediate vicinity of the subject property. South Berkeley became part of the City of Berkeley in the early 1890s.

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 south 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 Shattuck Avenue running between Vine Street to the north and Oakland to the south.⁷ 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. In the 1920s the blocks surrounding the subject building were occupied by residential uses, with slowly increasing density and infill concentrated along Shattuck Avenue (**Figure 23**).

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. By the 1950s, the subject block along Shattuck was filled in with commercial developments (**Figure 24 through Figure 26**).

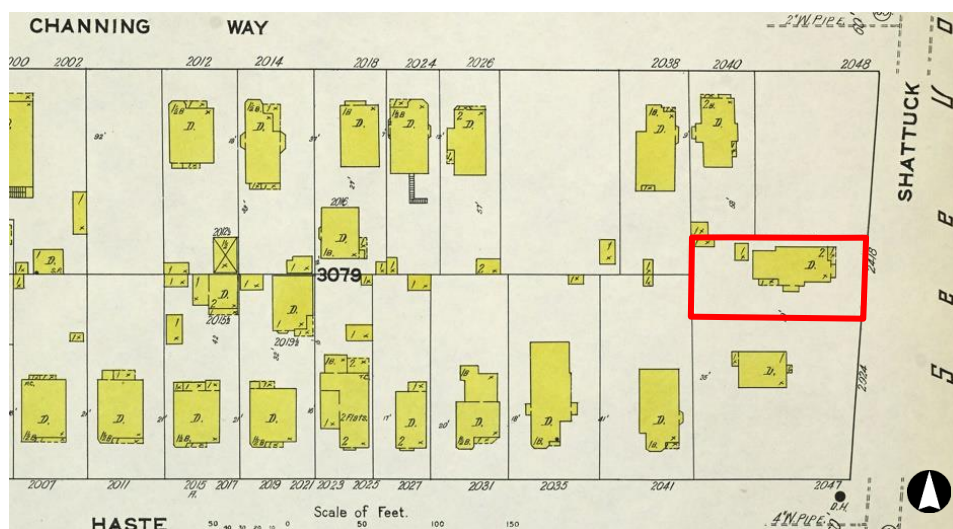


Figure 23. Detail from 1911 Sanborn Insurance Company Map for Berkeley, showing early twentieth century residential development on Shattuck Avenue. Approximate future subject parcel outlined red.

⁷ 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.

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Figure 24. 1947 aerial photograph of Berkeley, showing earliest known footprint of subject building. Note the absence of the later two-story rear addition. Subject parcel outlined red. Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.

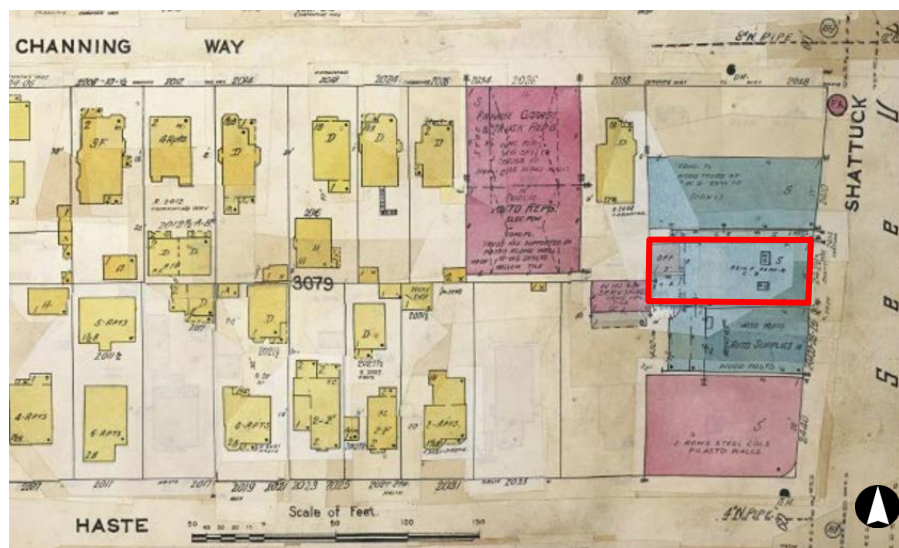


Figure 25. 1950 Sanborn Insurance Company Map for Berkeley, showing mid twentieth century commercial and residential development on Shattuck Avenue. Subject parcel outlined red. Note the larger footprint compared to Figure 24 due to the rear addition constructed in 1949.⁸

⁸ Building permit No. 65804, on file with the City of Berkeley.

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Figure 26. Historic photograph of 2410-2420 Shattuck Avenue from the late 1950s, with subject building at red arrow. Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

In the decades following World War II, Berkeley's reputation as a liberal stronghold grew, particularly expressed by its Democratic-leaning academic community and African American and working-class populations. Civil Rights became an important topic, leading to struggles over fair-housing and segregation of schools. The Vietnam War affected the city tremendously, as it was heavily populated by young, working-class people and students who were eligible for the draft, spurring protests and demonstrations. Berkeley has remained a politically and culturally outspoken community that largely accepts and promotes progressive thinking. The University of California remains the centerpiece of the city, which is otherwise inhabited by a wide range of social, economic, and ethnic demographics.⁹

Owner History

At the time the subject building was constructed in 1940 it was owned by Basil K. Denbigh (1872-1951), an English-born realtor based in Berkeley. In 1948 Denbigh sold the subject building to its then-occupant, Sal Wiseman of Wiseman's Appliances. Wiseman likely sold the building soon after moving his business elsewhere in 1952, but to whom it was sold was not identified by research. In 1967 the building was bought by John Schipani, who owned the building until it was sold to the current owner, 2420 Shattuck Avenue LLC, in 2021.

Occupancy History

Commercial tenants at the subject property included retail, restaurants, and auto service shops. For most of the building's history it was occupied by Giovanni's Restaurant.

Table 3, below, lists documented commercial businesses at 2420 Shattuck Avenue since 1940. Records were assembled through research in Alameda County Directories and historic newspaper archives.

Table 3. Occupancy History, Commercial Businesses at 2420 Shattuck Avenue		
Year(s) of Occupation	Occupant/Business Name	Use
1940-1952	Wiseman's Appliances	Retail
1952-1956	Ritz Variety Store	Retail
1956-1960	Verdies Bar	Restaurant
1960-1966	Berkeley Muffler Service	Auto parts-service
1967-2015	Giovanni's	Restaurant
2017-2018	Gio's Pizza & Bocce	Restaurant

The first tenant of 2420 Shattuck Avenue was Sal Wiseman of Wiseman's Appliances, from December of 1940.¹⁰ From 1952 through 1967, the subject building was occupied by a retail store, restaurant, and auto shop. In 1967, 2420 Shattuck Avenue was

⁹ City of Berkeley, *City of Berkeley Landmark Application for the Preservation of All Souls Church, Parish Hall and Courtyard, 2220 Cedar Street, Berkeley, CA*, on file at Berkeley Architectural Heritage.

¹⁰ "Concern to Go Into New Home," *Oakland Tribune*, November 29, 1940, 67.

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acquired by John Schipani (1935-2020) who moved his pre-existing restaurant business there. Schipani's restaurant, Giovanni's, would occupy the space from 1967 to 2018, a total of 52 years out of the total 81 years the subject building has existed.

John Schipani was born and raised in Gary, Indiana, and moved to California by 1960 (**Figure 27**). In 1961 Schipani opened "Mr. Pizza" in Berkeley, which was successful enough to fund his purchase of the subject building in 1966. After remodeling the former Berkeley Muffler Service building, he opened Giovanni's restaurant in 1967. Schipani sold the rights to the restaurant, but not the subject building, in 1987 and moved to San Francisco. After Giovanni's was forced to close due to poor financials in 2010, Schipani bought the restaurant back and reopened a year later (**Figure 28**).¹¹ Giovanni's continued operating under John Schipani and his family until a fire in 2015, when he sold the restaurant to three University of Berkeley graduates, Xin and Michele Jin and Nathan George.¹² They remodeled and renovated the subject building to both repair fire damage and rebrand the restaurant as Gio's Pizza & Bocce. The restaurant operated between August of 2017 and December of 2018.¹³



Figure 27. "Benny" John Schipani, Froebel High School class of 1950, Gary, Indiana. Source: Ancestry.com

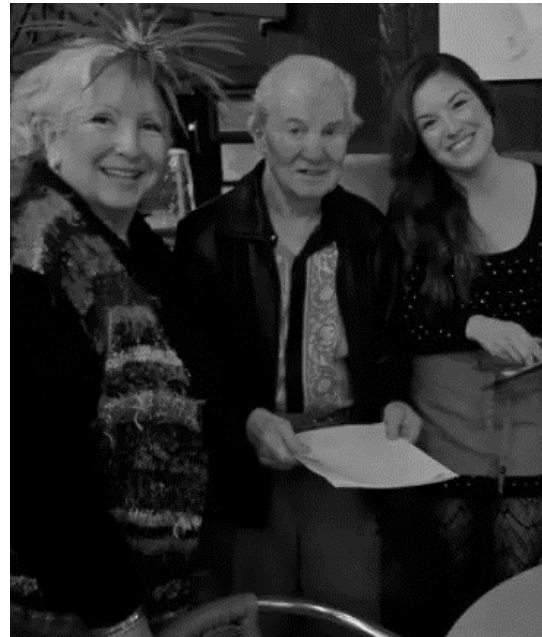


Figure 28. The Schipani family, 2013. Source: Ted Friedman, berkeleyside.org

Evaluation

California Register Evaluation

The property at 2420 Shattuck 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).¹⁴ The subject building is not listed as a City of Berkeley Landmark or Structure of Merit.

Criterion 1 (Events)

2420 Shattuck Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 (Events). The subject property is not associated with events which 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 1940 as a commercial

¹¹ Ted Friedman, "Giovanni's last stand: Family rallies to save restaurant," *Berkeleyside*, January 16, 2013, <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2013/01/16/gioannis-last-stand-family-rallies-for-berkeley-restaurant>.

¹² Caleb Pershan, "Gio's brings back a classic with pizza and indoor bocce ball," *Eater San Francisco*, August 23, 2017, <https://sf.eater.com/2017/8/23/16193902/gios-berkeley-giovanni-bocce-ball-pizza-open>.

¹³ Linda Zavoral, "After 57 years, Gio's Pizza shuts its doors," *The Mercury News*, January 21, 2019, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/01/21/after-57-years-gios-pizza-in-berkeley-shuts-its-doors/>.

¹⁴ California State Office of Historic Preservation, Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD), Alameda County, updated March 2020.

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building, at a time when commercial development south of downtown Berkeley and the adjacent blocks had been ongoing for over a decade. 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)

2420 Shattuck 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 Basil K. Denbigh as a single-tenant commercial building. The most prominent and longest owner and occupant of 2420 Shattuck was, John Schipani of Giovanni's restaurant. Although one of the longest operating and more prominent restaurants in Berkeley, neither Schipani nor Giovanni's made a significant impact on local, state, or national history. None of the other known owners or occupants at 2420 Shattuck 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.

Criterion 3 (Architecture)

2420 Shattuck 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 1940, designed by local master architect James W. Plachek and erected by contractor Willis F. Lynn, the building was heavily altered several times by subsequent tenants. Due to the severity and number of alterations, the structure currently exhibits no specific style or character and does not represent Plachek's original design. The original design of the primary façade was not identified through research, as the earliest known photo from circa 1952 was taken after the first major façade renovation in 1949. While designed by a locally prominent architect of merit, alterations to the building prevent evaluation of its design as a representation of Plachek's body of work. Subsequent façade alterations in the 1960s lack the scale, complexity, or expression of any specific or combination of styles that they could be considered significant in their own right under this criterion.

Criterion 4 (Information Potential)

2420 Shattuck 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 2420 Shattuck Avenue does not appear to be eligible as a City of Berkeley Landmark. The subject building was constructed as a single-tenant store in 1940 and has been drastically altered by several 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. 2420 Shattuck Avenue was used for auto services, retail and restaurant businesses during a time when this use was already a regular part of Berkeley life, and as such the building would not be eligible as a landmark for its cultural value. 2420 Shattuck 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 Shattuck Avenue between Channing Way and Haste Street lacks visual, architectural, or historic distinctiveness or significance in its mixture of commercial and multi-family residential buildings dating between the early 1900s and 2022. Therefore, 2420 Shattuck Avenue is not eligible as a City of Berkeley Structure of Merit.

Conclusion

The commercial building at 2420 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California, was designed by James W. Plachek and constructed by Willis F. Lynn, and completed in 1940 for owner Basil K. Denbigh. The building was used by retail, restaurants and auto service shops until 1967, when it was occupied by Giovanni's restaurant until 2019. This evaluation is based on a site visit and analysis of

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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 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."¹⁵

¹⁵ 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.

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